

# DISAPPEARED UNDER DICTATORSHIP

**TESTIMONIES OF FAMILY MEMBERS** 

#### Disappeared under Dictatorship - Testimonies of family members

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# Testimonies

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# A system of values

The book of testimonies of the family members of the missing is the second in row in the AIDSSH, on the testimonies of the survivors. It is grounded on the experience of the first edition, the testimonies of the survivors of the former internment camp in Tepelena, a collection of testimonies, characters, photos and artefacts, which also influenced the opening of the public debate on the camp.

The volume you have in hand, is one of the outcomes of the AIDSSH-ICMP project "Raising public awareness on transitional justice and reconciliation: the disappeared under communism", supported by the European Union and the Government of Switzerland, and is made possible after the immense work made by the Authority and partners, in response to the requests of the family members of the disappeared under communism, for the clarification of the fate of their relatives, the acquaintance with the circumstances of death, as well as the secret or unmarked burial places.

Pursuant to the definition of law no. 45/2015, we have recorded their witnesses, collected personal materials, memories, objects, in addition to the files of the executed, with and without trial, to bring the story of those whose grave is still unknown today, in its all dimensions. Thus, this is the reason why this book is a collection of stories from south to north, from east to west, from the descendants of the signatories of the Independence Act, to those of the Albanian prime ministers, to those of simple and at the same time great people of dignity who are all still missing.

The stories collected all over Albania, 30 years after the fall of the communism, are just as unique

as similar. Family members testify about their loved ones, with the heavy burden of the many years of searching, with the anxiety of failure to find anything, with the need to tell the whole story and to make known even those little bits that everyone fears will be lost, besides the memory of loved ones who could not even lay a flower on their grave. Some of the persons interviewed passed away a few months after giving their witnesses to AIDSSH. Not rarely, it is one last word, but it is nonetheless their last will to turn back the disappeared to their families.

It is the voice that is upturned to be heard, it is the concrete challenge with the institutions and society, which owe them even for the long silence.

Solzhenitsyn, at the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony, said: "The world, the mankind cannot exist in the face of two scales of values: we shall be torn apart by this disparity of rhythm, this disparity of vibrations. Same as a man with two hearts is not for this world, neither shall we be able to live side by side on one Earth".

Therefore, let us adopt a system of values, that of a civilized world, where human rights are guaranteed, because this would keep us more connected to each other. Let us be aware of and address the denied rights of the missing yesterday and their families today, distancing themselves from indoctrination, the stigma of class warfare and ideology, with an open heart and not underestimating any case.

PhD Gentiana Sula Chairwoman of AIDSSH



# Missing person:

# Akile Tasi

**Akile Tasi**, born in 1891 in Leuse, Përmet. He served a sentence of 30 years in prison in Burrel Prison where he died and buried, but it is not known where.

The process of searching the graves of prisoners has not started yet in Burrel Prison.

**Sufferers:** Koço Tasi, born on 15.05.1898 in Leuse, Përmet. Has served a sentence of 20 years in prison

**Koço Tasi's family** who were interned, and one of his sons, Napoleon, and his daughter, Tefta, were also sentenced to prison.

# Testimony of Lekë Tasi, the son

# We hope for a state that respects the norms, first, the norms of freedom and economic independence of the people and their most intimate, most spiritual rights.

# I have such a hope!

Up in the mountains there were groups of communists, of national front, legalists, but the country needed a government!

Interviewed by Marçel Hila

Mr. Lekë, first of all I would like to thank you for agreeing to give us this interview. What was the reason your father and uncle were arrested?

My father, Koço Tasi, was convicted as a nationalist. He had studied in Italy for jurisprudence, around 1914. When he was young, he had collaborated with Osman Haxhiu in Vlora, where he had worked for several years as a tax clerk in the village of Armen. He was part of the first Albanian parliament as a deputy. For the role he played in Albanian politics in the 1920s, he was arrested right in the centre of Tirana and sentenced to life imprisonment. My father was a nationalist, but had not reached an agreement with any party except National Front, but for a short time, because he saw that the National Front was inactive, and he demanded that they react to communism. I have written these things in my book ... This was the

reason they convicted him: his role in the Albanian politics of the 1920s.

My uncle, Akile Tasi, had been a journalist in America in the association "Vatra", with the newspaper "Dielli". He returned there in the 1930s to manage the national library and then became involved in journalism.

As an old journalist in America, he undertook to publish the government organ - "Nation", which was then called "Union of the Nation", later, for several weeks took over the Ministry of Culture. This was the reason he was convicted by the communists.

In 1943, he got engaged in solving the chaos, after Italy's capitulation, as far as there were groups of communists and legalists up in the mountains all over the country, and the country needed a government.

An agreement was needed with the German command, which used to consider Albania a little differently from other countries, because it was a country without an army, but also that had attracted the attention of German researchers.

The people were rumouring about an anthropologist who was very enthusiastic about Albanians and called them superiors in the Balkans, and that this consideration extended to the upper echelons of Germany, so Albanian nationalists dared to impose certain conditions to Germany, that is, if they had a strategic need, as far as they had the troops here, the nationalists demanded neutrality, the right to self-determination and we do not disturb. This was a heroic move for many who judge the situation from the perspective of the conditions in which Albania was at the time.

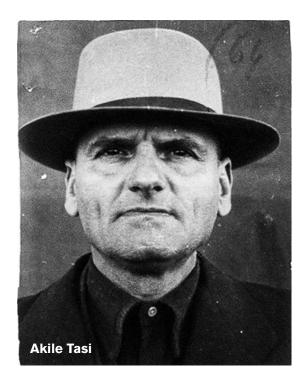
The Albanian government newspaper published the communications of the three participants in the war: the Soviets and the Allies. I have read in the newspapers of recent years a dialogue of a German commander dealing with propaganda. He was indignant and complained to my uncle, who had simply replied that we have an agreement, we are sovereign and neutral on many points, it's something else that you have violated us... The German commander left without a word.

The sentence to my father was more severe, to life imprisonment, and he has served the prison at the same time as his uncle. My father completed 20 years in prison and then was released, but was diagnosed with stomach cancer and died 4 hours after the surgery.

#### Do you remember how they arrested them?

I know that my uncle was arrested in Shkodra. He went there with friends, hoping to immigrate to Italy, but since there were gathered so many, only some of them could make it to go to Italy. My uncle was a meditative man, not practical and so he couldn't make it, so he was arrested in Shkodra.

My father was arrested right in the centre of Tirana. We had left the house because it had been destroyed by the war and we were staying at a



My uncle got engaged in solving the chaos, after Italy's capitulation, 1943, as far as there were groups of communists and legalists up in the mountains all over the country, ... and the country needed a government.

Those who have been spies shall be divided into categories: there are some who have been driven by pressure made on their family...

There have been many dirty methods used and you cannot blame them too much.

While the others who have been driving this activity, who have been offered, they are worth punishing, but it is not possible for now, in this transition, where former communism are still alive.

# ... in this transition, I know numerous cases of colleagues, searching for the remains, bones of their relatives, but the officials do not even budge when asked where they have been buried.

friend from Permet, for a couple of nights. I was out and when I came back there, he was not there anymore. My mom and my uncle were thinking about how to send some food to the prison...

Some 100 people were killed in and around the districts.

## Your uncle, Mr. Akile Tasi, died in prison? In which year and under what circumstances?

He got sick of liver cirrhosis. They say it has to do with alcohol, but he did not drink alcohol, but maybe smoking. We know that he got badly sick and was received by the prison ambulance, nothing else.

#### In what year?

In 1961. As soon as I found out he was sick, I asked a doctor and the next day I went there, but he had died: he did not have the proper medical treatment.

## Do you know anything about his burial or not?

When I went there, they stopped me at the bars, at the gate, and said, "Go away, we cannot tell these things."

# Did you get any information later on your uncle's grave?

Yes. Agim, a boy from Vlora who lived in Elbasan and Tomorr Dosti. They helped him, cleaned him because the cirrhosis had harmful hygienic effects and he used to give them blessings, but his agony did not last long. Agim found me and gave me a book, with a very honourable dedication made to my family. He published it for my uncle's work. He told me that he would like to publish a book for my father, too.

## Were they with your father at the same time in Burrell Prison?

Yes, but when that happened, my father was brought to Tirana to have an eye surgery.

# This is a difficult question ... If you had the chance to meet those who did this injustice to your father and uncle, how do you think you would have reacted?

In all this controversy over the security service files, the disclosure of the culprits, the spies, since the very beginning I have taken the position that the devil shall be found and punished with forks, rather than those who suffered from the torments that this devil did to the people. When I entered the "House of Leaves", I saw the place where my 20-year-old brother, Napoleon, was staying. I immediately imagined what despair, what anxiety he had gone through there. He was sentenced to 10 years, but he completed 7 years due to the granted amnesty. Not to mention the countless labour camps: In Beden of Kavaja, in Peqin, in Maliq ...

Those who have been spies shall be divided into categories: there are some who have been driven by pressure made on their family... there have been many dirty methods used and you cannot blame them too much. While the others who have been driving this activity, who have been offered, they are worth punishing, but it is not possible for now, in this transition, where former communism are still alive. I know numerous cases of colleagues writing books, searching for the remains, bones of their relatives, but the officials do not even budge when asked where they have been buried.

#### They do not tell you? What would you say to these people who have ruined the lives of your father and uncle?

I would say to them... I talked once in a cafe, the opportunity came, I didn't ask for it. He was the one, convinced of the old did, and I said to him that the regime had destroyed Albania; the first fault is on the economy, since the economy affects everyone except a limited number; suffering is in addition... He was not very touched by this and so I quit the conversation...

# Another question Mr. Lekë. Have you stored personal belongings from your father and uncle?

Yes, my little brother is very passionate on objects, not me. I keep his manuscripts on "The Philosophy of Law" that I have published in the book about my father. It also summarizes a translation made by an Italian lawyer. This is my contribution.

I have a lighter that he used to keep on the table, a big lighter, as well as the hat pierced by the bullet, when Riza Cerova attempted to assassinate him in Athens. In the police records, his name was forged as allegedly he was Riza Kardhiqi. That night my father was with Ali Këlcyra and this happened a few months after he had published three leaflets where he made the balance of the king Zog regime and the Albanian state on relations between the Muslim majority and the Christian minority.

He took indicia from the displacement of Christian farmers from a village of Kurvelesh, Shtëpëz, as well as from several villages in Kolonjë and the case was not isolated. It happened that the Muslim agallars used to commit such robberies while the state protected them, because it relied on them. Their speaking was a bit harsh, but at the moment the things started to be written the Albanian state was in its early stages, and that was how it was supposed to be spoken, openly. They could not stand this and so Riza Cerova carried out the assassination attempt, four bullets of which, fortunately, two of them passed by and one bullet was stuck in his thigh.

# Since, due to your father you had a "bad" biography, how did the authorities consider you, did you have any consequences?

Ah, I was helped by a momentary inspiration of 1943, when was announced the opening of the school of music at Radio Tirana. I liked the music, but in general. I went there and I was chosen for cello. That selection and those two years I studied with my professor Kaleti were providential I can say, because I lived with the cello until the day others came out more capable than me, so they took me out and assigned me physical works. I have been in the radio and opera orchestra for about 20 years.

#### What happened to you afterwards?

I started the series of physical work in the vineyard...

#### Have you been interned as well?

After a few years...

#### In what year were you interned?

The internment came in 1975.

#### What for?

It was a wave, that is, as a declassed family. Some 60 families were thought to have been displaced, but there had been an earlier wave there since 1968 so we found other families interned there, in the village we were taken to, in Grabian. We

When my sister was arrested, they took her only sweet food, no salt, and her blood pressure dropped and her health deteriorated.

They did not give her the opportunity to feed normally.... In Lushnja, where she was taken to internment, the head of the office, who had given instructions that she

had to stand up from

morning to evening..

During the whole time of communism we were under pressure, for example: they came unexpectedly inside the house in Grabian to see what we were doing; There were moments when you got captivated by the terror, awaiting for the worst. With 7 people in prison from the extended family circle from father, sister and uncles ...

suffered so much in internment, me, my mother Aleksandra, my younger brother Ylli, my sister Tefta, who was also imprisoned in the women's prison.

#### When did you finish the internment?

In October 12, 1990.

#### **Exactly 15 years of internment!**

In fact, the internment measure lasted two 5-year terms, that is, from the third 5-year term we should have come back here, but no matter how hard we tried to find a job in Tirana or anywhere else, we couldn't. It was also a crisis at that time. At that time I also wrote the book, which was worth it, the book on Grabian's memoirs.

#### A book of memories "Grabian by the hills"?

Yes. I think it is an overview of the situation, people, typologies, relationships with the government, the worker, the prison, family stories.

## Mr. Lekë, has there been used violence to you? Your sister-

Violence has been exercised against the older brother who was arrested in 1946 in Poland. He was violated by a group - Mitrojorgji, Skënder Kosova, Skënder Konica and company.

When I entered the "House of Leaves", I saw the place where my 20-year-old brother, Napoleon, was staying. I immediately imagined what despair, what anxiety he had gone through there.

He was sentenced to 10 years, but he completed 7 years due to the granted amnesty. Not to mention the countless labour camps: In Beden of Kavaja, in Peqin, in Maliq ... In Maliq there were two sectors with convicted whose number was about 1500. Many of them were left in the mud of the swamp till they drowned dead. My uncles were also sentenced there for one year. They tied them with wire. Horrible...

## What about other relatives, have they been violated?

Tefta...my sister. When she was arrested, they took her only sweet food, no salt, and her blood pressure dropped and her health deteriorated. They did not give her the opportunity to feed normally, but gave her permission to stay in bed.

In Lushnja, where she was taken to internment, the head of the office, Kamber Shehu, who hated us, had given instructions that she had to stand up from morning to evening. This weakened her, her blood pressure dropped, and then, the last month, she was allowed to lie down. They held a ridiculous trial and then 3 years of labour camp in Kosovo of Dumre until the amnesty of '82 came, she had been sentenced to 8 years but released.

# Have you experienced pressures, threats during the time you were in internment?

During the whole time of communism we were under pressure, for example: they came unexpectedly inside the house in Grabian to see what we were doing; there were cases that they eavesdropped at windows, as well.

Once there came to us someone from the neighbourhood when we were listening to the radio, but we turned it off quickly.

There were moments when you got captivated by the terror, awaiting for the worst. With 7 people in prison from the extended family circle from father, sister and uncles, who have suffered greatly under torture, they hit him so hard behind the ear that he almost lost hearing; they convicted him for the reason that when he was a judge in Burrel and nearby, in Peshkopi, a terror trial was taking place for the best families of Dibra, they also added my uncle as an intellectual considering him an organizer. In fact, many people were shot dead there, but my uncle was sentenced to 30 years in prison, which later reduced to 10 years. He spent 10 years in prison in all those camps.

#### But who else of you has suffered?

Even two cousins, my uncles' sons. One of them 26-year-old was imprisoned four times by Bardhyl Linti and the other, I don't know well, 5 years, arrested for terror at the age of 16, directly from school.

#### So your family has suffered a lot?

Yes. It suffered a lot: controls, transfers from home, we lived on the third floor in '44 and ended up in a basement before going to internment.

## Have you had financial problems from this whole situation?

Economically speaking, at that time wages were done to meet a subsistence minimum. We were also weak, because we didn't eat much. My father, held 20 years in prison and released, but then had cancer in the lower stomach and died after the surgery.

#### Did your father die during the surgery?

4 hours later, but neither the two surgeons visited

#### Has this been painful for you?

Yes it is so, my mom stayed there with him to be of help to him. Apparently they had put penicillin on the wound, even though he had told them before that he was allergic to penicillin and had fever, so he passed away at midnight: 4 hours after the surgery.

## Mr. Lekë, did you hope that communism would fall down?

We were optimistic and saw the signs: the economic situation was going down; there were divisions of communist diplomats in Paris, Rome, to Vatican. My brother-in-law had told us that wherever they went in the European chancelleries, they were told to open churches and so, this was the first step that started the liberalization...

Apparently they had put penicillin on the wound, even though he had told them before that he was allergic to penicillin and had fever, so he passed away at midnight: 4 hours after the surgery.

## How did you expect the fall of communism in Albania?

With joy, with excitement, because we were old. I was 60 years old and we had high expectations in fact, but we soon realized that it was an east-west contract to leave the same regime in force with the condition to provide two concessions: market economy and pluralism.

We saw how they were falsified, bastardized in a controlled economy leaving the property in the hands of their puppies in order to have economic power and so communism went on. Only a few paid with a few years in prison, but their influence in politics remained active and we saw the parliamentary panorama, while the oligarchs entered to the market everywhere.

# Mr. Lekë, do you hope that the authorities will make possible the discovery of your uncle's remains?

This word of the Americans gave me hope and gave me this encouraging thought. Americans do fundamental things, they can even search the remains because they have automatic tools and I hope so, because they have done so in some other places.

In Burrel, within that mass of people who have died and died for 50 years, they can distinct and separate the bones. We have made a burial place for my father, brother and with their names in the epitaph there is also the name of my uncle, Akile Tasi, but we want to have his bones, as well.

We are hoping that the current situation will evolve towards a more regular, legal state, which respects the norms, first, the norms of freedom and economic independence of the people and their most intimate, most spiritual rights. I have such a hope!

#### Where do you think these remains are?

I don't have information that they have been exhumed from the surroundings of Burrel prison, the same as are usually done in other places, first search for the persons who carried out the exhumations, while in Burrel I don't know that they have taken any action to exhume them. I don't know this!

## Mr. Lekë, thank you very much for the interview!



# Missing person: Taho Sejko

**Sufferers: His Family** 



He was born on February 14, 1912 in Çameria and came to Albania when he was 8 years old. He took part in the war as deputy commander of the "Çameria" armed unit.

On July 28, 1960 he was arrested charged of being a foreign intelligence agent for a long time.

In May 1961, his name was mentioned in the trial of Teme Sejko and 38 other people, but he did not appear physically in court. From that moment and on, nothing is known about his fate.

There were rumours that: he was alive, has gone mad, was executed, had hit his head against the wall of the cell and died. Official state bodies neither confirmed nor denied his death, leaving this case pending, full of mystery, giving so the false idea to his family members that Taho Sejko was still alive.

It was during democracy that the family was acquainted with the Verdict of the Supreme Court of that time that he was sentenced to death, but there was no file record of the execution.

The most recent declaration about his fate was from a former investigator, who claims that Taho Sejko was tortured for a long time and at the end they gouged out his eyes.

Amidst such contradictory and horrific information, the family still does not know the truth of Taho Sejko's fate.

# Testimony of his son, **Hektor Sejko**\*

# Neither alive nor dead — a life lost in the dark!

What happened to this man, to this human?

What is his fault?

My 80-year-old grandmother was left alone, out of three sons she had, none remained

Two of them were arrested and executed on the same date.

They made the other to drown in the well...

Interviewed by Marçel Hila

#### Mr. Hektor Sejko, thank you for taking your time for this interview.

I will start with a short story. My grandfather, Mehmet Seiko, has been one of the greatest patriots of that time. In 1908 and 1909 he established and held the title of the President of the "Albanian" club for Albanian language fraternity". He opened the first Albanian school, in his house in Filat. In 1919 he signed the memorandum of Cameria, addressed to the Great Powers for the unification of Cameria lands with those of Albania. In 1920, the Greeks forced him to leave and so they came to Konispol.

My father, Taho Sejko, was born on February 14, 1912 and when they came to Albania he was 8 vears old.

He finished school in Konispol, after that the

French Lyceum of Korça and graduated to the

French University of Athens for economic and political sciences. He was an excellent connoisseur of French, Italian and Greek language. He came back in 1939, forced by the Albanian occupation. His father was dead and his mother with his two brothers was in a difficult economic situation.

He joined the movement as deputy commander of the first battalion "Cameria" and was wounded. At the battle of Konispol, a German shrapnel projectile was shot into his body and stacked to his bone.

After Albanian liberation, he was assigned in Konispol, Gjirokastra, after that in the State Planning Commission, Head of the Economic Editorial office in "Zeri i Popullit" newspaper, up to the date when Tirana Conference was held. At the Tirana Conference he was convicted. It took place after Stalin's death and after the 20th Congress of the Soviet Union's where Khrushchev changed his political lines. Two people from the Central Com-

<sup>\*</sup>Hektor Sejko passed away two months after this interview.

mittee, Nexhmie Hoxha and Figrete Shehu, came to "Zëri e Popullit" to analyse the issues of the Tirana Conference. This is the time Taho Sejko had a conflict with Nexhmije Hoxha.

This conflict targeted Taho. But there is a document that proves that on 21.8.1948, Taho Seiko was discharged by his position on the State Planning Commission and had received a Reprimand about that famous registration card of that time ... Figrete Shehu asked: - You, Taho, you have two Reprimands on the registration card. -Yes, -he said. - You did not ask to remove them. - Why should I apply? You know very well why I received the Reprimands. Do you remember that in the State Plan Commission no one spoke to you and Mehmet was taken to Vlora, because of you, because you were dismissed, you were discharged from the Party and the only person in the State Commission to speak to you was Taho Sejko. -Yes, - she said - I know. "But when you got your party-card, why didn't you remove the reprimands I had received?" Taho replied. For all these famous problems of that time, Taho Sejko was targeted.

Here, there is a correspondence that Haxhi Kroi, Enver Hoxha's secretary, sent to the members of the Bureau. It is noted: By the order of Comrade Rita, we are sending you the list of the anti-party elements, for whom it is proposed to take the necessary measures, discharge from the responsibilities they have and transfer them in other places. Please, you are asked to give your opinion on this issue. Among the 19-20 names listed, there is also the name of a member of "Zeri i Popullit" collegium, Taho Sejko. The Prime Minister decided that Taho Sejko will be assigned as director of Shkodra Park.

Taho Sejko asked if it would be possible that his family could stay in Tirana, since they were stabilized there. However, a big truck came, the loading workers loaded our luggage and we went to Shkodra. We had no house there and stayed to our uncle's house. From 1956 to 1960 my father was assigned as the Park Director and from an unprofitable enterprise he put it in full efficiency.

Taho Sejko said to
Nexhmije: - People are
suffering for a living,
while you and your
husband have a car!
...you are doing bad
harm to this country!
He spoke so openly, that
the others thought he
would be chained up at
the moment.



# Fleta e Rregjistrimit:

1) Mbiemri. emri. atesia Sejko Kaha Shehmet
2) Vend-lindja Jilet Gregi 3) dat-lindra 1919
4) Vend-banimi Shkooler dagia Noje kushi, Aruga Rugholi Kyli Kr. 103)
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7) Kombësija Shqiptere
8) Shtetësija Shqiptere 9) Partiniteti AP. P. Rigipaise
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12) A ka qënë i rregjistrua më parë në evidencë
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14) Përmbledhja e shkurtër e matërialeve të tija kompromentuese <u>Ka kloillue shkivitet pruique</u>
auti-Porti dhe i tille ant gadit nga portià, aktualisht meragitet me
artintet ormigner auti-Porti, othe Ka ba meset ne vye grup pringer.
15) Tedenca që ka sot Anti-Certi
16) Përcaktimi i pseudonimit Korolani ii Na "607" (ose emri përkëdhelës)
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Houdelmile .
" Shuder "me 10 - Yawer 1959

- Do you accept the charges against you?
- I do not accept them, because I have never been an agent of any foreign intelligence service.

I have never given to anyone any secret information.

I have never tried to overthrow the popular power in Albania.

# What did it happen, that Taho Sejko became such a dangerous person, even planning his kidnapping and disappearance?

It is said that in that meeting, when Nexhmije Hoxha was also present, Taho Sejko said to her:
- People are suffering for a living, while you and your husband have a car. So, something needs to be changed for people, because you are doing bad harm to this country! He spoke so openly, that the others thought he would be chained up at the moment.

# Has your father been surveyed? Do you know anything if there was any informer?

Yes! According to the documents, there were informers from all different categories of people: in "Zëri i Popullit", in the State Planning Commission, in the park directorate of Shkodra. They are a series of official declarations, of course, without using their real identity.

#### Did they use nicknames?

Yes, nicknames. They also reported how many times Taho Sejko has eaten meat.

#### Are you familiar with your father's file?

Yes, I have taken them. My father was arrested in Shkodra Park. The State Security car with three officers went there, threw the blanket on his head, arrested him and took him to Tirana.

My father was asked to go to Fushë Arrëz, to arrange the cars from there to the Ministry of Defence disposal. Beqir Balluku was waiting for him there. But it was a trap. The moment he was arrested, a group of two security officers and the Head of Neighbourhood, Mark Shllaku, came home to check. Mark Shllaku came by bicycle. As a kid, looking at his bicycle, I took it and I joyfully rode to my father's work. There I saw people crowded. It seemed strange to me because there was not any celebration. Someone came close to me and said: -Hektor, do not stay here, go home! He did not tell me what had happened. When I got home, I saw that they were inspecting and filing everything. There was my uncle Sulo, his wife, Nazi, my mother and my uncle. They took letters and photos and at the same time they got a Nagant pistol, war trophies, no bullets, nothing. He had told them the exact place and shelf.

And of course, the bomb had fallen on the house, because it was unbelievable that Taho Sejko could be arrested and taken to Tirana. This is where Taho Sejko's great drama began. From the beginning to the end he didn't accept absolutely anything. Absolutely nothing!

This is the evidence...

#### REPUBLIKA POPULLORE E SHOJPËRISË GJYKATA E LARTË "Kolegji Ushtarak"

147

Nr. 3. i Regj. Themeltar. -Nr. 3. i V e n d i m i t. -

# VENER TË POPULATE

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Këshilli Gjyqsor i Kolegjit Vahtarak të Gjykatës së Lartë, i formuar nën kryesinë e :

N/Kolonel Hilimi Telegraffit, Antar'i Gjykstës Lertë Kolonel Andrea Themeli HdfGjygtar'i " " Kolonel Anden Sheti " " " "

T'asiatuar prej sekretares Vangjeli Terova; dhe me pjesmarjen e Prokurorit Kolonel Vangjel Kacani, prej datës 23-24.II.1962, meri në shqyrtim në seancë gjyqsore me dyer të mbyllura çështjen që i përket di pandehurit:

TAHO SEJUS, 1 biri Mehmetit dhe i Shyqyranes, i datlindjes 1912, lindur në Filat të Çamërisë (Greqi) dhe ne banim në Shkodër, me shtetsi dhe kombësi shqiptare, i martuar me 3 fëmijë, i pa dëmuarë, ish A.P., me orizjinë shoqrore fshatar i pasur me gjëndje nëmpunës, me arsim të lartë, mban dekoratat Çlirimit, Kujtimit, Trimërinë, urdhërin e trimërisë, Yllin Partisan klasit III-të, urdhërin e Flamurit, dhe urdhërin e panës klasit IIX-të, mban gradën kapiten I.-rë në rezervë, dhe i arestuar me dt.28.Korrik 1960.

#### I AKUZUAR:

1. Se ka qënë pjestar i një arganizate armiqësore i cili kr pasur për qëllim rrëzimin e pushtetit populler dhe nënshtrimin e popullit shqiptar shteteve të huaja me anën e një kryesgritje t'armatosur që do të realizohej me pjesmarjen direkte të forceve t'armatosura monarko-fashiste greke, të revizionistëre jugosllav dhe të filotës së gjashtë të SR.B.A. dhe me veprimat e bandave t'armatosura qysh më parë nga jashtë në teritorin e R.P.SE. dhe të njisive t'armatosura që do të krijoheshin nga ana e kësaj e ganizate armiqësore.

2. Eshcë rekrutuar die vënë në shërbim të zbulimit grek e amerikan, ka dhënë informata me karakter sekret shtetëror dhe ka kryer Në këto kondita për të pandehurin Taho Sejko këshilli gjyqsor nuk gjen asnji rrethanë lehtësore, mbasi veprimtaria e këtij të pandehuri ka qënë shumë e gjërë dhe paraqet rrezikshmëri shoqërore tepër të theksuar.

#### PER KETO ARSYE

Këshilli Gjyqsor i Kolegjit Ushtarak të Gjykatës së Lartë, hë mbështetje të neneve 278,279 e 284 të K.Pr.P.

#### VENDOSI:

Të dekllarojë fajtor të pandehurin Taho Sejko për krimin e tradhëtis ndaj atdheut, për organizimin e bandave t'armatosura, për krimin e asjitasionit e propasandës kundër pushtetit popullor, parashikuar nga nenet 64,69 dhe 73 në kombinim me nenin 76 të K.F. dhe e dënon:

e dënon me VDEKJE FUSHKATIM, me kontiskimin e pasurisë së pjesës tij dhe në bazë të neneve 28 të K.P. me bunbjen e së drejtës elektorale për 5 vjet kohë në bazë të nenit 29 të K.P. me heqien e dekoratave dhe në bazë të nenit 34 të K.P. me heqien e gradës ushtarake Kapiten I-rë në rezervë.

Në bazë të nemit 69 në kombinim me nemin 76 të K.P.
e dënon me 25 (njizet e pesë) vjet heqle të liris me konfiskimin
e pasuris pjesën e tij, në bazë të nemit 28 me humbjen e së
drejtës elektorale për 5 vjet kohë, në bazë të nemit 29 të K.P.
me heqlen e dekoratave dhe ne bazë të nemit 34 K.P. me heqlen e
gradës ushtarake kapiten I-rë në rezervë.

Kë bazë të nenit 73 paragrafi I.-rë dhe në kombinim me nenin 76 të K.P. e dënon me 10 (dhjetë) vjet heqie të liris, në bazë të nenit 28 të K.P. me humbjen e së drejtës elektorale për 3 vjet kohë, në bazë të nenit 29 të K.P. me heqien e dekoratave dhe në bazë të nenit 34 të K.P. me heqien e gradës ushtarake kapiten I-rë në rezervë.

Përfundimisht në ba ë të nenit 48 të K.P. duke bërë bashkinin e dënineve,e dënon me VDEKJE PUSHKATIM, me konfiskinin e pashris të pjesës të tij, me humbjen e së drejtës elektorale për 5 (pesë)vjet kohë, me heqien e dekoratave dhe me heqien e gradës ushtarake Kapiten I-rë në rezervë.

I dëmuari Taho Sejko ka të drejtë në bazë të nenit 349 të M.P.P. ti drejtohet për faljen e jetës Presidimit të Kuvendit Popullor mbrënda tre ditve nga shpallja e këtij vendimi. Vendimi për këtë të dëmuar nuk mund të ekzekutchet pa marrë  Tell us about your hostile activity.

#### The answer:

- The Security Services, as they were based on lies in 1946, they are still based on lies against me, on my charge as being a spy.

After my sayings are read and written correctly, I sign them.

#### Yes, you can read it.

Here is what it is written: I, the Lieutenant Colonel Stavri Madhi of Tirana State Security Directorate, investigator, interrogated the convicted Taho Mehmet Sejko, to announce the accusation, date August 8th.

So, on July 28, he was arrested, on August 10, was written the investigation record. The interrogation started at 8:15 and ended at 13:45. Now, this interrogation session that started at 8:15 'and ended at 13:45' has just the following paragraph: "You are accused of being an agent of foreign intelligence for a long time, together with other persons, in an organized way, you have carried out hostile activities which aimed at the violent overthrow of the popular power in Albania, carrying out the tasks of foreign intelligence, you have provided confidential information and recruited other persons".

- Did you hear it, and are you aware of the charge?
- I heard and I am aware of it.
- Do you accept the charge against you?
- I do not accept it, because I have never been an agent of any foreign intelligence service, I have never given to anyone any secret information and I have never tried to overthrow the popular power in Albania.

# The formulated charge would lead him directly to the shooting.

Beyond any doubt, definitely! Now, what happened next?

On 14.11.1960, in the Investigation Office, the director of State Security, Lieutenant Colonel Stavri Madhi wrote down: "I interrogated the accused Taho Sejko. The interrogation started at 9 o'clock and ended at 10 o'clock". This interrogation session has been shorter ... He might have been tortured; there's no any other explanation!

Here is another document where it is written: - Tell us about your hostile activity.

- Comrade, it is better to take your children with you and leave, because now they are without a father but can be without a mother as well. If we did not leave Tirana straight away, my mother would be put in prison

Since that moment, it was May 1961, for a long time, about 5-6 months, we did not move from Shkodra. We did not move out of fear, because they said:

- If you will come, your place will be in prison!

Answer: - The Security Forces, just as they were based on lies in 1946, they also today base on lies against me, on my charge as a spy. After my statements are read and are written correctly, I sign them.

Have you been notified by the state authorities about this whole procedure, about the trial, elimination? What do you know about this?

We have never been notified and something unusual happened on that trial. On May 15 or 16, 1961, the trial for the "Cham group" begun in Tirana. In this trial, my father's name was mentioned, but he was not physically there. He was mentioned as has founded and was the Head of this group.

Afterward, my mother takes the three of us, me and my two sisters and we came back to Tirana. Her only intention of our returning was to find out the way how to help her husband. At my grand-

mother's house, a floor above, lived a family and their son-in-law, named Sasha, who was a well-known lawyer, but he was a sort of dog of Sigurimi - a State Security collaborator.

He came downstairs and this conversation took place. He told us: -I came for a particular reason. What Teme Sejko has done, he knows it by himself, he will give his explanations, I do not know, I cannot talk on his behalf. But what he says in his brother's address has nothing, absolutely nothing true!

He told us that Teme Sejko had revealed it all, talked about all of them. Then, we figured out that this trial was hold after a general rehearsal as those for theatrical shows. A general rehearsal was done for the trial!

#### Why did Teme Sejko accept this farce?

How should I know, why he did it! Maybe, he accepted it under torture or deception! But what has

forced him, is very difficult to be found out. First of all, he has admitted faults that he had never committed.

Half an hour after this conversation, the police came to pick us up and take us to "Selvia", where the Tirana police directorate was. My mother was kept at the officer office, asking questions for two hours, as he was an investigator. At the end, I bear in mind something unusual. As soon as the officer left the office of his Chief, he said under voice: - Comrade, it is better to take your children with you and leave, because now they are without a father but they can be without a mother as well.

The police accompanied us to the Ministry of Interior, lifted us in the car and a policemen accompanied and stayed with us, up to Vora, so that we would not go down anywhere.

The problem was that if we did not leave Tirana straight away, my mother would be put in prison.

My mother wanted to say just two words in the Supreme Court and in the Popular Assembly: What Teme Sejko said about himself, he is self-conscious, but what he said about the others has absolutely nothing true!

Since that moment, it was May 1961, for a long time, about 5-6 months, we did not move from Shkodra. Normally we did not move out of fear, because they said: - If you will come, your place will be in prison!

#### An open menace

So, Taho Sejko was mentioned in court, but Taho Sejko was not there physically. At that time three versions were rumoured: Taho Sejko was shot; Taho Sejko fell and bumped his head on the wall and died and the last one that Taho Sejko had gone mad. Now...

My mother, considering those three versions, sent three telegrams to Kadri Hazbiu, asking him an appointment, to find out the truth about what has happened to him. It was hold the trial, his name was mentioned but he was nowhere.

#### Was it your father's trial or Teme Sejko's?

My uncle's trial, Teme's.

#### Did your father have a lawsuit?

Just a minute, now I'm going to tell you about the trial process. The story of the trial has its specificity. Since my mother sent three telegrams to Kadri Hazbiu and he did not appointed her a meeting, my mother was called by the Internal Branch and she was asked: What was the reason that you comrade, addressed three telegrams to Kadri Hazbiu, and asked him for a meeting? My mother tried to explain her one, two and three reasons...- There are many rumours around. We want to know the truth, what has happened to him?

Feçor Shehu replied: - If we had executed him shot, we wouldn't be afraid to tell you that. If he had died, people could die either being outside or inside.

If he would have gone mad, he would be neither for you nor for us. We would tell you "Go to Elbasan, you can find him there". And his last words: - Go, bring up those children, this is Party's concern.

This is Party's concern! That's all! So, we are in front of this dilemma: a convicted man, a person whose name is mentioned in a trial, he didn't show up in person, an unusual rumour around and finally you are answered in that way! The question is: did we like that answer? We really did, that we found hope inside it: He was alive!

My mother said to him: - I am stacked. I cannot go to Tirana, I cannot travel. He replied: - You are a citizen of the Republic. From today and on, you have the right to go wherever you want, as by your needs.

This kind of release, made my mother run to Tirana, asked for a meeting with the General Prosecutor, to discuss about her husband's cause.

She said to him: - Comrade Prosecutor, I came here for a very simple reason. I will make a deci-

sion for my children, but I want to hear with my own ears what Taho Sejko says about his hostile activity. We have lived together for 16 years; I met him during the war. He has been my husband and my friend and I do not have the slightest doubt about this.

The prosecutor replied: - Taho Sejko has had bad beliefs since the war time, from time to time. And those beliefs surely would lead him to that course. But you cannot participate in Taho Sejko's trial, because it will be held behind closed doors.

My mother said: - Comrade Prosecutor, do you believe in what you are saying? You have held Teme Sejko's trial opened to the public, who was the Director of Army Intelligence. And you will held Taho Sejko's trial behind closed doors, who was simply the Head of the Economic Editorial office of "Zeri Popullit" and director of Shkodra Park? Where are the secrets of Taho Sejko?

Where? In "Zeri I Popullit" magazine, which I read by the whole world?

The answer was null:

- The trial will be closed!

During all those times, full of rumours about my father's story, my aunt came directly from Durres to visit us. She lived in Tirana, but came from Durrës. Why? At the prison's hospital in Tirana, a Cham nurse called my aunt and said to her: -Do you want to see Taho? – Of course! The nurse said: -I will give you a piece of paper for Dr. Vokopola, but listen, you will go, you will give him the letter and wherever they'll say you to sit you'll stay still. Do not you even try to stand up, say anything or talk to him. So was my aunt instructed and she gave the letter to her.

I think that all that was all made-up by the State Security Service, because no man would ever dare, without considering any nurse, to do such a thing. More than ever, on those times!

My aunt went to Durrës, handed in the letter to doctor Vokopola and he said to the nurse there:

Feçor Shehu replied: - If we had executed him shot, we wouldn't be afraid to tell you that. If he had died, people could die either being outside or inside. If he would have gone mad, he would be neither for you nor for us. We would tell you "Go to Elbasan, you can find him there".

Go, bring up those children, this is Party's concern!

The prosecutor replied:
- Taho Sejko has had
bad beliefs since the war
time, from time to time.
And those beliefs surely
would lead him to that
course.

You cannot participate in Taho Sejko's trial, because it will be closed. -Give her a uniform and let her sit there. It was not much time passed, when a car noise was heard my aunt said - and Taho came along with Ali Xhelo Harapi. He was one of the convicted persons in court; he was physically in his trial. They were chained hands in hands and two security officers stayed on their both sides. They both were dressed in English fabric suits - she said.

Taho's suit was okay but his friend's was completely torn. Dr. Vokopola visited them and told to the officers that for the first one, nothing was left to do, he had gone mad ...and he found Taho in better conditions than before, but there was no special room to keep him there.

My aunt came and told us about this conversation full of joy, not joy but an extraordinary happiness!

#### That your father turned out to be alive?

Yes! After that, another event occurred. Zef Bala, Shkodra Park's driver, had an accident. The cable of the loaded trunks broke and he injured his spinal cord. They sent him to Tirana. At that time, a doctor from Romania had come to Tirana, and Zef Bala's friends made possible Bala's visit with that doctor. Zefi told us in person this: -I entered the anteroom, where the doctor was and I saw Taho Sejko at the right, sitting amid two men, two civilians, Security Service Officers. Yes I saw him! And he saw me and I thought at the moment, I'll talk to him, that I am injured ... How are you comrade Taho? He replied: -Well, Zef, well!

Yes, that's it! Now, all these information were the first ones on those circumstances, this new situation.

After that, certainly, the rumours did not end, they continued in all forms, in all ways. Not less, but a lot. Information came from different sources of various kinds- he was here, he was there, he has cooperated with the Security Services, he works with the Security Services etc. All these kinds of information lasted until 1990. My mother died in December 1984. It was up to me to find out any information about my father.

# Finally, in January 1991, I received this criminal certificate, according to which we found out that Taho Sejko has been shot.

# He has been SHOT!

## Did you have any other official information?

Besides those chats, which were of different variety, we had no other information. Shortly before my mother died, we found out something else. My son-in-law worked in Rrenc with Mark Dodani's nephew, who was a state security guard. Mark Dodan's nephew said to my son-in-law:

- Tonin, my uncle came last night and I mentioned you, that you have married someone's daughter. My uncle told me that the one, Taho, came from Greece, He accompanied him himself, sent him to Tirana and he met all the Party's dignitaries.

# Who were these functionaries? Enver and his comrades?

It seems like that, who else could they be? Who else would he talk about? Completely made-up lies! All those stories I am telling to you are lies, because it was all confirmed later. Why was that kind of situation made up, I do not know. I do not know the reason why, there's no way for me to know. It's not written anywhere, so I do not know. There are no witnesses, they no longer exist.

#### They are dead...

Even those who have been alive didn't speak. Then, in December 1990, I sent a telegram to Ramiz Alia, asking for information on my father' case. A response letter came, to go to the Ministry of Interior. An officer waited for me there and I said to him: - I want to know the truth about my father, Taho Sejko. -Why, you don't know the truth? - the officer replied. - Do I look like an idiot to you, to know the truth and still come here and ask for it? If I only knew, I would not ask. I explained to the officer the entire story in short.

Three days after my mother died, a person came and told us, "Taho was at the funeral, hiding behind a tree. He was hiding behind a tree! He wanted to convince us that Taho was alive!

#### It seems to be a working method: Create the legend of being alive and thus cover the crime.

Yes, yes, the legend that he was alive. The story goes on. The funeral was at two and a half, but as going to Shtoj cemetery, it was beginning to get dark, because it was winter, December, it got dark... completely dark...and this man came and told us lies totally at ease: - He has been hiding behind a tree.

# In May 1961 Kadri Hazbiu reports:

- Taho Sejko doesn't speak yet. He, not only weakens to some extent the legal process to be made public, but it hinders the disclosure of facts that he, as an element, is aware.

By the deadline we will try hard to make him speak out.

To date, among the 38 detained, only 22 spoke including the main ones, except to Taho Sejko, the others spoke only to some extent, ten didn't speak at all, consequently, in order to make them speak out, it would take us a longer time.

### It had been a quarter of a century since your father was arrested?

Exactly 24 years! They continued to deceive us ... We went on living with a dream. My mother died with her great and exceedingly hope and belief that this man lived. Where he was, nobody knew, but he was alive...

#### Did you have any official statement?

Absolutely nothing! Absolutely nothing! Apart from those rumours around, what was the motive, even today I am not able to know the reason why.

Based on what Feçor Shehu said, "we can kill him anytime, we're not afraid; people die inside and outside, and they say he is dead; if he would have gone mad ..." All these three versions were rejected by the Head of the Internal Affairs Branch, who later became the Minister of Interior and Security of the Albanian State. It was created such a tangled situation; I don't know what to say... Finally, in January 1991, I received this criminal certificate, according to which we found out that Taho Sejko had been shot.

He has been shot!!

Here it is, read it, that I find it a little difficult to read.

### Based on Decision number 3, dated 24, second, 1962.

Yes. In 1962.

Decision of the High Court, for treason, for providing information to foreign intelligence, for agitation and propaganda, according to articles 64, 67, 76 of the Code of Procedure, executed to shot. Confiscation of...

His belonging part of the property. They have seized us everything! They left nothing!

#### What about this? Electoral law...?

For 5 years. After being shot, he has no right to vote for 5 years!

But, he is dead! ... His military rank is annulled. Executed on 13 March 1962;

#### So he had died since '62?!

Tirana, January 29, 1991. So, as soon as democracy came, this was the first information, showing democracy, that they had never been given before?!

No place was left looking for my father. In '62 he was shot, it is noted in '62... There is no shooting record, I don't know what happened to him...

# Has anyone been willing to talk about the situation regarding the arrest, the shooting and the disappearance?

In June 1992 I came to Tirana, assigned as sub-officer of the Republic Guard. The objective I set to myself was to bring out the truth about my father's case. Pjetër Arbnori, in '94 helped me to meet the president of the Court of Cassation to get the file of Taho Sejko.

### Who was the President of the Court of Cassation?

Zef Brozi. He gave me permission in '96 to use the materials of the general directorate of the Central State Archive regarding Mehmet Sejko, Taho Sejko, Teme Sejko, Rexhep Plaku, and Alush Taka. This is the support given to me by Pjetër Arbnori through Kolec Topalli intercession.

Here there is: "The archive of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Directorate of State Security, the first branch, file 278 top secret, series C2, Tirana, 24/3/1961."

It's all that Kadri Hazbiu reports regarding the case. A month or two before Teme Sejko appeared in court.

### The trial of Teme Sejko was held in May 1961, right?

Yes, in May 1961. Then what does Kadri Hazbiu report here? Beside the other things: -Taho Sejko doesn't speak yet. He, not only weakens to some extent the legal process to be made public, but

In 1994, a former State Security officer, of Cham origin, came and looked for me at the Presidency of the Assembly.

- I came here to meet Taho Sejko's son, to tell a truth.

Do you know what the last torture they did to your father was?
I stayed still for a moment and looked at him.

- The final torture they did was that they gouged out his eyes. it hinders the disclosure of facts that he, as an element, is aware.

By the deadline we will try hard to make him speak out. To date, among the 38 detained, only 22 spoke including the main ones, except to Taho Sejko, the others spoke only to some extent, ten didn't speak at all, consequently, in order to make them speak out, it would take us longer time.

So until March 1962, Kadri Hazbiu reports that Taho Sejko did not speak at all. That is, during 1961 he did not declare anything.

The file that I have on hand, documents I could get from the State Archive, Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Foreign Affairs, are more than 1200 pages in total. Of course those documents do not enclose information only regarding to my father, but also my uncle and my uncle's son.

I have shared with you some of the spiciest things. In these documents, one thing that impressed me a lot, that he has written them himself, it's his handwriting, he has made some lines over it with a pencil. It is written two days before the trial would begin, two or three days.

#### Date 12/5/1961.

Yes, the 5th, 1961, 3 days before Temes's trial!

So, on May 15, 1961, the trial of Teme Sejko began.

What is written there? Did he or others write in pencil?

No, that is his!

"By the unhuman slanders of our country's people ...", so, this expression is his?

Through this, he has responded to the state. It's on file. I do not know how many records there are, asking to postpone the investigation, because after the trial of Teme Sejko was over, the investigator of Taho Sejko was Ferhat Matohiti.

In the end, they have compiled a file, where this person, who previously didn't accept anything, suddenly had accepted all of them.

#### Where is this file?

I have a complete investigation and legal file. In the court file, there is everything what Teme Sejko, Tahir Demi and the others have testified. Everything is in there, and it turns out that Taho Sejko accepts everything. Come on, he accepted them, how did he accept them, if he accepted them, which part was it...

They must have tortured him. He was not brought to the trial of Teme Sejko, but his name was mentioned there. On the other hand, there are many records that have delayed the investigation to make him speak out, as they note in that document, so definitely all this time of "making him speak out" must have been a time of tortures.

The important clue to me is the three-member panel. One of them was Andon Sheti. As soon as I saw the name, I went and met him. I told him that I had nothing personal with him, because he has been forced, has been payed and has fulfilled the assigned duty, but I wanted to know the truth.

He told me: - Here, in this document, there is absolutely nothing true. I did not participate in that trial ... It would be a great pleasure to give you any information about your father's trial ... But there is absolutely nothing real there. This is not my signature. I did not sign here and I was not present at this trial.

#### This is a creepy mafia...

That is, they have also manipulated the court file. There was no trial at all! They have written some letters, somebody has signed, that there are three signatures.

So, this trial is not real, but the person has been arrested, kept in the Investigation premises, tortured ... What is the reason that for 31 years this man has been kept hidden? This trial, without the shooting record, is false. What happened to my father I do not know, that my investigation comes across a wall? The wall is all the rubbish of the State Security and the Albanian government, who

have stained their hands with the blood of the innocent people and refuse to tell the truth.

In 1994, a former State Security officer, of Cham origin, came and looked for me at the Presidency of the Assembly. He told me: - I came to meet you, the son of Taho Sejko, to tell you a truth. Do you know what the last torture they did to your father was?

I stayed still for a moment and looked at him.

- They gouged out his eyes.

#### Oh my god!

Do you understand? What happened to this man, to this human? What was his fault? What is the reason we have not been told for 31 years? What is the reason we were moved to Shkodra and not interned? I can never forget it! My 80-yearold grandmother, out of three sons she had, none remained. Two were arrested and eliminated on the same day. The other died drowning in a well. Uncle Sulo died in 1963 and she died in 1964. I could never forget that scene as long as I live: A carriage, a horse, a cartman, a coffin and three people in the back. I, her sole nephew, she had other nephews, but there was only me, Ramiz Draçini, the neighbour and Kujtim Demi, our relative who lived in Shkodra and my father had helped to come and alleviate the situation in Shkodra. These were the three persons who were burying the mother of three boys, who was left without any! Without any!

# As if by chance, you would meet those who have killed and disappeared your relative, how would you feel? How would you have reacted?

Yes, I'm saying it plainly, I have declared it frankly. When I opened the files to look for the last investigator, Ferhat Matohiti, I was an officer of the Republic Guard, with a gun on my waist.

Ferhat Matohiti used to come and pass in front of the Presidency of the Assembly every day and it has never come to my mind and never will to do something bad to him. I can never forget it!
My 80-year-old
grandmother, out of
three sons she had, none
remained.

Two were arrested and eliminated on the same day. The other died drowning in a well. A carriage, a horse, a cartman, a coffin and three people in the back burying the mother of three boys, who was left without any! Without any!

I believe in God! I believe in God! The real people who did this have suffered their end to one another. I cannot do anything beyond my beliefs and to the man I am. Believing in God I live the justice in His hands.

Only Xhemal Selimi has paid his sins. Xhemal has been declared in Shkodra. He killed someone and broke the nuts in his head. But the man from Dukagjin won't forgive this humiliation.

In every society there are rules of conduct towards the dead body, prohibition of violation, desecration, and respect for the gone.

### Now, I'd like to know, do you keep any personal belonging of your father?

Everything he had in the house was seized and confiscated. Two costumes left I readjusted and fitted them to my size, because I had no other choice. The vast majority of things, we were forced to sell them for a living.

I have one last beautiful thing from my father. My friend, Gjovalin Filipi has found his father's work book in Shkodra. There, my father, continuously, had written with his own handwriting, the works he had done from 1945 to 1960.

I also have some letters, photos...

# Since you got this stamp of "bad biography" how did people see you? What about the authorities? Have you been considered different?

In 1968, when I was released from the army, I lost my job and after trying hard I managed to get work document for the regional factory in Shkodra, which was located behind the wire factory.

I was told to go in September that the chief of Human Resources was on leave. I went in September and there was a meeting of the work staff discussing about my work, because I was the nephew of someone and the son of someone, so would they accept me or not. Fortunately, the man chairing the meeting said, "What do you think, do I agree?" So I started working on three shifts.

### Did you have any support from friends or were you under surveillance?

We have had friends and I will not forget them as long as I live. We were left without a salary, Taho Sejko's driver, Angjelin Toska, used to send his wife, Lucie, when it was dark and give two thousand ALL(Albanian Lek), three thousand ALL... He has given us bread! At the time when they took us all and we did not even have bread to eat. He did something extraordinary. I could never forget Çelin Toska and Luçe.

When my father was arrested, my mother told me: - Be careful son, we are here alone. Anything good and bad do it to yourself, not to anyone else.

#### Have you missed your father in your life?

Ah, a lot! I adore my father - a man who didn't know what servility was, didn't know it absolutely. A man who said to communism "You are wrong here and there..." It is hard to find such a man today, but a man who was self-punished.

# Even with three children he did not compromise, because he could have remained silent, for your sake.

Speaking out he is self-punished. My mother told me: - I have told your father more than 100 times "Do not speak! Do not speak, man! Do not talk, because you see what they are doing! " "I will speak out what I feel inside me, I am not afraid ..."

#### Did you feel his presence?

My father has been close to me all my life, even today while we are talking together. His presence to me is unique. Even when I say my name, I say Hector Taho Sejko. He sacrificed his life just for us. If Taho Sejko would go and testify in court...

### Do you think they would have put you in prison?

No, no, I would not be alive today! I assure you! It's his merit and his ability. The moment a person admits guilt that he has never committed; he has punished not only himself but his family too.



They used to take me out in front of the platoon commander and mention my father and uncle, every time:

The enemy's son, the enemy's nephew, he doesn't want to work ...



His stance convicted him, but not the family! He was convicted because he was destined to be killed. He could not get out of there alive; he absolutely could not get out alive. With the stance he held, with his resistance, logic leads me to the conclusion that he has protected us.

### In which moments did you feel most of your father's absence?

I felt it when I had no bread to eat at home and my mother would take the two sisters to bed and tell them: -Hector is going to borrow some money to buy bread and I am telling you a story until he comes; I felt it when in the second grade of high school I had no shirt to wear and I went to school with sweaters and the school principal took me out in front of the whole school; I felt the absence of my father when I was forced at that time, at that age to go to work on the farm, was forced to go to work in the brick factory; I felt when I was a soldier that I was taken out in front of the platoon commander, that being 49 kilos I was not able to cut trunks with a 5 m<sup>2</sup> axe. It was impossible to cut it. They used to take me out in front of the platoon commander and mention my father and uncle, every time: The enemy's son, the enemy's nephew, he doesn't want to work...

### How did you expect the communism collapse?

It has been the greatest joy of my life, the greatest. After my children were born, this event was the greatest joy I have experienced in my life. There are many people who have had material benefits

from democracy, but I am happy with my spiritual ones.

The Democratic Party establishment took away my fear. I was no longer afraid, that is, I revealed myself. The Democratic Party victory, in March 1992, brought my freedom. Through democracy's victory, I put in place my family integrity, which I value much more than all the properties that some people have. The democracy put my family dignity in place.

### Do you know anything about your father's grave and have you tried to find the bury location?

I know absolutely nothing, although I have tried hard.

# Do you have any hope that state authorities will help to find the location and exhume your father's bones?

No hope. I consider it lost.

#### When do you think this story will end?

When my life will end. Wherever I go, whatever I do, whatever I say, I have the most difficult obligation - to keep my father's name alive. It's too heavy. He has paid with his life; I owe this to him, to keep his name alive!

### Thank you very much Hektor for your interview.

I thank you very much, too.

Wherever I go, whatever I do, whatever I say, I have the most difficult obligation:
To keep my father's name alive. It's too heavy.
He has paid with his life; I owe this to him, to keep his name alive!



# Missing person: Riza Dani

**Sufferers:** From his family, his brother, **Dan Hasani** and his two sons, **Xhevat** and **Xhelal**, suffered long time imprisonment and internments.



Riza together with his brother Dan Hasani, were the initiators of flag-raising in Shkodra, in 1913 together with the compatriots, his family friends Luigj Gurakuqi, Father Gjergj Fishta, Dom Ndre Mjeda, Maliq Bushati, etc.

In 1921 Riza was elected member of the first Albanian Parliament; he was re-elected in 1924, and Noli Government appointed him Prefect of Durrës. When King Zog took over, being an opponent of his platform, Riza fled first to Italy and then to Austria.

Together with other patriots, they fought for the country liberation and after and end of II<sup>nd</sup> World War, on 2 December 1945, he elected member of the Parliament once more.

On December 31, 1947, Riza Dani was sentenced to death by shooting for conspiracy against the state.

His body has not been found yet, but according to his relatives, it may have been buried at the place known as "Varri Bamit". But it is also possible in Linza.

The whole family was persecuted; their property was confiscated and went through the ordeal internment.

# Testimony of **Kujtim Dani**\*, **Riza Dani**'s nephew

# Shkodra's son, Member of Parliament, elected in three elections, buried but no grave

#### Oblivion is the second murder of these people!

Interviewed by Marçel Hila

Dear Mr. Kujtim, thank you for taking your time to share your memories as a relative of Mr. Riza Dani, one of the many martyrs who died unjustly sentenced by the communist regime. What can you tell us about his life and what do you know about the reasons why he was arrested and convicted by the regime?

I think oblivion is the second murder of these people. Riza was an honest citizen of Shkodra, patriot and a true intellectual. He descended from a civic family form Shkodra, from generations. I have extracted the history of my family tree and I know that Danaj family has lived in Shkodra since the 16th century and a bit earlier. Our origin is from the upper Gojan of Puka and moved to Nenshat during the war, even the Catholic Danaj and Çobaj come from the same father.

I possess some documents, written by Dan Hasani and Riza Dani. Riza had studied at a university in Istanbul and graduated in administration. During his university years he had contacts with patriotic groups and with the other Albanians living, working or studying in Istanbul, Turkey. When he came back to Albania, to Shkodra, he got involved with patriotic groups with his brother, Dan Hasani.

During 1908-1912, Riza Dani was a member of the club "Albanian Language" in Shkodra, with his family friends: Father Gjergj Fishta, Luigj Gurakuqi, Dom Ndre Mjeda and Maliq Bushati. They have been very close family friends. In 1913, together with his brother, Dan Hasani, they were the initiators of the flag raising in Shkodra, showing to the Montenegrins and Serbs that Shkodra is part of Albania, it is one and the same with Vlora and with the flag-rising in Vlora.

In 1914, with other distinguished personalities such as Sotir Peci, Hoxha Kadri and others, Riza was the initiator of the establishment of the "Secret Committee" with the main task to fight against the risk of fragmentation and loss of Albanian independence, focusing on the protection of Shkodra from Montenegrin and Serbian menace.

Together with other nationalists and patriots, they

<sup>\*</sup>Kujtim Dani passed away some months after this interview.

established the political organization "National Wing", which later, in 1921, became a parliamentary party, while Riza Dani represented Shkodra, elected as a Member of Parliament.

In Shkodra was established "Kosovo Committee" under the leadership of the noble patriot Hoxha Kadria and members: Hamit Gjylbegu, Riza Dani, Hysni Curri and Eqerem Begolli. In 1918, this Committee in its national movement was widely assisted by the American Red Cross. In the Congress of Durrës, Hoxha Kadria, Riza Dani and Qerim Begolli were members of the Committee. Even in 1924 he was re-elected Member of the Parliament, together with the nationalists and co-patriots as: Luigj Gurakuqi, Father Gjergj Fishta, Dom Ndre Mjeda, Maliq Bushati etc., he was also appointed Prefect of Durrës district by Noli's government.

When King Zog came to power, Riza was against his platform and was in opposition. Despite the support of his brother, Dan Hasani, one of the greatest merchants, a well-known benefactor in Shkodra and a man who had popular support even the mill that was at the entrance of Shkodra, at Buna Bridge, was called "Vllaznit Dani/Dani Brothers" - Riza was forced to leave the homeland. He stayed in Zara for a short time and then moved to Graz, Austria. He stayed in exile for 15 years, during the time that king Zog was in power.

It's a beautiful episode that I think it should be mentioned. On a cold winter day, February 1931, Sejfi Vllamasi and Xhevat Korça went to Graz. Both of them were Riza's brothers-in-law, because the three of them were married to three sisters. Xhevat Korça had killed Ceno Beg Kryeziu in Prague, Zog's brother-in-law, because he had married king Zog's sister. They went to his house and Riza opened the door. -Why did you come for, in this cold weather? - he asked. -Listen! - they said. -Ahmet Zogu has come to Vienna for medical treatment and we have decided to carry out his assassination. Riza answers: -Then, I won't open the door for you to come in. I am surprised, you, being nationalists and patriots... how did you come up here, to my house, knowing

On December 31, '47, while the whole world tries to enjoy the New year's Eve, the trial of Riza Dani and the 11 others took place:
No defence attorneys, no public, just a room, where was read what the Investigation Office had prepared. He was charged of conspiracy against the state!

# The file record of the

my principle against the act of assassination, as an ugly and not manly crime, especially committed in a foreign country? This is how the Chetnik and Bolshevik guerrillas act: kill behind the scenes, especially in a foreign country. We must come together and make a better plan than that of King Zog, for Albania recuperation and development and present it to the Parliament. If we win, we will overthrow king Zog through our votes and not with such an ignominious assassination. You have no place in here! He shut the door to them and refused to let them in.

Riza has never been wavered or compromised about his convictions. He has never said, "Well, we can do it like this or like that". He was very strict, honest, and fair man.

the occupiers and for its reconstruction. He took part in the meeting of Tapiza in '43, where the National Salvation Committee was established. Its program was Albanian liberation in its borders of 1913 and to have the universal right to self-determination. These were the basics of this Committee. These are the official documented evidences. Then as unfairly happens, history is always written by the winners. But this is not what happened.

Riza Dani on elections of 2 December, '45 was elected as Parliamentary Member, for the third time, representing Shkodra. As far as I know, with no intention to vault the man of my blood, but I have never heard of a man, like Riza Dani, to be elected for three times: in '21, '24, and '46. This gives me a moral right to think that his character

# notes: "Riza Dani, as a

After the Italian invasion of Albania, in '39, Riza came back for good and joined the patriots and nationalists, to fight against the foreign invaders and liberate the country. He did not agree to the government of Shefqet Vërlaci either that of Mustafa Kruja. In both governments, Xhevat Korça was a minister and Sejfi Vllamasi an employee. I have read his book where he notes: "I was got there, after Xhevati asked me because I was unemployed".

Riza jointly with the Albanian democrats and nationalists participated in the Democratic National Liberation Front for the country liberation from

had patriotic axis. He was unwavering, he wasn't like "I'm going here, I'm going there..."

There is another thing I have heard 4 years ago, in parliament, where someone declared: Riza Dani gets 7680 votes for Shkodra, while his opponent Tuk Jakova, member of the Communist Party leadership gets 7078 votes. It was a document from the state archives.

There were many major problems for running the country after war. The organs of the new government were inexperienced. Many orders and measures did not serve to the establishment of

# the people, did not acc

# Investigation Office

a normal State, but they were carried out with initiatives and in secret, they were inconceivable and chaotic.

Riza and Gjergj Kokoshi also discussed about imprisoning and shootings without any trial or just by an order on a piece of paper, full of intellectuals, names of patriots, clergy, students, merchants, landlords, militaries, clerks, citizens and highlanders and country men with patriotic social authority. Every attempt for democracy, for patriotic pluralism and opposition in the constitutional assembly and outside it, was not supported. Democrat nationalists and intellectual citizens were engaged in the Democratic Front, hoping for the establishment of a social democratic system. They were not supported, left in silence and even rejected.

# an enemy of

Riza Dani realized that after the sacrifices and the shed blood, Albania had been liberated from the foreign invader, but unfortunately it was being enslaved by a Slavo-communist system that was penetrating with such a sneakiness and cruelty. The group of Democratic Parliamentary Members: Gjergj Kokoshi, Riza Dani, Nikol Prela, Sheh Karbonara, etc., were in contacts with intellectual groupings and opposition organizations set up in the middle of 1945, in Shkodra and other cities.

Uran Butka in his book "The first uprising against communism" testifies: "A family friend went to visit Riza at his home, that he was ill and during their conversation, asked him about how things were in Tirana. He replied "bad, very bad"! The government has enacted new laws that aren't appropriate to people needs. I opposed them, but parliament approved them by a majority. You will read them when they'll be published. They are laws that "degendisin". "Degendis" is a very old word, but a popular term in Shkodra that means "harm". They harm people's moral, religion and wealth. You will read them when they'll be published. I told them that these laws are for Russian communism and not for Albanian people. "

I want to answer to that question asked at the beginning, what was the reason that made Riza Dani react. He says "these are Russian laws for the Albanian people. "This is indeed a communist government."

At the meeting of July 6, 1946 held in Shkodra, Riza Dani was the keynote speaker, the Parliamentary member representing Shkodra, who spoke about people's difficult situation, they were suffering injustice, their land was being taken away, big and small traders were failing because of heavy taxes. The industrialists were being deprived of their wealth without any reward and were suffering the same end of big traders. It was reached the peak of people's despair, all around Albania "When we held the assembly in the Democratic Front for the liberation of the country, it wasn't like this". Afterward he spoke about the censorship of the freedoms of speech and that of the press: "It is forbidden even the slightest criticism, otherwise you'll be arrested as a reactionary man". He spoke about the necessity to organize a general uprising.

Doctor Pjetër Pepa, Member of Parliament, has

# cept to sign anything."

Rizai and others, 8 men altogether, were shot, dumped into a pit and covered.

They were shot early in the morning. Someone's leg and arm was left out.

The next night, Aunt
Feti went there dug
and found his clothes
that she, herself, had
sent to him in prison.
On the cuff of his
pyjamas, she touched
something solid and
pulled out eight tied,
written cigarette's
rolling papers.

published, literally, the discussions on meeting of the Assembly in his book.

On January 10, 1946, convened the Constitutional Assembly, with the participation of the first representatives of the Albanian people, who emerged from the elections of December 2, 1945, gathered in a common hall. There were representatives of the Democratic Front, Communist Party, Democrat Nationalist and patriots emerged as independent candidates. Out of 82 representatives, only 48 members had the membership card of the Albanian Communist Party. The rest, were the Democratic Front, independent nationalists.

On January 12, 1946 the meeting of this Assembly was chaired by Tuk Jakova. The first in the agenda was the election of the Assembly Presidium. Riza Dani refused the list proposed by Kahreman Ylli. After long debates, it was decided a new list, missing the name of Enver and others. He listed the names of Sheh Karbunara, Aleksandër Xhuvani, Kolë Kuqali and other nationalists, patriots and not communists.

During the discussion of the Assembly, about the draft regulation, the MP Riza Dani boldly argued with Koçi Xoxa and Enver and asked for the publication of the full meetings minutes, in the official newspaper, so that the people would know what was discussed there. Then, on March 6, 1946, when the draft statute was being discussed, Riza Dani opposed it as being anti-national and as being drafted with a communist ideological spirit.

"I will be as brief as possible, considering that the Assembly does not like long deliberations, and the words would not change anything when the fact is obvious" - these are the original words of Riza that Dr. Pepa extracted from the meeting minutes records, that are in the People's Assembly. "Our statute has two strong, excellent and full of heroism founds. The liberation war on one hand and the Democratic Front on the other. This double found has certainly dictated the draft statute, but the liberation war of the Democratic Front has had and still has more a national character than an ideological character. People, regardless of their

class or beliefs have fought, so that the Democratic Front would resist. The Front is nothing but a union of people, parties and inclinations for the liberation war and for country reconstruction. Any kind of ideological colour that the Front can take, will lead to its vanishing and alteration into a simple party with its respective colour. The statute obviously is drafted with an ideological and political spirit, also from a socio-economic perspective. I, personally, am in support of a free democracy and apparently I would like our statute to be inspired by this principle too. "

To be honest, from my understanding since 1992, I, in person, am proud of the courage and calm Riza Dani showed in those parliamentary debates. He was very human, intellectual and had a genuine patriotism.

There is a witness of Mërgim Korça, told to him by his brother, Genc Korça, who fled to America early on.

"One day, Riza, who was my aunt's husband, was waiting for my brother, Genc, to give him the speech he would deliver the next day in parliament, to take his opinion. My brother replied: Mr. Riza, I am young and have no political experience, so it would be better to take someone else's opinion. Riza objected and insisted that he would read it and then asked for his remarks. After reading it, Genci replied: Mr. Riza, it is a beautiful and strong speech, but you should bear in mind that if you read this speech in parliament, you will be shot! These were literally Mërgim Korca's words that were told by his brother. Afterwards, Riza calmly replied: "I know! I completely agree with you, but do you know why I asked you to read it? Because I want a youngster to know that I was fully cold-blooded and fully conscious, when I wrote this speech. To the point, I want you to be a witness, and to testify in the future, in the Parliament, that the words I used in my speech, were not unintended or that I was nervous, but that I am fully responsible of what I am going to say and what will happen next".

He was guided on the principle that the MP

After Riza's arrest, the next day were arrested all the men of the house: Dan Hasani, Xhevat Danin, Xhelal Danin, 16 years old, while Dan's two elder sons, Hasan and Qemal Dani, who were studying abroad when World War II broke out, in '43, they fled in Canada and America.

Dan Hasani was sentenced to 5 years. Xhevat Dani, was sentenced to 10 years because he translated into German language, he was considered as serving to Germans. He was interned in 7 internment camps: Maliq, Beden of Kavaja and some others. Even Xhelal, despite his young age, was arrested and sentenced to 3 years.

should give explanation to his own honour and conscience, not like the communists to the Party in Parliament.

In general, all these were contrary to guidelines and directives of Yugoslav communism, since the establishment of the Albanian Communist Party in 1941 and their plans to admit Albania as the seventh Yugoslav Republic. They did not prefer the nationalists who believed in an independent Albania. Riza Dani and the other intellectuals of Shkodra, in cooperation with the PM Gjergj Kokoshi and other men, in agreement with the leaders of the northern areas, organized a general, well-studied uprising in northern Albania for September 16, 1946.

#### **Postriba Uprising?**

The Uprising of Postriba took place in 9 September. This uprising would be joined by forces from Kallmet and Lezhë regions, Mirditë and Puka, Zadrimë, Nënshat, Postriba and the Saint Bridge, Dukagjin and Shosh, Koplik and Zagore, Malësi e Madhe and Kelmend. The extent of this uprising was very optimistic. It was drafted a Memorandum, presented to the Allies and handed over to the American and British missionaries. This coincided with the Paris Peace Conference, held on 8 September. On the evening of September 8, a friend from Postriba comes to dinner and says: -Riza effendi (Mr.), Postriba has decided to attack Shkodra tomorrow at dawn. Riza reacts: - No way! You have no forces, no weapons. You are only a few men! We have organized it all for the next week, on 16. Kallmet and Lezha region people will cut off all telephone lines, those of Nënshkodra will block the forces from Lezha and those that will come from the Buna Bridge. Kopliku and Grizhja will block the forces coming from the Koplik battalion. Thus Shkodra would remain only with the forces of the Shkodra garrison.

Unfortunately, in fact, Postriba had been stabbed in the bone and exactly on that day they were trying to get their boys, to serve as soldiers. This was the main cause that the uprising erupted on the 9th. But I was surprised that Uran Butka in his

book about this uprising also mentions Jup Kazazi with his brother Sait. According to him, the son of Jup Kazazi's uncle has stated that Jupi had gone to his house on June 17, 1945. But the uprising took place on September 9, 1946. It turns out that Jupi has been hidden for a year and three months. How did he manage to organize the Postriba uprising? Do you understand me logically?

Yes I understand. I have data from a friend of mine, about a letter written by Kole Biba, where he emphasizes this about Jup Kazazi: "Completely unreasoned and precipitated organization". This led to Postriba uprising breakdown.

Listen, Mr. Marçel, the truth is the truth. It's an Albanian expression: The truth breaks your back, but it has to come out.

I was born on July 27 of 46, at 9:30 p.m. It was the first day of Ramadan. Riza effendi was coming back from the mosque and Mrs. Vaçe of Dan Hasani came down to the living room and said to him:

-Riza effendi, Xhevat's wife gave birth to a son. He says: - I wish to his wife to get well soon and long life to the son, but I'm sorry, that they are going to suffer!

In September, Postriba uprising took place and the economic destruction, punishment and moral denigration by the communist occupier of Albania against the Dani family began. He was arrested in mid-September, stripped of his immunity on December 23, 1946, and suffered the most brutal medieval Slavic-communist tortures.

Honourable Sami Repishti, in his book "Under Rozafa shadow" writes about the two PMs Kolë Prela and Riza Dani.

#### Kole Prela was Dukagjini's Member of Parliament.

Yes! It was really a bad luck that on December 31, '47, as the whole world celebrated the end of the year and the beginning of a new and people wish to have good health, happiness and the best for

their loved ones, exactly that day, in the most fatal way, took place the trial of Riza Dani and 11 other men: Without defence attorneys, no public, just a room, where was read what the Investigation Office had prepared. He was charged of conspiracy against the state and he replied: - How could you even think of such a thing. My 18-year-old daughter died that day, she was my only child, and it could come to my mind the conspiracy against the state!

Riza Dani denied everything and the record of the investigators state: "Riza Dani, as an enemy of people, did not accept to sign anything."

#### Did you find out where he was buried after the shooting?

One last witness on Riza Dani is that of Aunt Feti, the wife of Xhevat Sejfo, the mother of Adnan Sejfo who passed away lately. She used to bring him food, because she lived in Tirana and the day he was shot, they had told her about a place near "Varri i Bamit", but when we went to look at the place, in '92, that area was completely inhabited, full of houses and we did not know how and where to search for the place anymore.

Rizai and others, 8 men altogether, were shot, dumped into a pit and covered. They were shot early in the morning. Someone's leg and arm was left out. The next night, Aunt Feti went there, dug and found his clothes that she had sent to him herself in prison. On the cuff of his pyjamas she touched something solid and pulled out eight tied written cigarette's rolling papers.

It was written: "This is a very serious issue; closed trial, no defence attorneys, no public. The prosecutor accuses me of being the plotter of the "Group of representatives" I have attended the meetings, I Have held meetings with fugitives. Defamations: These are shameful lies ... I am morally strong and I have denied everything in court, what verdict will be given to me, I do not know..."

The next letter: "Now that I am writing to you, I am suffering a lot, three days with no food and no water, twenty days lying on the cement floor, nothing to cover. Feti, tell to Dr. Omer..."

# All our property was seized:

Four houses, an ice factory, a mill, a house in Barbullush village together with all the mills and 10 hectares of land.

He hoped for his help, because he was the president of the Democratic Front...

Next letter: "With the God's will, I'll die as a man. Thanks to Feti for her care and for the food he brought to me. The seal, bequeathed to my grand-children."

I want to say two things. A man who finds out that he will be shot today, tomorrow or the day after tomorrow, has so much moral courage and peace of mind that he declares in written form "thank to my granddaughter for the dishes she brought me" and the second "bequest the seal to the grand-children"! My father is honoured... Excuse me...

### Please do not apologize. You have all the reasons to feel touched...

We kept Uncle Riza's last will. Mrs. Makbule lived with my mother and when my father was released after ten years in prison, from seven internment camps and finally from the camp of the Rinas aviation field. Mrs. Makbule lived with us till her last day. My father took care for all of us, including Mrs. Makule, only with his salary, three hundred lek, working as a manual worker, because my mother has never worked. We all slept in the same room: my mother, two children, Mrs. Makbule and my father too after his release.

Riza asked through his letter, to be buried next to Agime, his daughter. Until lately, his letters were in the Tirana museum. After the 2000s we don't know where they might be. His last words were "With God's will, I'll die as a man "paç hijen tënde" this is an expression, more used by Muslims in Shkodra. It is addressed to another person, who is not considered a human being, born by a mother with the Great God's blessing, but is considered as a shadow, a nothing. He did not insult those who had tortured him, but reacted through his folks's tradition/culture "Paçi hijen tuaj".

Let me interrupt you a bit, because there is another similar case regarding the cemetery you are being interested. Syrja Selfo'daughter claims that in 1993 they

went to Linza, in Tirana and inspected for a grave. A resident had told her that they had taken Syrja Selfos's remains out of there and taken somewhere else, as by family members' request. It is very likely that the pit where these eight men were dumped, is not in "Varri i Bamit", but in Linza.

The end of Riza Dani was the revenge key to Dani family, a patriotic, nationalist and generous family from Shkodra. After Riza's arrest, the next day were arrested all the men of the house: Dan Hasani, Xhevat Danin, Xhelal Danin, 16 years old, while Dan's two elder sons, Hasan and Qemal Dani, who were studying abroad when World War II broke out, in '43, they fled in Canada and America.

Dan Hasani was sentenced to 5 years. My father, Xhevat Dani, was sentenced to 10 years because he translated into German language, he was considered as serving to Germans. He was interned in 7 internment camps: Maliq, Beden of Kavaja and some others. He ended up in Rinas camp with Sami Repishti and Et'hem Bakalli and other friends, may their soul rest in peace, except for Sami who was alive and went out. After his release my father agreed to work as a manual labourer. Even Xhelal, despite his young age, was arrested and sentenced to 3 years.

All the property was seized: Four houses, an ice factory, a mill, a house in Barbullush village together with all the mills and 10 hectares of land. My mother was the only woman who served us for everything: Wash our clothes, take the bread, serve the food, cook the bread for the next day, and get clothes...

My mother, may her soul rest in peace, all mothers are good, but I loved her very much and honestly, I do not remember ever saying "I will not do this". She has been all on her own, the woman and the man of the house who has coped with everything alone.

I want to mention a human act of a former prosecutor, Qemal Llazani, who according to many others he was very severe, but my mother was daughter of Llazani's family. Qemal passed in front of the big door of our house and said to my mother: "After two days they will come to seize the house. That's it" He has my deepest respect and once, during democracy, I stopped him on the street and said "thank you". My mother, thanks to these words, go back a good part of her jewels, rings, clothes that her father had bought to her in Italy, because my mother got married in '39, 17 years old, put the things in a stroller and left the house from behind the alley, towards the lane where her father and grandfather were. She sold the things she took out to Rakiqi's shop- the user of the persecuted families. A ring that would cost 200 thousand he bought it for 20 thousand and then would sell it to the Yugoslavs. My mother took care of us for 9 and a half years with those money... until my father was released...None of women in Shkodra whose husband was imprisoned, persecuted by the communist regime, have divorced.

When the property was confiscated, my mother was told to choose a house. She consulted a lawyer, our cousin, and he advised her: -You are left alone and you have to think how to earn your living and look after your childres. I suggest to keep the house in Barbullush, you have 10 hectares of land, you have a mill, you can work and provide food. And she did as she was told

6 years later, we were sent away from our house in Barbullushi, because they would use it as an office.

Until I was 9 and half years old, when my father was released, I didn't know what a father's hug would be like? I was lucky that at the age of 9 years and 8 months I could hug my father for the first time, but there were my peers, older or younger, who did not had this opportunity, because their fathers died in prisons and in Investigation Premises.

The persecution of the Dani family carried out in two phases: first phase that of fathers and mothers and we were the second phase. My father, graduated with excellent results in banking eco-

My mother, may her soul rest in peace, all mothers are good, but I loved her very much and honestly, I don't remember ever saying "I will not do this". She has been all on her own, the woman and the man of the house who has coped everything alone.

nomics, in Vienna University, has worked as a mortar worker for 14 years.

Once, when he went to get his salary, the accountant asked him if he wanted the rest as vacation coupons for children in the camp of Shiroka and he immediately said "Yes", he paid the money and I went to the children's camp. I was ten and a half years old. The camp would last 20 days: July 10-30. My birthday was on the 27th. A day before my birthday, I say to the camp chief, there was a physical education teacher: - My birthday is tomorrow; will you give me permission to go home and come back to dinner? The chief said that the permission was granted by the director. I went to the director. - What's your name? - Kujtim Dani.- Whose son are you, of Xhevat Dani, that reactionary, the convicted? How could you come to camp? I stayed still. It was a moment that ... We were afraid, but until then, 10 years old boy, I had him in front of me, face to face! -Listen, you are the son of a criminal, the son of a merchant. Now, take your clothes and get off the camp! I stayed still for 5 minutes, I was confused. The leader came in, put his hand on my shoulder and said: - Let's go out because the director has some work to do. Only on that very moment, I realized what happened and went out. I still remember his words: - Do not worry, there are only three days left. Just three days, who cares! I took my suitcase and I cried all the way long, from the camp to the house in Kiras, where we had been taken.

When I came back from Tirana, wanted to enter in my room, I was a Forest Engineer student, on the 4th year at Kamza University,

We found our room locked. We were five of us. We knocked on the door but no one answered. A friend of comes down and opens our room.

The director of the dormitory was a former officer of the Interior Ministry dismissed from office 6 months prior completing his retirement age.

When he had found out who I was, he wrote a letter to the Faculty Party Organization, noting that the student Kujtim Dani had broken down the dormitory door, after I had closed it, as the

Dormitory Director: This is a persecuted family, Dan Hasani's grandson, Xhevat Dani's son. This one had his father shot, his uncle shot... In what he had written were 50 truths and 50 lies. I was lucky as a student, to be an active member of Dajti volleyball team and we had a gentleman coach, a wonderful man, Thoma Kukja. Believe me, if I say it honestly, he was a communist, but if all the communists would be like Thoma Kukja, Skënder Temali, Bardhyl Zeka, Andro Ivani, Pashko Marku of Bratoshi and the Head of the Cooperative and director of Waters, the honourable Nazmi Dibra, Albania would be like the Switzerland.

The meeting took place and finally Dhimitër Jançe, a Forest engineer, who had studied in the Soviet Union, Secretary of the Party of the Forest Faculty, Panajot Koçi, forest exploitation engineer, deputy party secretary, have fought for Kujtim Dani as if he saw their son. Thoma Kukja used all the power he had. I was lucky, God loved me very much in many things in life. The first secretary of the Tirana district, Nue Marashi from Dukagjini, do you know what he said to me?

#### Is he the secretary who killed himself?

Yes! Because he did not agree with many directives of the Congress and saw that they were plotting behind his back... He told me: -Do not e afraid, you will not be excluded! Do you know that your grandfather, Dan Hasani bought all the weapons for Dukagjini's people? With those weapons, my father and grandfathers together with Dan Hasan fought in the war of Koplik!

### Was it about the war against the Serbs in 1920?

Yes, he was a man knew things. Andro Ivan was my supervisor when I worked as a chief in the forestry sector and as an engineer in Koplik. As a sportsman I had to work 5 hours. But it took me 3 hours to travel by bus, 1 hour and a half one way and 1 hour and a half the return, so I used to work only for 3-4 hours. I have walked on foot all the region of Razëm, Bogë and Fushëzezë, all what you can see on naked eye from Shkodra.

We go to his office to discuss for a project, the investment manager also comes. He assigned us the tasks we had to complete and while we were leaving, he told to the person in charge to leave and he stopped me. Engineer, come back in a minute. Engineer Dani- says- you are from a good family. He is a communist and a Security Branch spy. Be careful when talking to him!

Who would do me such a favour? Andro Ivan, a communist. But he was a human! I have seen with my own eyes, when a woman, holding her sick child on her arms, together with her husband, asked for his help. They needed a car to take them to Shkodra Hospital. He got out of the car, leaving that car to them, then found another mean of transport to go to a meeting in Shkodra.

But who would do this? Xhemal Selimi was also present, as well as other cooperative Chiefs. It was also a communist, Pashko Marku but he had human principles.

Today I had a coffee with Bedri Çoku, who completed 23 years in prison - the hero of the Spaç revolt, where they ripped down the communist flag with a star.

Burrel Prison... I was told that when someone would die there, a man named Sami Damllia together with Osman Kazazi, when they were young, they would take the dead body, put it in a sack and accompanied by two policemen, one in front and one in the back, would throw it into a pit. Afterword, this procedure changed and the dead bodies were carried by a manure cart. After collecting Burrel's manure, he would come at 6 pm and pick up the dead bodies, accompanied by an ordinary prisoner, and throw them to the pit. These are the horrors of communism.

I remember what my father told me, may his soul rest in peace, about the Beden canal, Peqin-Kavaja, it was 8 m high and 5 m and a half down the sloping sites. The work there was very hard,

but the biggest shock was that announcement call: "In 5 minutes the water gets in" and all the prisoners had to climb to get out. Some were tired and used to slip, someone would stretch out the shovel stick to pull it up, but the water flew out, took them away. Maybe ten or twenty or thirty men were taken by the water stream and they died and disappeared. Nothing is known about them. No one ever reported that!

#### I have not heard this anywhere!

Xhevati said that the most awful thing, was when someone who would try to dig the ground a bit, like an escarpment, to put his foot, the soldier who was guarding, criminal in his blood and his character, used to kick him and let him down. -Try to come up again! At that time the water would flow down and take him away. These crimes are still undisclosed. To push someone, to push him intentionally to make him die, this is inconceivable.

### What you are telling are really awful. Do you have anything else to say about Mr. Riza?

Riza Dani has had two personal passions: painting and carpentry. In Graz, where he lived for 15 years, has made 4 paintings: Two small, one medium and one larger painting. The biggest one was inherited by my father, the other two by aunt Asia, Hasim Ulqinaku's wife and later she inherited them to her daughter, Mira Ulqinaku Dervishi, the wife of Elnar Dervishi.

However, when he came back in '39, he gave all the carpentry tools he had, as a grandson, to Esheref Dani, the former football player.

There is a lot to tell about those years, many more...

Thank you for all these memories you shared with us and I wish you good health and good days!

- Whose son are you, of Xhevat Dani, that reactionary, the convicted? How could you come to camp? I stayed still. It was a moment that... We were afraid, but until then, 10 years old boy, I had him in front of me, face to face!



# Missing person: Galip Hatibi

#### Persons sentenced:

His father, **Rasim Hatibi**, interned for life.

His spouse, **Asamble Hatibi**, sentenced to prison and interned.

His son, **Durim Hatibi**, persecuted as a person of bad biography.



Galip Hatibi, born in 1920, origin from Skopje.

He worked as Secretary in the Ministry of Interior, but left by resigning the office to be engaged in the field of sports as organizer of national and international sports activities. He was fluent in many foreign languages: Serbo-Croatian, Italian, French, English and German.

On September 25, 1946, at the age of 26, he was arrested by State Security Service, Sigurimi, at midnight, after a long meeting held with sports' leaders.

For two consecutive years, from 1946 to 1948, he has been tortured in the dungeons of the Ministry of Interior and other State Security Service premises, on "Dëshmorët e 4 Shkurtit" street, lacking information to his family and court procedure, as well, accused of "collaboration with the espionage service of the American imperialism"

Documents of State Security have different versions on his fate.

"In 1946, by order of Nesti, I illegally arrested Galip Hatibi ... as an agent of the Americans. He was interrogated by Nesti and Thoma Karamello.... I know that often, Nesti and Thoma have badly beaten Galip and treated him very badly. He was killed illegally in July-August 1948 by a special trial made by order of Vaska from Angji Faber and Skënder Kosova", affirmed in self-criticism the senior Security officer, Vango Mitrojorgii.

Held in isolation for a long time in the basement of the State Security Section (at Selvia), he was never interrogated but was executed, according to some evidence, somewhere near the Kinostudio area, after he had become all skin and bones.

During his trial, Koci Xoxe, already accused, confirmed that "For Galip Hatibi, Vaska (Koleci) told me that he was in a miserable condition and so, even with the decision of the Commander (Enver Hoxha), he was executed with a formal trial". His subordinate, Vango Mitrojorgji, also confirmed that "related to the use of torture, when faced resistance, torture was used extensively. til the detainee died or testified." While in the trial against Kadri Hazbiu and Fecor Shehu, the accusation act mentions that "From the evidence and facts collected by the investigation units, many cases of such murders committed without trial have been made concrete, by order of the traitors Mehmet Shehu, Kadri Hazbiu, Mihallag Ziçishti and Llambi Peçini. Here are mentioned, the murders without trial and then the burning in the furnace by Mihallag Ziçishti and Galip Hatibi arrested as American spies, the murders committed in Puka, Rrëshen, Kruja, Burrel, Berat, etc."

The testimonies of the responsible persons include some culprits in his execution, breaking even the communist law itself. His fate remained unclear, as well as the place of his remains has never ever been found.

After the murder of Galipi, his wife Asamble Hatibi went through the ordeal of suffering with her child, Durim. In addition to her dissatisfaction with the regime that killed her husband, another accusation was made to her: she had reinforced the rumors about Enver Hoxha's bad moral image. Asamble was arrested in October 1978 and released in November 1982.

Besides her, her son was also persecuted. Though talented in football, he was left to work in the geological enterprise. "He is very correct, very reserved, but within his chest a volcano is emerging. He was advised", writes the Security for him.

# Testimony of **Nurxhan Gostivari** on his father-in-law **Galip Hatibi**.

# At least have a grave with his name engraved on!

It was said that: "they took him out of the country with a suitcase, he is speaker on Radio London, in BBC...", but he was being tortured in the dungeons of the Ministry of Interior!

Then, the family, hoping that at least he would be alive, listened to both Radio London and the BBC, but nothing resembled his voice.

Interviewed by Marçel Hila

### Madam, thank you very much for taking your time for this interview!

I thank you too!

#### What was the reason that your father-inlaw, the deceased Mr. Galip Hatibi, had been arrested and convicted by the regime?

The reasonHe has been a patriot who loved his country - an intellectual. He had studied abroad, in Italy, and wanted to serve to this country. After graduating, he came back to Albania. He was an idealist, very honest and loyal to his communist ideas. He was devoted to serve to his country with justice, but after his return, he was appointed to

the Ministry of Interior as Secretary, and as I was told by my mother-in-law, he quickly realized what the government was actually doing, the State of that time, and immediately asked for resignation from the office. I know that they didn't want to accept his dismissal and, through the mediation of someone else, they dismissed him.

He was a versatile person; he was also involved in sports – he was a footballplayer too. He loved sports very much, but he also had many other talents, such as acting, I do also possess documents on the abovementioned.

He was fluent in 6 foreign languages, learned at school; Serbo-Croatian, when he finished



He was an idealist, very honest and loyal to his communist ideas. He was devoted to serve to his country with justice. ...he quickly realized what the government was actually doing and immediately asked for resignation from the office.

...they didn't want to accept his dismissal and, through the mediation of someone else, they dismissed him. his primary school in Skopje, French and Italian language in high school, English and German learned by private lessons.

Given the above circumstances, after his resignation, he was appointed in the Sports Committee, if I recall it correctly. At that time were organized the so-called Olympiads or the Balkaniads.

### It was the Football Championship and the Albanian Team won, in '46.

He was the organizer, the chairman and, as I was told by my mother-in-law, Ramiz Alia has been secretary. On September 25, 1946, a few days before this Balkaniads, he was present in a long meeting on sports til late. The meeting lasted up to 10-11 PM and after he left the meeting, the State Security Service seized him, arrested him.

### Are you aware of any detail on how he was arrested? Could the family see him afterwards?

He was arrested in secrecy. No one knew, or at least we were never told about how he was arrested. His family was worried about the fact that he did not turn home, and went out to search him asking his friends, people who have probably been with him in the meeting, but everybody just shrugged and said "we do not know anything". When asked, the relevant authorities answered: "He may have fled insofar as he was in the service of the Anglo-Americans!...and it is possible... "I was told by my mother- in law that, they said to her: "they took him out of the country with a suitcase" they went this far, saying that: "listen to Radio London or BBC Radio - he is a speaker there". Then, the family hoping that at least he would be alive, listened to both Radio London and the BBC, but nothing resembled his voice.

#### Do you think he has been kidnapped?

He has been kidnapped, yes! Even though her logics couldn't except that he left the country, fled, knowing very well her spouse...



#### So, later on, you found out details that he was arrested and eventually disappeared? What happened to him?

The truth is that they did not find out any further details, anything at all, because people were afraid to speak.

#### People? Who are those people?

His own close family. His father was still alive. He had 3 sisters, or better to say 2, because one of them was not exactly his sister, but he called her sister, and one brother from his father's second marriage. Until that very moment, they have been very close to him, but after his disappearance, they denied him and no one ever approached to the family. My mother-in-law, they were just married, it was just 2-3 months of marriage and after her spouse disappeared, she realized that she was pregnant. He, as we learned later, found out that his son was born while he was still in...

#### In the investigation office?

There, where they were keeping him.

#### What is the exact name, Galip?

Galip Rasim Hatibi... thus, she raised her son alone with absolutely no help, except for her father-in-law, for as long as he was alive and as much as he could, because he was also interned. He also completed his internment. That was the situation...with no help, she sold everything she had, house furniture and things, because they were a family...

#### How old was Mr. Galip when they seized him?

26 years old!

#### The only son?

The only son, with three sisters, one from his father's second marriage... in fact a brother...

How did you find out about the disappearance or arrest? Was it clarified what happened to him or you have never No one knew, or at least we were never told about how he was arrested. His family was worried about the fact that he did not turn home, and went out to search him asking his friends ... When asked, the relevant

authorities answered:

"He may have fled insofar as he was in the service of the Anglo-Americans!

"They took him out of the country with a suitcase"

The truth is that they did not find out any further details, anything at all, because people were afraid to speak.

People who have been very close to him, but after his disappearance, they denied him and no one ever approached to the family. My mother-in-law, they were just married, it was just 2-3 months of marriage and after her spouse disappeared, she realized that she was pregnant.

He found out that his son was born while he was still in dungeon.

My mother-in-law, like her husband, has been an anti-fascist war activist.

Since 1942, she has been a member of guerrilla units and contributed a lot. This is how she met her husband, in those circumstances. She had friends, because she was well-educated too: She was fluent in some foreign languages, because she had completed her studies abroad...

#### had any further information, so did the father of the disappeared person, your future husband, as his child, find out anything about him?

His father died a few years after the son (of the disappeared) was born, his nephew, who is my husband and he bequeathed all his wealth to his nephew as an immediate legal heir.

#### To your husband?

Yes, being conscious that he would grow fatherless bequeathed to him 2/6 of his fortune. Later on, his brothers and sisters, except to one of them, tried to conceal the will, so that the property would not be divided into two more parts than to the fatherless nephew, but the destiny was on his side, on the court, there was only one copy of the Verdict, where the opening of the legacy had taken place, and thus the wealth was saved, because they fought against it all the time.

### Have you been informed by the state authorities about Mr. Galip's fate?

No no, absolutely!

#### What do you know about his fate?

My mother-in-law, like her husband, has been an anti-fascist war activist. Since 1942, she has been a member of guerrilla units and has contributed a lot. This is how she met her husband, in those circumstances. She had friends, because she was well-educated too: she was fluent in some foreign languages, because she had studied abroad...as above mentioned. They were of the same generation as Nexhmije, Enver - the famous of that time, I mean Enver Hoxha and so...

And she took her out and said: "Your husband is an agent of the Anglo-Americans. Go out to search him and listen him on Radio London!" and when the mother-in-law insisted on saying "My husband does not do this, he cannot leave his country!", she said "Get out, otherwise you will have other consequences too!" Thus, since then...

# So, if we consider this "authority", is this the final answer given by the Albanian authorities?

Yes yes, that was it!

They were of the same generation as Nexhmije, Enver, and she took her out.

She said: "Your husband is an agent of the Anglo-Americans...

"Get out, because you will have other consequences too!"

#### What happened later on?

We did not have any concrete detail; I already mentioned the fact that people were afraid to speak at that time... After the advent of democracy, after the '90s we learned that people had seen him in prison. Lawyer Koço Dilo was arrested at the time. My mother-in-law said that he has been kept there for about two years, in '46 -'48; together with the lawyer Koço Dilo, who was arrested between these two years and kept tied up to the prison columns.

#### In the Ministry of Internal Affair?

Downstairs, where the prisoners' dungeons were. One night, in one of these dungeons, he saw a person who looked like a corpse, for he was so thin... It was winter and he was still with summer clothes on.

#### Dressed as he was at the moment of arrest?

Yes, that was on September 25th, with a long beard, ragged and those clothes were torn. He didn't recognize him! He approached to him and said "Do not you know me, who I am?" he had introduced himself and was recognized only by his eyes. He had told him that he had found out that he became father of a boy (eyes in tears), excuse me, and that his grandfather had named him Durim (Patience), hoping that...

#### Patience wins!

He must be patient in order to be able to come, maybe hoping that he would meet his father, the son to meet his father, which didn't happen. This was the conversation he had with Koço Dilo, but he said that to Petro Marko and not directly to his family. That's because of the fear he had.

#### To Petro Marko? How do you know that?

Koço Dilo told that to Petro Marko and he kept this as secret, telling no one, without even sending a note or word to the family. Then, he felt indebted, more as a moral obligation, and after the '90s...

# Petro Marko died in June 1991. Maybe, he didn't have much time to write during those months!

Yes, I have it and I can show it to you, it's really touching.

We need to have all the materials you possess, photocopied, because we are creating files for each one – containing photos, documents or any other material.

It has also been written on other newspapers, information regarding the trial of Llambi Ziçishti. Based on that information, it comes out that my father-in-law, Galip Hatibi, has been burned alive.

### Did Llambi Ziçishti affirm that in court? Are there trial records?

Yes, here they are! The trial's records were published on the newspapers.

This corresponds to 1982, the time when Aranit Çela, had the office of the Chair of the Supreme Court

But these were revealed after the '90s, so before that...

#### I know, I know, it's true!

He said that during the time Koçi Xoxe was the Minister of Interior, my father-in-law was a Secretary.

#### Koçi Xoxe's Secretary?

I do not know, but he was appointed as secretary...

Koçi Xoxe was not a Minister at that time, but the director of the People's Defence Directory; he had great influence at the time and in October or November of '46, he served as a Minister of the Interior. Until then, the Minister of Interior has been Haxhi Lleshi.

So, there he was as secretary.

In one of those dungeons, one night was seen coming out a person, resembling a corpse...he was so thin It was winter and he was still with summer clothes on.

My mother-in-law has also been convicted of agitation and propaganda. She was sentenced to 7 years and completed 4 years, because she was granted amnesty. She was arrested in October 16th, 1978. ... She was 55 years old when she was arrested.

In Albania there were three Directorates: Directorate no. 3 was the Directorate of People's Defence. Koçi has been the Director of the People's Defence Directorate. Have you submitted any request to the relevant authorities to get information and did they give you anything?

No, no, absolutely!

So, after the '90s by chance you have found two sources, that of the writer, Petro Marko and the public trial's records of Llambi Zicishti, the former minister.

Yes, as well as some affirmations from other people.

### Did anyone, willingly, come to your family to reveal any information?

My mother-in-law was also convicted for agitation and propaganda. She was sentenced to 7 years and completed 4 years, because she was granted amnesty. She was arrested in October 16<sup>th</sup>, 1978. She was judged at the end of March '79 and then got out after 4 years in prison, because of the amnesty... She was 55 years old when she was arrested and for that reason she was released earlier, so she had done the interviews, but I have two affirmations from two persons talking about Galip, I can read them or make them available to you.

#### Can you briefly summarize them?

One statement is that of Siri Ago, who declares that he has known Galip Hatib, during the time he was learning English with Professor Isan Qereshniku, during the Movement. He had heard that after the Liberation, he was a secretary in the Ministry of Internal Affairs headed by Koçi Xoxe. In '48, when he left Tirana, someone he didn't not remember, had personally confessed him that Galipi had been tortured and had lost consciousness ... No one knows how many times he had lost his conscious in those two years... but anyway he had also told him that he was burned with gasoline at the Ministry of Internal Affairs premises.

### Is this information given willingly by him to vou?

Yes! The person's signature, the neighbourhood stamp of that time has also been verified by the popular council of the neighbourhood.

#### When was this evidence obtained?

This is of '92. There is another evidence, that of the lawyer Koço Dilo himself,'92. He says that in September '47, when he was arrested by the State Security Service authorities, he was detained for several months, in the State Security Building, located in the address: rruga "4 shkurti". There he was lucky to meet Galip Hatib, who

... someone confessed him that Galipi had been tortured and had lost consciousness ... No one knows how many times he had lost his conscious in those two years... but anyway he had also told him that he was burned with gasoline at the **Ministry of Internal Affairs** premises.

She did not accept that he had left the country, that he had fled, but still, deep in her heart, She lived hoping that he might be alive somewhere, in some place.

was kept isolated in one of the back cellars of the building, in a miserable condition. He had learned later that he had been executed and burned in '48.

# So, you got the latest information about Galip in '92? Have you ever had any other news from 1948 to 1992?

No, nothing at all. And I have often thought to myself, I have never heard from my mother-in-law, but I have thought that who knows for how long she has longed for...

There have been other cases when people hoped that maybe one day they would find their relatives alive. There is a case when their father had been shot in 62', but the family hoped for his return till the '90s. After the '90s they found out that he was sentenced to death and shot.

Though, I have already mentioned, that she did not accept that he had left the country, had fled, but still, deep down in her heart, she lived with the hope that he might be alive somewhere, in some place. There were legends alleged that he had escaped but two other information prove the opposite. I have a question that does not refer to you directly, but to your family experience: If they had met the executers by chance, those who disappeared and killed their loved one, how would they have felt, what would they have done?

Unfortunately, I have also lost my husband, the son Galip had with his first wife It would probably depend on him, if he would be alive. I do not think my mother-in-law would revenge, physical assault absolutely not. She could have just written a lot about what happened, but she was sick after she was released, diagnosed with neurosis, she was afraid to go out, and she never got out of the house.

# Since the day she got out of the prison? Was she afraid of being arrested again? No one knows what she had seen, terrors...

She never left the house, except two or three times to visit her relatives, escorted by the police.

#### Did she suffer imprisonment even at home?

Yes, she suffered home imprisonment.

#### When did your mother-in-law pass away?

In 1999.

#### How would she react or she wouldn't react at all, on your opinion? Or, she had simply accepted her destiny!

She did accept it! She would just give more information, vent her anger, I think, this way, peacefully.

### Do you have any personal belongings of Galip Hatibi, things remembering that man?

I have letters that Galipi had sent to his wife or family, during the time that his wife was just a friend. The letters sent from Bari Prison, were written full of love and commitment. The problem, as he states himself in those letters, was that he did not have paper to write and he had often written on such tiny letters. Here there are, these are the letters. There are even smaller ones. I think my mother-in-law should have left them somewhere, maybe to one of her familiars, because I haven't seen these at home, while my mother-in-law was in prison, otherwise...

## Obviously, otherwise they would have taken them, they would have disappeared... Maybe they have brought during democracy?

Yes, that's what I think, because I have not seen them. These appeared later. I entered their house when my mother-in-law was in prison. She met me when our daughter was 9-month-old and we went to the women's camp in Kosovo, Lushnja, for the first time, to get to know each other. It was an unusual emotion. That day... we went by taxi because the girl was 9 months old. It was a luxury for us to get a taxi, but we had no choice. My husband used to go by train and later by bicycle, once every three or four months, to deliver her food, despite to those he posted - dry food that we could deliver. My mother-in-law also smoked a lot and cigarettes were her main food, she said. I sent her a letter in two or three weeks.

...I have it in front of my eyes.../: it was a long way, except for the iron door where the guard and meeting room were. Yes the camps, the buildings were about 400-500 m away, I do not know exactly, but I know that what impressed me most were all the other women watching me from afar. It was extremely touching.

# Did you visit her as her daughter-in-law, with your baby, so with her 9-month-old granddaughter, who used to see her for the first time?

She saw me and I saw her. I had never known her before! I did not get married, I ran away from home not to affect my family, after she was arrested. I knew my husband long before getting together. In those circumstances, people, knowing my relationship, said to me "Leave him, other couples break-up being married and having children, he is just your friend!", but I did not leave him and that's it, here we are.

... She could have written a lot of things, but she came out of prison sick, with neurosis, she was afraid to go out, nor did she ever leave the house.

# Being labelled as "of bad biography" how did people treat you?

My husband and I were taken to Tirana suburbs. Luckily, at the place we worked, there were a lot of people who were convicted and obliged to work there. They were people who stayed closer to us and treated us well. They generally behaved well, in terms of getting closer to us, but they were the simple people, not persons in charge, i.e. the bosses. Bosses, no! We were always persecuted! They did not give us the category, because we were workers, because when you get the category you get a bigger salary.

# In what ways have you been excluded, away from people, isolated?

One way was this: branching off. They sent us there to work, traveling for an hour and a quarter, one hour and a half to get home, working in three shifts. I worked there with my husband.

#### Where did you work?

We recently worked at the Granite Enrichment Plant, then my husband was moved to the Tractor Factory until the establishment of democracy, then My mother-in-law last will, before she died, ... was that the photo of Galip could be placed in her grave too.
There are photos of them both, and Galip's name, as if they rest together there ... but in fact in the grave rests only my mother-in-law.

he was differently appraised. He worked there in three shifts, I still worked in three shifts and since we became parents, he did my third shift so that I would not go out in three shifts. I already told you that they did not provided us higher categories, when we completed the norms to get a higher category, because they would give us a higher salary. We needed that salary to live and look after my mother-in-law in prison, because there she was given bean juice, she could not hold her soul, plus she was also in retirement, and was arrested 3 months before retiring and had no chance to work like the other women, who were forced to work somewhere in agriculture. Those who worked would take meat once a month I think, I do not know what kind of meat it was, but as my mother-in-law said, received a meal, something different from others.

## Has it ever been used physical or psychological against you or your family, children, husband, including your motherin-law?

Physically, I do not know, but psychological yes! From the very beginning, when I got married, when I went home, my husband did not allow me to talk at home, because we knew we had listener-in eavesdroppers. We had a private house with a yard all around and at night, in the dark, they might even come to our window. We used to write to each other when we had something to say and then we vanished them. Then, when we went out together, especially when we went out together, I knew, my husband often turned his head, even though he did not want to do this in front of me, but he knew we had someone following us from behind.

#### Did they pursue you, survey you?

Yes! Even when we worked together in the beginning, before the baby was born, in that factory I told you, that factory was on the hill and the person who followed us to work, used to stay under the trees, in the shadow, until we finished our shift, during the day when you are fully visible- then at night, when my husband came from his second shift and I was home - and I could not wait for him to come, it could be 12 o'clock, because at 11 o'clock he would leave to work, at 12:30 he got home, for him to find the food warm, I waited for him to undress and come to eat. - he was often late in the room. When I see that he was looking from the curtain with the light off, whether that person had gone or not. This is psychological violence. We lived in that period like this, etc. etc...

# Did you feel your life as a curse, as a fall into the abyss?

Therefore, to answer this in just two lines, I will quote a saying from Durim's friends, an expression he frequently used and which answers your question. "I laugh, because I am too embarrassed to cry!" So Duri often said, and this was probably the narrative emblem of the way he lived and survived to the days of this world.

He was an athlete with Tirana Team, he played till '71, then he gave up, for many reasons, although he had an extraordinary talent, they did not give him the opportunity. Someone helped him to study... he finished school with excellent results, self-educated and fluent in 7 foreign languages.

Duri never knew his father, his mother raised him alone and he was very silent. I think he asked for him, although he did not feel his father close, he wanted him wholehearted through all what he has done to survive, for himself and for his mother and for the way he chose to live life in those conditions.

## Has it ever had any moment when he has expressed the missing of his father, such as, in your marriage or after the birth of your children, or in any other moment?

Duri was very silent, because, as I think and this was the logic of his life, as he grew up in those circumstances, as a fatherless child from his mother, he knew the reality, so he was reserved for many things, but he was very intelligent, self-taught many languages. In those conditions when we worked there with stones, because it was a stone factory, even if you would see Duri where he worked with shovels and stones, when they would chose him to go and work elsewhere, where he would take the shovel and fill the elevator with stones, that had to be grounded in the mill, he had a book hidden there, under the rags and sacks of rags that he used to read all the time.

# How did your family react to the communism collapse?

I was very scared, except for the joy and enthusiasm, because I could not find Duri. I went out and looked around for him. I was afraid that, out of all that people enthusiasm, he would not refrain himself. It was really a day full of emotions, the day the statue was toppled.

# It is about an era, more than a day. When democracy came, did you formally address

# to anyone about the body and fate of your father-in-law, Mr. Galip?

Duri did it himself, he asked for the file to the Ministry of Interior and they told him that they could not find it, there was no file/record.

# Do you have any hope that the remains of your relatives can be found?

I would like to, but I don't have any hope considering many information and that it is said that he has been burned. My mother-in-law last will, before she died, was that the photo of Galip could be placed in her grave, and at my mother-in-law's grave, if you will see her grave, there are photos of them both, and Galip's name, as if they rest together there, but in fact in the grave is only my mother-in-law. At least have a grave with his name engraved on.

# I've never heard this before in my life! When do you think this story will end?

I don't know if the remains will ever be found, but considering what has been said, I don't hope for it to happen...

#### So you are on the verge of dying hope?

Yes. Yes!

# Madam, thank you very much for the interview!

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak! This is a very small part in fact.

You have made a confession from your family sources, but you have provided data on a monstrous time, how people were burned, how they were destroyed. It is an archeologic crime that comes out little by little. You are helping the society a lot, so we are the ones who should thank you again!

Thank you!



# Missing person:

# Father Gjergj Suli born in 1893, from Lekli, Tepelena. Shot in 1948.

**Sufferer: His sons** 



He was an intellectual man, rite priest from Tepelena. He studied at the "Zosimea" gymnasium, in Yannina and later in America. He came back to his homeland, to contribute to the country.

Gjergj Suli had acquaintances with Fan Noli, Faik Konica and had joined "Vatra" Federation in Philadelphia. He fought against the Germans and the Italians. He was pro-American and pro-English.

He was accused of being allied to the Sylog of loannina, having contacts with the National Front and with the leaders of the beys to overthrow the communist system. He was shot in Gjirokastra Castle.

It is thought that his remains are found on the site of an industrial school, near the cemetery in Gjirokastra.

Father Gjergj Suli's two sons, Thoma Suli and his older brother, were not allowed to have a complete school education, were not supported by anyone, were oppressed, despised, did only heavy and ordinary work, and were considered as the children of the enemy.

As a result of the persecution, isolation, pressure and hard life, part of his life was spent in a psychiatric hospital where he was not treated well.

- Photograph of beaver At Cherch Sulti 

# Testimony of his son, Thoma Suli

# Is there a national-leader, to lead Albania!

No matter how much I have suffered the cruellest tortures, but still, my country hurts me, Albania hurts me, what is the one who abandons Albania?

Interviewed by Marçel Hila

# Can you tell us something about your father's life?

Father Gjergj Suli was born in Lekël village. He finished primary school in his village and was educated in foreign languages, in Turkish and Greek. As an excellent student, he won a scholarship to the "Zosimea" gymnasium in loannina. From there at the age of 16 or 18, I am not sure, he went to America where he continued his work and got in touch with Fan Noli and Faik Konica; on my inquiries, he stroke up a friendship with Fan Noli and secretary of "Vatra" Federation for Philadelphia. He decided and came back to Albania because he was broken-hearted for his country, although he had left his children there ... I, unfortunately, didn't know my father, because I was 9 months old when he left.

Here is how I express it through my verses:

"Ah, my heroic Tepelena, / Don't forget Father Gjergj, / Great beloved patriot,/ He left America and came back here, / his child stayed there '/ How come you didn't care for your children? / your blood bursed for Albania, / You wanted to bring freedom, / To bring democracy, / But the evil hindered you. / Lekël's priest was a man, / an enlightened Democrat, / That we won't never forget. "

He stared working as a priest in the Lekli area, and helped the fight against Italy and Germany. When the Germans came to Labova and burned the village, he spoke to them in English: "What's your problem with these people? If you have any conflict, fight the partisans and ballists don't attack the poor people, you are burning down their houses ". Afterwords, the German withdrew due to Father Giergi Suli arguments.

Then, the spies of communism, like it was Gjirokastra hunting greyhounds, which hunted the smart and rich people, were after them. He was kept in Gjirokastra investigation Office. He was interrogated even by Yugoslavian Investigators, to verify who Father Gjergji really was. No information was obtained from him, even though he was beaten, despite the file records of the communism investigators. He was finally shot in the castle of Gjirokastra.

There were also shot and buried many influential persons of Tepelena such as the Baba of the Koshtan Tekke, Baba Zenel Shehu who was a dangerous fighter; he opposed Enver Hoxha at the Përmeti Congress; Syrja Shehu from Vasjari of Tepelena was also arrested and shot.

They were the most important persons of Tepelena who led democracy for the liberation of Alba-

He worked for about 3-4 months, but it was revealed that he was working as a tractor driver and they said:

- How did you let the tractor in the hands of an enemy?

My brother was little of age, and he could hardly jump in the tractor, I looked at him and I was happy for him that he was very skilled, he was a tractor driver, an electrician, he was a hard-worker. he could do everything!

nia, not to follow Russian course, because they knew what communism was, they were educated abroad, his friends in England and France, and Father Giergii himself in America. They were shot and buried, as we were later informed.

The shooting of 12 intellectual men from Saranda, Tepelena and Gjirokastra took place at the industrial school, near Gjirokastra cemetery. When the foundations were laid for the construction of a school, in Gjirokastra, the enemies' bones came out. That is how we were told from people who had seen them. At that time, they said that the industrial school was constructed above the 12 men's remains, enemies of the Communist Party.

## Have you, your family and your relatives suffered persecution?

My brother has suffered a lot, because he was an ingenious man, just like his father, he was a creator, that if he would have a biography ... medium, not communist, he could have become an engineer of different kinds of inventions, while I played the fool: inheriting the ingenuity of my father's gene, I protected myself and was released from that evil.

Once, when I was a child, the men were gathered at the center of the village and my brother came from his work, he was a mechanic and right there, where communists, brigade-leader and the secretary of the organization were - he said that he would fix the hydropower plant since we had no electricity. In August the water level used to drop. A communist staying there said: - the power plant cannot be left in your hands to fix it. You must be diligent at your own workplace, which is even too much for you! I was a bit violent, as a kid and I attempted to fell upon his neck, but my brother impeded me, because he was very smart and very intelligent. The secretary of the party's Base Organization clinked after him: - Hey, come here! -he said to him. My brother replied: - my father probably committed a mistake to the party, and he was shot, but you cannot blame us, insult us because this is about the benefit of the village.

- Can you repair the power plant? Asked the sec-

retary. - Yes, he says, I can! If I do not repair it, I will be burned right inside the power plant!

He spent four days and four nights there, at the hydropower plant and I have no idea of how he did it. I brought him food, and as being a child, I said to him "have some food, eat ", but he was worried finishing his work and when he repaired it, and the lights were switched on...everything was on light. When he used to go to school, since we were poor, he wanted to leave school and go to work on the roads, but our mother didn't allow him. "You will continue you education, listen to your mom".

One day he was looking at a tractor at labor and, being fond of it, went after it. Looking at it carefully, he turns to the tractor driver and says to him that the tractor was making too much noise. - How do you know? - the tractor driver wondered. - That's what I think, - said my brother and the tractor driver then replied: - Will you come to work with me as a mechanic assistant?

That was it! He stopped attending school and started to work as an assistant.

He worked for about 3-4 months, but it was revealed that he was working as a tractor driver and they said: - How did you let the tractor in the hands of an enemy?

I looked at him and I was happy for him that he was very skilled, he was a tractor driver, an electrician, he was a hard-worker, he could do everything, never attending school, and...I wasn't capable of any of these works, I only knew how to use pickaxe and shovel. And so, being dismissed from one job to another....taking him here and there...

He fell in love with a girl from Korça, a teacher, here in Tirana. They were together for a year when she found out that he was persecuted. – Your father is an "enemy of the people" – she said - why didn't you tell me this? Even if we would have two or three children, I would not marry you, because I belong to a communist family, not to a family of enemies. So my brother, being always rejected,

I will say to him, "You are an evil", for I could never revenge on a person like that, an overconfident and bloodthirsty person ...because we have such a cultivation here that we cannot step even on a fly, we do not want to revenge through inhuman tortures as that system did in Albania.

In my Albania, that my father loved so much, for which he left America and his children too, I see that a lot has been stolen here and communism continues, continues, continues the communism course ... Anything can be achieved if it is led on the way of the great patriots ideals, that of the Frashëri brothers, Mit'hat and Abdyl Frashëri.

By my side, as we say, they are forgiven, that I am not vindictive with such people, I am sorry how these barbarians managed to do this with all the Albanian culture, with the most distinguished personalities of the Albanian nation, with all the rich who spent blood, sweat and tears.

ended up in the psychiatric hospital. Even there he was not treated like everyone else, because the hospitals were a bit like that...

When I was 19, I fell in love with a girl and I said to her "I love you". She said to me: - I would merry you if you had only one eye, but the wolf fur you have, why do I. Afterwards, I fell in love with another girl, I asked for her consent through matchmaking and I was refused again: - Oh, the priest's son? No way! So, me as well, I was hospitalized for some time in psychiatry with my brother. Two brothers were in psychiatry, until the sister married a man with a good biography. He was from a communist family, but they did not come home anymore, since my sister was the daughter of the enemy.

However, then came her children's turn. Her first child's average grade was 10, from the beginning of school, the first class, till the eighth, but the only one scholarship was granted to our village, it was only for two schoolgirls. The other schoolgirl had a better biography than my niece, but had very low grades. The school director took the floor in the presence of the Bureau Secretary and said: - I, as the School Director, knowing well both schoolgirls, think that Zhaneta Suli must get it because of her higher grades. - Sit down, - says the Secretary of the Bureau. - Zhaneta Suli is the

granddaughter of Father Gjergj Suli. The school Director replies: - Father Gjergji paid with his life. Even this girl's mother didn't know Father Gjergji, neither did she, however we can say it differently: She is the granddaughter of a communist, her uncle is a military who works in Durrës Navy. When he sat down, the secretary said: - Be silent!

But these were heavy whips on my sister's back and ours too. My sister faced these situations a little better, being protected a little by her husband's biography, while us, the two brothers, hospitalized in the psychiatry where we were treated as being seriously ill.

# Did you keep at home, any personal belongings of your father?

No way! What we had, disappeared when they destroyed our house. My father had nothing left, only books, some buckets, some blankets. Even though he came from America he was poor, but he had other great ideals, ideologies, he was a polyglot, he was completely different.

# Did you find out what was the main accusation your father was convicted of?

The accusation was that the father was allegedly allied with the sylog of loannina', had contacts



However I don't know what the word "father" is, and I don't have any compassion for him ...and I have loved my mother very much, I think I shifted the love for my father upon my mother I loved my mother, because I didn't know my father!

with the National Front and the Head of the beys to overthrow the communist system. He did not accept the communist system, because he wanted the Americans and the British in Albania...

# This accusation was only for your father, or was it the same for all the group members sentenced?

This charge was for the entire group members and everyone was sentenced to execution! The four main leaders were convicted during a dinner. Zenel Shehu was a well-known great fighter and was appointed Head of Tepelena Committee after its liberation. He rode his horse and went to Përmet while the Congress was taking place and opposed Enver Hoxha: We fought, we freed Albania, but comrade Enver, are you making us part of the communism. We know what communism is! "Well, Comrade Zenel," says Enver. - We will consider your issue next time! Afterwards, he was arrested straightaway and sentenced to death by shooting.

When you grew up, have you ever met those who caused this tragedy to you, people who accused your father, tortured him? Did you find out who they were?

We know nothing!

## What if today, at this age, you were shown those persons, walking down the street, how do you think you would have acted?

I will say to him, "You are an evil", for I could never revenge on a person like that, an overconfident and bloodthirsty person, because we have such a cultivation here that we cannot step even on a fly, we do not want to revenge through inhuman tortures as that system did in Albania. From my side, as we say, they are forgiven, that I am not vindictive with such people. I am sorry how these barbarians managed to do this with all the Albanian culture, with the most distinguished personalities of the Albanian nation, with all the rich who spent blood, sweat and tears. How do you name this...they came and seize my property? For those who owned one, because my father

had no property, nothing, just had his lofty ideals, his broad culture.

# Do you still hope to find your father's remains?

Ah, ... I do not know, maybe I can make any mistake, but in my Albania, that my father used to love so much, for which he left America and his children, and my nephew and I see that a lot has been taken from us, and here communism goes on, it still continues, the pathway of communism continues... Yes, everything can be achieved if it is led on the way of the great patriots' ideals of the Frashëri brothers, of Mit'hat Frashëri, who led the National Front and those of Abdyl Frashëri who was as we, labs\* sing through our verses in songs.

Avdyl you spent your wealth/, Made it gold. Went to Bismarck, / Stayed in Penury...

People were persecuted because that's how the system was. If people would walk on the right democracy steps, then everything is achievable.

# Would you be happy if one day you were informed that your father's remains were found?

It will be a great joy, however I don't know what the word "father" is, I don't have any compassion for him and I always loved my mother very much, that is, I think I shifted the love for my father upon my mother. I loved my mother because I didn't know my father! I don't have his ideals.

I just feel sorry for myself now and I am emotionally touched by such a great man, that I never compared to him, to have a great love. But for this misfortune that befell my father, I will do my best, night and day.

# Did they write about your father, did they mention him as a distinguished man?

We were 17 men holding the coffin on our shoulders, in the town of Memaliaj. We opened space for cars and people to go, the cars nearly crushed us for the reason that the enemy's daughter left.. So, we have been too much, extremely despised. No one spoke to us. They oppressed and spit on us! We were let to do the hardest works!

<sup>\*</sup> Labëria is a historic region that is roughly situated in south-western Albania. Its inhabitants are known as Labs (referred to as Albanian: Lab, pl. Lebër, also dial. sing. Lap) and its boundaries reach from Vlorë to Himara in the south, to the Greek border near Sarandë, incorporating the Kurvelesh region of Gjiro-kastër District and extending east to the city of Tepelenë.

I left a piece of land, ruins in the village of Lekël I long to come and see it! no matter how much I have suffered from the most inhuman tortures, but still my country hurts me, Albania hurts me.

They did, but no one wrote properly, that all my father's fellow travelers didn't live long.

When democracy came, almost all the people left the country, we were also a bit powerless, because we were oppressed and isolated in the Lekël village: no one came in or came out of our house, we didn't know how to make a wish or to dance, nor to give condolences to anybody, even when my mother died, or when my wife's first cousin, 17-year-old died...

We were 17 men holding the coffin on our shoulders, in the town of Memaliaj. We opened space for cars and people to go, the cars nearly crushed us for the reason that the enemy's daughter left.., because my wife's family members were also persecuted and sentenced to prison: her uncle, 10 years in Ballsh, and her father 5 years in Spaç. So, we have been too much, extremely despised.

No one spoke to us. They oppressed and spit on us! We were let to do the hardest works!

While I was having a medical report from the psychiatric hospital of Vlora, I said to the secretary of the Party's Base Organization of the village: - is there a job for me too, since I cannot work with pickax anymore, considering my bad health...! – The Party has certain norms! - he said to me.

A sector superior, who felt sorry for me, who was not a communist, appointed me to work with mares and horses. As soon as I started my work, I took good care of them, fatten them, for my personal dignity and to respect the sector superior who did me such a great favor. He didn't allow me to work in hard physical works as an ill man. but someone wrote a letter and the first secretary of the district, sent his instructor and they immediately dismissed me from the work at the horses. A fellow villager from Hormova stood up there, and said: -Don't dismiss him, man! Leave the enemy alone, because he took good care for the horses! He said and I heard it myself. -Ok, man, mind your own, because the party knows it best-said the instructor.

# Mr. Thoma, thank you very much for the interview.

I thank you too for the respect, for your manners, for the education and I wish that Albania takes the full path of democracy, which all Albanians who have fled abroad come back to their nest, that the bird leaves its nest ... as they say "Where is clay sweeter than honey? Here in Albania!"

But we do not see any prosperity on our Albania, so that all Albanians who have left their country come back, what is that men who leaves Albania?

I left a piece of land, ruins in the village of Lekël and nowadays I live in Greece, and I long to come and see it, no matter how much I have suffered from the most inhuman tortures, but still my country hurts me, Albania hurts me. I want to see it, let a statesman come out, let him lead Albania!

<sup>\*</sup> old folk expression to show the love for motherland

I wish Albania to take the full course of democracy, all Albanians who have fled abroad to come back on their nest, that the bird that leaves its nest ... ...what is a man who leaves Albania



# Missing person: Gjelosh Luli Llesh Marashi



Gjelosh Luli was the grandson of Ded Gjo Luli and married the sister of Kol Bibë Miraka, becoming an undisputed authority in two large provinces of northern Albania.

An idealist of the national cause and a devoted anti-communist, he was one of the leaders of the Malësia Madhe League that mobilized thousands of men for North defence. Gjelosh Luli was one of the organizers of the Malësia Madhe Uprising, where he was seriously injured.

In an attempt to save him, somewhere, one of the companions strangled him, grabbed the gold he had, pulled out his teeth and buried him.

The communists who had been following him for months, when they found out what had happened, went there and exhumed him, decapitated him, put his head in a spike and walked it in Shkodra city center, sowing terror on the people.

It is still unknown where Gjelosh Luli's head ended up.

**Llesh Marashi** - one of the leaders of the Malësia Madhe League, who fought fascism defending the North as well as against the communists during Malësia Madhe Uprising. He was seized by partisans in the period from June to July 1946. Accompanied by two officers and several partisans, he was executed by hanging, right in Shkodra city center.

It was set up a joint battalion to fight fascism, commended by: Mayor Llesh Marashi, Mayor Mul Delia, Ded Nikolla of Doda and both Tuk Jakova and Qamil Haboxhi on behalf of the Communist Party.

The Battalion was named after "Malësia e Madhe League Battalion...
Nobody argues this anymore but people have left their bones there...

Testimony of **Fran Xhanaj**, 91 years old on the fighters **Gjelosh Luli**, his father's uncle, and **Llesh Marashi** his godfather.

# Where is Gjelosh Luli's head?

All these patriots tried their best to cooperate with the communists, until the Reç War took place in August 1943.

Llesh Marashi was one of the first warriors, while Jup Kazazi fought against fascists with his own forces.

## People must know this truth!

Interviewed by Marçel Hila

My name is Fran Xhanaj and I am from Malësia Madhe, born in 1929.

In 1940, 11 years old, I enrolled at school but 3 months later, I left Malësia Madhe and moved to Shkodra.

I grew up with Llesh Marashi, Niko Preka, and Gjelosh Luli. Llesh Marashi was my godfather, Niko Preka my uncle and Gjelosh Luli my father's uncle. Gjeloshi was related to Kol Bibë Miraka family.

All these patriots tried their best to cooperate with the communists, until the war in Reç, in August 1943. Llesh Marashi took part here, while Jup Kazazi fought with his own forces against fascism. People must know this truth!

In the valley above Rjoll and in Doç of Reçi, Tuk Jakova and Qamil Haboxhi, who were illegal and commanded the partisans, tried to set up a joint battalion to fight fascism. The battalion was structured under the command I mentioned above and other commanders: Mayor Llesh Marashi, Mayor Mul Delia, Ded Nikolla of Doda and both Tuk Jakova and Qamil Haboxhi on behalf of the Communist Party. The battalion was called the Battalion of Malësia Madhe League ... Nobody argues this anymore, but people have left their bones there... and this situation went on so that they would not be commanded by the Red Army, but Miladin Popovic and Dusan Mugosha immediately intruded, ordered by Serbia and Moscow.

These men, these patriots went on like this till the Second Labinot Meeting was held...

They also organized the Shkreli battalion, for which the Grand Mufti of Shkodra, Jup Kazazi, Gjon Markagjonaj, Ded Mirakaj, helped a lot.

# These men, these patriots went on like this till the Second Labinot Meeting was held...

Shkreli Battalion was created to support only Malësia e Madhe Uprising.

But what happened on January 25-26, 1945? The communists attacked us 3 days before, on the 23<sup>rd</sup>; afterward the men were forced and went up the mountains. Of course they came to our house, because they were my people and we Albanians, at that time, had a tradition that when people come into your home and you open the door, you have accepted them as your man. This situation went on till June 18, when partisan forces eliminated them.

But, to become known to people, when the Uprising of Malësia e Madhe ended, at the Rrjoll Bridge, the grouping of Lleshi came out together with Llesh Deda, Lleshi with his companion, Gjelosh Luli with his companion Mirash Zogaj and the commander Idriz Dashi. My uncle, who was the Commander at that time, together with his companion and my dad, went out and got into the oaks. At this time, Colonel Zoi Themeli entered to Shkreli church with his forces. Nik Pribeti, when he saw that all the "reactionaries" of the northern area had entered his village, got up at 12 o'clock at night, went in the middle of the snow, about 30 centimetres of snow, and shot with his rifle up five times. People came out barefoot. They took their rifles and went up to Razma; 500 meters away the bayraktar and my father were waiting for them, because they knew the way to get to the Dragon Cave. After they went out to Qafa e Bilalit, they held them on their shoulders. We kept them there, in the cave, for about 2-3 of months.

It was a great misfortune; the communists were Albanian's greatest evil. Italian army, after the defeat, left their weapons in Albania and they all got armed and came out with the slogan "Death to fascism!" But the history has been changed ...

We held Gjelosh Luli with a barrel on our shoulders from the Dragon Cave, together with Pjetër Preka. There was also his wife Xhelina, Gjelosh Luli's sister. With a guard who watched our back and forth, we took him from there. Mark Leku of Hoti helped us too. Nikolle Prela, took them to Mark Gjeloshi of Bardhaj. They could not stay long there, because Marku with his men and Leze with her women, were in the hands of Sigurmi, security service. Then they took them to Miraj and Dedukaj, as they said to Kolë Miri and Mark Miri, where they stayed till March 1946.

In 1946, Boje Stokovi together with Lieutenant Baba attacked at the same time and seized the men, the two brothers: Mark was tied to a trunk, Kola was undressed, and were put between two fires.

Finally, they tried hard and removed them from the cave, because the cave was in an unforested place. It was very hard, because the board had to be held in their arms. They took him to the village of Kastrati where they left him together with Mirash Gjoka, his companion and another man, the whole Malësia e Madhe knows, I don't like to name him. I have decided to reveal the truth, for the God's sake, I curse them.

Marash Doda was there too. Marash Doda's house borders with Shkreli's house, in the woods, in a convenient area. There, when they were sitting, this man strangled him, grabbed the golden napoleons he had in his pants, his watch and fled from the mountain.

#### To whom?

To Gjelosh Luli!

#### Didn't lieutenant Baba strangle him?

No, Sir, no! History cannot be written like this; I am revolted that they have distorted it. Let me tell you, everyone, I can confront to any Albanian!

#### How was he beheaded, after he died?

Let me tell you! When Mirash Gjoka sat down with these men and they wanted to carry him in, to go to Marash Doda, they found him dead and buried him there. That man, was sitting in Shkodra on Reçi Street, waiting for the dawn.

He went to a dentist, near Reçi Street, to put in the pulled out teeth. The dentist realized that the teeth had been forcibly removed and, thinking that he had taken them to the cemetery, he informed the police, who arrested him on the spot, at the dentist. I can confront on this to everyone!

On the evening he was arrested, they came out and exhumed Gjeloshi. They beheaded him and buried his body there. They took his head in a wrecked car and came around Shkodra.

When democracy came, Ded Miri appeared on television: "Who finds the bones of Gjelosh Luli". I called Kol Luli, because he has his house above ours and I told him "go to that man". They went there, found his bones and we took them to the Catholic Church in Shkodra.

#### His head was never found?

The whole Malësia e Madhe knows that man, he has been imprisoned, but that's how it goes, they distorted this horrible story, this cruel crime.

#### Who killed him?

I do not like to mess about, but the whole Malësia e Madhe knows. I ask the communists to accept their mistakes, to apologize...

As I said, we took Llesh Marashi's grouping; we removed them from the Dragon Cave, at the time when the area was controlled by the offensive battalion commended by Lieutenant Baba and Zoi Themeli.

The whole Malësia e
Madhe knows,
I don't like to name him.
I have decided to reveal
the truth, for the God's
sake, I curse them.

Shkreli was completely surrounded, by day and night. They watched all the movements we did, so the men could not move a single step forward. We fixed a place where we would leave the food, but the women delivered it. At that time, women wore long thick "xhubleta" (traditional costume) and used to hide the food under it. That's how they carried food to them. We, the men, couldn't go there in any way, on that time that Shkreli had become a siege.

Zoi Themeli and Lieutenant Baba with their men, had listed all the names of families related to the insurgents. Our friends advised us: "Do not go out at night, in the dark, because you will be killed."

Llesh Marashi was caught, through betrayal. The troops fought for 3 hours and could not get any closer. They asked them: "Surrender! You will be forgiven for Christ's sake!"

Rroku together with Lleshi and Pjetër Bajraktar agreed not to fall into the hands of the communists alive. Rroku pulled out his pistol to shoot himself, but Lleshi took it off from his hand, because we Catholics, we sin if we commit suicide.

Afterward, they decided to kill each other not to surrender. Nevertheless, Zoi Themeli tied 6 men, hand in hand with the Christ's cross and led them to the cave. There, they were told that these 6 tied men, and said their respective names, will be shot

...the very night they came out and exhumed Gjeloshi. They beheaded him and buried his body at the same place. They took his head in a wrecked car and came around Shkodra. Shkreli was completely surrounded, by day and night. They watched all our movements, so the men could not move a single step forward. We fixed a place where we would leave the food, but the women delivered it. At that time, women wore long thick "xhubleta" (traditional costume) and used to hide food under it. That's how they carried food for them... We, the men, no way, on that time Shkreli was in a state of a siege.

dead, if you don't surrender, but if you do, then we will forgive you.

That is the reason they surrendered. As soon as Llesh Marashi's grouping surrendered, chains were snapped around their wrists, they were beaten, put in a ruined truck, a trash truck.

They were taken to Koplik where organized people came out into the lanes shouting...

The day Llesh Marashi was killed in July 1946, I was there. They carried him, handstied and placed him in front of the tripod.

Zoi Themeli, the alleged commander of the popular defines, stood up and said: "Comrades of Shkodra and the districts, today we have got here the most dangerous enemy of the northern area who has acted against the people and the Party. Others have been arrested and are in prisons."

He said to Lleshi: "Apologize to people!"

Two officers, standing next to him, grabbed him by the arm to climb him onto a ladder made of pieces of wooden boxes for the ammunition, one big and one small over it.

"Leave me alone, I can step up by myself!" - said

Lleshi. "Ladies and gentlemen, I have sworn before the people to serve to my homeland and to the people. Those who condemn me are allied with the intrusions; they have come with another flag. Long live Albania!" and then they tied the rope around his neck.

# Can you tell us briefly, if you know anything about Prek Cali too?

In early January 1945, Lleshi and Nikolla met Prek Cali and asked him not to take part in the Malësia e Madhe uprising, on January 26, in order to protect the border with Montenegro, with his fighters, in case the partisans should enter from there. Faithfully for this mission, Prek Cali stayed to protect the region from there.

The partisans entered because "that man" betrayed... They took one man of Dedej and one of Boge and they led them from Boga to Qafa Thores, across the mountains, there, they arrived to Kelmend, because Prek Cali did not even think of that...

The partisans entered in secrecy, no one knew anything; their betrayal caused that, everyone in Malësia e Madhe (Great Highlands) knows that; Prek Cali was with his men.

Zoi Themeli tied 6 men, hand in hand with the Christ's cross and led them to the cave.

There, they were told that these 6 tied men, and said their respective names, will be shot if you do not surrender, but if you do, then you will be forgiven.

#### Where did Mehmet Shehu come from?

Mehmet Shehu went to Rrapsh; For 15 days they shot with the mortar guns and could not do anything, then they took actions from Montenegro and from Boga to Kelmend. It did not occur to anyone.

# Did not the population see the armed forces that were coming in?

No! They cheated! They said they would go to Dukagjini. I myself saw the persons who would lead them to Dukagjini. When they went across the Mountains and came in Kelmend, the war came home; the Kelmend's men entered into the caves. Prek Cali was in the cave and they were fighting from there until Kelmendi was taken.

# Did Mehmet Shehu kill anyone when he went to Prek Cali's house?

He killed 36 men from Kelmendi. We must keep in mind that, there were 82 partisans killed, that they could not enter from Tamara bridge; they couldn't even from Yugoslavian border.

#### Could they enter from Grabova bridge?

No, no, it was just one bridge. There were two "Qafa" from Montenegro, because they could not cross on the mountains, they would fall and be dead, the only way was to cross by helicopter. But they came in Kelmend...

#### How many men did Mehmet Shehu have?

1st Assault Brigade, 300 men. It was the 1st Brigade when the Uprising of Malësia e Madhe took place, at the Rrjoll Bridge. They could not do anything with mortar gun, but then someone told them the way from where they could enter.

#### Kolë Maci?

He said: You can cross from that way there. We, Albanians, we always betray ... We could never lead. Only Gjergj Kastrioti, but he was also betrayed.

#### Thank you so much for your testimony!

"Ladies and gentlemen,
I have sworn before the
people to serve to my
homeland and to the
people.
Those who condemn
me are allied with the

intrusions; they have come with another flag. Long live Albania!

- Llesh Marashi -

# Missing person:

# Dom Ejëll Kovaçi (Engjëll Kovaçi)

**Sufferers:** The two sisters **Angje** and **Tone** (Antonia) of whom Angjelina Preka, was convicted of agitation and propaganda and other charges she never found out about. She was sentenced to imprisonment in Shkodra prison. She never married.



**Dom Ejëll Kovaçi**, born in 1920 in Hajmel of Shkodra, arrested twice, once on charges of agitation and propaganda, sentenced to 5 years and served 3 years. After his release, he was appointed bishop in Kryezi.

He was arrested for the second time on charges of killing a man in the village. The incident was staged as if this murder had taken place in the church and the priest together with his sister, Angelina, had killed him.

The priest was being tortured and forced to sign and plead guilty. But the real reason was the conflict with the government because of his disagreement over the policy towards the Catholic Church and his opposition to sign a church statute drafted according to the interests of the communists.

He was sentenced to death and shot dead for a felony. Today still missing.

# Testimony of Angjelina Preka, sister

# Now my tears are dried, my life is exhausted, everything...

# ... then let them do what they want, say what they want... It's only me left. All the others are dead!

Interviewed by Marçel Hila

At first, when my brother became a priest, he was appointed to Koman; in Koman we stayed with him for three years, there, us, the two sisters, in Koman, alone, no one else. From Koman he was appointed to Qelëz.

# What happened in Qelez? It was killed the chairman of the council or someone else?

Yes, a murder happened! They were close to us, from here to there: The door of the cell here, the church little further, the door of the church there. The yard, the people, that's it ... I was in the kitchen. That day, my sister was in Shkodra. My brother has been in his office. The office was there, then up the stairs to the kitchen. There was a fight.

#### Who fought with who?

The villagers, there, with each other, one of them had killed the father to the other. The fight started. There were two brothers and the little one got wounded and brought to me in the kitchen. Relatives, brought him to me. I positioned the poor him in the chair. I knew that you shouldn't give water to the wounded, because if you do it, he may die.

I was in the kitchen cooking, when all his relatives come there with him.

#### Was he wounded with a gun or a knife?

With a gun! And his older brother fought with the killer. The guns cracked. There were three people with the wounded. - Water, water, water! cried the boy.

How old was he, I don't know well, was he 15, or 16, or 18, I don't know, as I was a child myself. So, he begged for water: -Bring me a glass of water!

I said "no!", because I was aware that the water could have drowned him, but where was the wound...he had it on his feet. He desperately begged for water, and then one of them, goes and takes the glass of water, fills it and gave it to him. I immediately hit the glass and drop it on the floor. This is what I did. The glass was on the floor. Then came the relatives of this poor boy and took him away! That's all I remember. After that I don't remember what happened, cause there have passed so many years now...

I remember they arrested my brother.

He was sentenced to 5 years for agitation and propaganda. He completed three years.

#### In what year did the injury occur?

I swear to God, I don't remember! As a result, my brother spent 3 years in prison. After that, with my sister, we took the cattle at night and everything we had sheep and pigs and cows because we also had cows that we milked in order to manage everything, and all these pigs and sheep and cows, we took to a family in Rrenc at night and they received them. So, we moved to Shkodra.

We left at night and came to Shkodra and didn't move at all for three years. We went to meet our brother for three years, because they amnestied two years, and he did three years.

At "Kafja e Madhe", we had the house. There were two cafes in the square, between the two cafes there was a path which pursued with a turn that led to the tower of Marka Gjoni. In that path we had the house, prior going to the turn was our door. People from the security service passed by, I saw them many times through the window and, to be honest, I suspected.

# They were Sigurimi security service officers, weren't they...?

Yes, they dressed like Sigurimi security officers. In our building there were 6 families of officers. We were down, they up, a yard, a gate. We filled water with them, we stayed with their wives. When Buna, Drini and Kiri used to flood Shkodra and we had to go to buy food, we used to come together 6 women and one officer with us and in order not to be drown.

I mean, I did not go out with anyone at all. I had a friend, one of the nuns, there up in the street...

As soon as the communism came they kicked us out of the house. We stayed for a long time at Serregi family...

Once I went out with my sister and my friend. A young boy, an officer, was following us. Me, my, sister, my friend, were all young.

#### What was he following you for?

To be honest, I knew nothing in the world. The three of us there and he passed by...

One day, during the interrogation, came Ali Xhunga. He was taken here by the person in charge of the dungeons. He entered, closed the door, and started those duties of him...

## Did Ali Xhunga beat you?

Yes! Yees, in the investigator!

## How? Did he slap or punch you?

Slaps, punches, as much as he could! To be honest, I could not stand it and shouted. That officer... was passing by, heard it and came knocking on the door: - Ali open the door!

He didn't open it! He kicked the door... - What are you doing, Ali? - he said. - Do you know what she has done? - What did she do, man? - he said. - Tell me man, what did she do? I have been chasing her for three years, from the moment she got out until she returned home. I have been following her and she didn't do even the slightest thing, related to honour, to quarrel, to anything wrong!

He made no sound. I have not seen him since that day. They know where they took him. This is how it was.

#### Can you tell me how did they arrest you?

Ah, how did they arrest me? I was at home. When my brother was released from prison, he was appointed to Kryezi, but he had the right to go to Dardhë for Mass, because there was no priest at that time in Dardhë.

#### **Priest?**

Yes, he was appointed Priest. I can't recall those dates and days... but once he came and told us that he was going to Dardhë. As far as I heard from people and we were afraid that they would put him back inside, I said to him: - You are going to Dardhë, the border is close, run off to Yugoslavia, save yourself! You've been inside for three

To be deeply honest,
I'm very tired and I
couldn't sleep all night
because I was in pain.
To put it bluntly,
see how my body is
trembling,
I don't remember.

years, who knows how many more they may assign to you!

#### Dardha is on the border with Tropoja?

It is close to Yugoslavia. And I said: - Go! - How can I go and then they will intern both of you? Ruin your life? - he said, "I don't care," I said, "Save yourself, save from them." Run away for yourself! Tone said the same. - No! - he said - I would better go in prison than ruin your life! And in fact he ruined his own life well.

We had a little dog. The dog grabbed him by the pants, pulled him in, and didn't let him go. I said:
-Come on, get inside! Don't let the dog bark in vain, tearing your pants! He came in, we calmed the dog and then he went away. Three or four days later, my brother was arrested. Three men came by...

#### Was he arrested for the second time?

Yes, for the second time!

#### What was he charged for the second time?

The same charges with me.

You were charged with murder in the village? The one who was killed was the chairman of the council, or another?

What chairman? I don't know, I don't know!

The indictment that was written to you and is in the file states that he was killed in the cell, inside the cell and that you took his body and hid it somewhere. It was also stated that you, yourself, collaborated to hide the corpse.

Yes, allegedly I hid it...

# This is the indictment they have made against you.

I hit his hand and glass was broken. Even for that they wanted to put me in jail.

## This was the case? Why did this boy die?

Yes, for this case, for this guy. No, no, the boy is not dead. His brother then strangled the other one who wounded his brother.

# And then they made it like these things happened in the church?

Yes, that happened in the church and we ended up in prison.

# Have you both sisters lived together all along?

We were two sisters together all the time.

## But why did they separate you?

The moment he came out of the cell, it was me only ... but this sister helped me for 18 and a half years.

## Then, who invented this shameful indictment?

Ilmi Sahiti and Ali Xhunga, those ones.

# I looked at your file and it is Ali Xhunga who asks questions all the time. Do you want to read it or not?

I either cannot see enough to read, or I want to!

#### Do you want me to read it to you?

I know, I am sure, that they have been recording me, that prosecutor.

#### Who was the prosecutor then?

Well, I forgot his name, the head of the prosecution, and the highest rank at the time.

#### In Albania or in Shkodra?

In Tirana!

#### **Arianit Cela?**

Arianit Çela! Arianit Çela was recording me there during the trial. I saw that they were recording me and I told him.

For that accusation, for all the accusations they have made against us for living with honour and pride, for all I can put my hand on fire.

Lies, lies...

# When they made to you this shameful accusation, did they tell you?

Absolutely nothing!

# So you know nothing at all during the entire investigation?

During the investigation, I didn't know what they were saying. I haven't confronted anyone, neither my brother, nor others.

## I mean, you found it out only when you went to court?

When I went to court then I realised: - Ilmi Sahiti and Ali Xhunga did this!

#### Ilmi Sahiti was alive at that time?

Yes, he was alive, a year after I have been arrested.

#### So Ilmi Sahiti died afterwards?

Yes, he self-poisoned or poisoned...

It is said that Ilmi Sahiti was poisoned. The newspapers wrote that he had cerebral haemorrhage, even though he was 38 years old at that time.

What he did, he found, of course!

# What did the brother say when he heard this accusation?

Nothing, what could he say? He couldn't speak.

#### Had he been tortured?

Yesl

# Your brother was also 38 years old, quite young.

Yes! He was young, I didn't even know he was 38 years old, but 32-33. Yes, I can be wrong, because the mind is lost", it is not...

No, Angjelina, maybe I'm wrong! I will look at the documents that have been prepared to take them to the beatification process in the Vatican.

I remember, when they came to take me, I said to my brother: - for God's sake, I fear they are going to arrest you again. The border is there, run, get away, since Yugoslavia is close! – Hey, I didn't do anything to anyone, to leave!

# Do you know what your brother's biggest fault was?

He has done nothing wrong.

#### Only one big fault he has!

What!

He did not sign the church statute as the regime wanted, and those who refused to sign it were shot dead. Let me tell you: Dom Ejëlli, Dom Dedë Malaj and Konrad Gjolaj and Dom Tish Lista who have poisoned him. Konrad was put in jail. These were called the strong ones who refused to sign the statute.

To be deeply honest, I'm very tired and I couldn't sleep all night because I was in pain. To put it bluntly, see how my body is trembling, I don't remember.

I only remember this, we had a pear tree in the courtyard. We had a table, four chairs there. On the day my brother was arrested, three people came - three officers, my sister served them coffee, and they sat there chatting. -Where is the priest? - He went to Dardhë for the Mass - she said, as he used to go to Kryezi and Dardhë for Mass, they were told priest...

When I was in prison, these officers used to call me: Vatican. Even Ilmi Sahiti, when he came to the prison in Shkodra, he called me close to my face, I turned the head to the other side.

#### How close to your face?

He come close to me, like this, and called me "Vatican" in front of the other women. With hatred, yes, with extreme hatred! In the years since I was convicted, he has run away from life.

It was not meant to find his remains.

After that no one was able to search for it? I couldn't, my sister remained paralyzed for so many years. Where could I go, only here, without anyone but God... I was helped by the great God and no one else, to be honest, only God helped me in prison and even here after I came out.

## He is known as a person who played havoc in Shkodra!

Yes! I knew some women from Malësia e Madhe, who sent him word to release them because he had promised. They wrote to him that they won't name him in court. I saw these with my own eyes, but he passed away and they continued in prison until the announcement of the amnesty.

# Who did Ilmi Sahiti meet with? With "saboteurs"?

He met with the Highlanders of Dukagjini. There were two sisters-in-law, I don't remember their names, to be honest, they wrote to him "you even promised to us... admit that you met and don't mention me, and then..."

#### He let them in prison! Meanwhile he died.

When they came to arrest my brother, we had a room, like this: the two sisters slept there; the brother had his own room and office in Kryezi. They came the previous day, asked about the priest and left, then the next day three officers came with a woman, and went straight into the brother's office.

He had a desk with a key. They went inside the brother's office: You are under arrest!

They started searching. I do not know what they said to him. This woman took me, put me in the bedroom, and did the searching. When I came out, I saw my sister sitting in a chair and a cousin of mine-a child not yet in first grade. I see my brother's bag.

-Hey, I asked the women who checked, what did you find? -No, she says- I didn't find anything. My brother had a gold watch, which was a gift to him but he kept it in his pocket. I noticed that the chain had fallen down, outside, and I said to my sister: - Tone, take the boy and when I leave this house, do not stay a second longer, because Dom Ejlli has been arrested. - How do you know? - she said. - look at the chain. Is it his chain? So, when I leave this house, do not stay any longer, and she did so, she left and went to the house in Shkodra.

#### Have they mistreated your brother?

The six who were there, added this one too, became seven in a dungeon as big as a hole.

From that moment on, you and your brother have no longer seen each other, only in the court?

Yes!

You were convicted in 1959, you were tried in Kinema Republika. When you Angjelina were first summoned to the investigator, accused of complicity in the murder, that is, the case of that son of Qela?

Yes! As far as I know!

Good! So this is the charge: Collaborator in murder! Even Dom Ejëlli, an accomplice in the murder, then made another accusation, which you didn't know at all, because they didn't tell you anything during the investigation?

For that accusation, for all the accusations they have made against us, for living with honour and pride, for all I can put my hand on fire. Lies, lies... only one officer has told the truth. In three years that he has been following me, he managed to say to Ali Xhunga: - There isn't betrayal even in the size of a needle! For three years I would have figured out a little!

Ali Xhunga was a short man... He is known for the bad things he did in Shkodra. He used to be in the major trials. There was also a certain Nesti Kopali and Zoi Themeli and Zoi Shkurti, who were the early officers who made horrors.

Yes, yes!

Do you know Fritz Radovani who wrote a book about Dom Ejëll Kovaçi? Fritz lives in Australia. Do you have Fritz's book?

No, No!

# He will write another book for all those who have not signed the statute.

Ah, journalists also came to me who wanted to publish a book for me, but they asked me for money, a million... Now my tears are dried out, my life is exhausted, everything, then let them do what they want, say what they want to... Only I am alive. They all died! I have prayed to God in prison. I did not sleep without saying, "Lord, let them not find mother alive!" and the Lord made my pray true, two years before I went out. A person came to me in prison and told me that someone had been convicted, and told me "so...so... is dead". Then I said: Lord, forgive me, I am glad he did not find her!

#### Do you know where the remains are?

No, no, I searched a lot. A friend of the brother came, he was also a priest, but younger. He came and told us that he had found one of those who shot him, but he was in the hospital. He was afraid to tell us not to take revenge. The brother's friend went and prayed to him on God. He came and picked me up and I went to the hospital, but I found him dead. It was not meant to find his remains.

After that no one was able to search for it? I couldn't, my sister remained paralyzed for so many years. Where could I go, only here, without anyone but God. I was helped by the great God and no one else, to be honest, only God helped me in prison and even here after I came out.

#### Did you marry?

Me? No! My sister got married. She didn't have children. But she had a gentle man, Tefë Martini, you should have heard his name.

#### What's his relation to Lef Martini

Both have been fugitives.

# In which country did you serve the prison, in Burrel or in Tirana?

In Tirana, I was in tailoring at the time, at hand-icrafts, then it closed. They closed it for both men and women. I don't know where the men had been taken. I remember that to go to the women's prison there was a big courtyard. The men worked, removing wood. When I got out of the car there were about 10-15 officers waiting there...

The director of this handicraft prison has been a certain Sotir Vulkani, a friend of Enver Hoxha, since the foundation of the communist party. There were two boys. One boy got a scholarship and went to study in Russia, the other was here. The boy there met a Russian and married her, but when things went awry with the Russians, he neither break up the marriage, nor did he return from Russia. Sotir was then convicted, dismissed from work, and the other boy imprisoned. It was said that this, Sotir Vulkani, had invented a torture for the convicts. At the end, his second son, who was put in prison, was tortured with the torture that his father had invented. And he shouted: - Father, what did you do to me with this invention of yours, father!

At the end of the interview, I want to thank you, Angjelina, for agreeing to give this interview to us.



## Missing person: Mark Tushi, shot by the regime

**Person sentenced: Lin Mhilli**, his son, as the child of an executed shot person.



Mark Tushi from Puka worked in the tower of Kolë Bibë Miraka. He was 30 years old when the partisans of the IV Brigade shot him dead. His body was dumped in a pit in the mountains.

Three months later, his cousins went and exhumed him and secretly buried him in their family's grave. Now they are all dead and the bones identification through DNA is indispensable, to exhuming and move them in a special burial place, which is decent for every human being.

#### Testimony of Lin Mhilli, his son

# Thirty years old. None from the fire squad shot the target. The commander went there and shot him with a pistol.

They took him, sent him to the mountain, dumped him in a pit, left him there and went away.

Interviewed by Marçel Hila

Mr. Lin, thank you for accepting this interview to the Authority for Information on Former State Security Files. Let's start by clarifying the reason your father was arrested and shot, what was it?

My father's charge was as I'm telling ... He married my mother in 1942 and didn't live in his own house, but to my mother's house together with my grandmother.

He has worked at the tower of Kolë Biba, when Kolë Biba was a minister...

#### Kolë Bibë Miraka?

He, who has been Minister of the Interior. When communism kick off, in '45, they came home and seized him, tied him up and took him for the IV<sup>th</sup> Partisan Brigade, headed by the brigade commander Mit'hat Goskova from Korça and operation commanders Koçi Topçe and Koçi Kolloguku.

The two shot him in the forehead, in the courtyard of the tower that at that time had become the courtyard of the police center, took him and shot him.

My father was 30 years old, and none from the fire squad shot the target, the bullets didn't hit him. The commander of the operation, Koçi Topçe, went and shot him with a pistol. He fell backwards. They took him, went up the mountain, put him in a pit there, left him there and fled.

My grandmother, my mother's mother, was far

away and they said to her: - Hey you! What are you doing here? She answered: - Nothing, I just get out to see, just like that ... - Do you have any relation with this man? - No, no, I have nothing to do, I just felt sorry when I saw that you shot him. - Go away! The poor lady left, and came back home at night.

#### What about you, when did you find out about your father's shot?

I found out when I went to school, 7 years later; when I went to school people used to say to me "You have a bad biography". I studied a lot, well, but people did not prefer me and they did not invite me at weddings, nor did they call me at gatherings ... I wasn't invited at parties, because they used to say to me: -your father shot and you should not come to our houses. Then I found out the reason my father was shot and what had happened.

Was anyone willing to shed light on the situation for his arrest and shooting? Did any of those who were present tell you anything? Have you ever met them?

Yes, yes, with those who have been partisans.

#### Who were those men you met?

I have met a Zef Marashi, he is dead now. Zef Marashi was our neighbour there, he was a partisan there. He has told me the complete story, as it was.

#### What did he tell you?

He told me: "I had nothing to do, because I was a simple partisan. We went

-he said- and took him from his house. I could not talk to them, but -he said- I was in so much pain for him that he was my neighbour, he was dear to me... We took him and left, but we were told to beat and torture them. My father told them: - Look here, if you want to shoot me, do it, do whatever you want, but no one touches me!

They did not put their hands on him, so they just tied him up and shot him there and the command-

- Look here, if you want to shoot me, do it, do whatever you want, but no one touches me! They did not put their hands on him... the commander ordered to open fire, but he wasn't hit by any bullets. Then the commander went and said to him, "You didn't fall down, you bastard?" and pulled out his pistol and shot to his head pam, pam.

I, for God's sake, to say wholehearted truth, I have been worried, but even if I would meet them. It would be difficult for me. ...it is not an unimportant thing that someone has harmed you ... But, I have not met him, and I am worried, for God's sake, that I have not met him, no one has ever shown me... people have told me afterwards.

- Who is that man that spoke?
- He has a bad biography!
- We do not need to hear your voice anymore! You must work, sit and keep your head down!

The workers turned their heads and stared at me; there were 200 workers in the canteen! The workers kept looking at me and ...

er ordered to open fire, but he wasn't hit by any bullets. Then the commander went and said to him, "You didn't fall down, you bastard?" and pulled out his pistol and shot to his head pam, pam.

- He fell down - he said, - he took the handkerchief from his pocket, wiped the blood out and died, afterwards we left.

#### Who took the handkerchief out of his pocket?

My father, by himself.

#### Like that...Shot two times?

Hit with two or three bullets on his head, at that moment, he took out his handkerchief and wiped out his blood ... with his own hand, fallen down. He has told me, when he visited us at my house, not only once, but several times when he came, that he had been very keen to my father. No he is dead, poor man. He also cut off my children's hair; he was that keen to my father.

#### He was your children's godfather?

Yes, yes godfather.

Let me ask you a slightly different question. If you had met, by chance, those who killed your father, how would you have reacted?

What can I say, man. I do not know how long I will live, I'm just worried, to tell you the truth...

#### Do you know anything, are they alive or dead?

This one, Mit'hat Goskova, died late; he lived in Tirana, I've been told, but I did not know where house was. Mit'hat Goskova, the commander of the IV<sup>th</sup> Brigade, had lived in Tirana and the other two died in Korça, that is, in their birthplace, Koçi Topçe and Koçi Kolloquku, who were the operation commanders. I have been told so, because I was a year and a half at that time, but this one, Mit'hat Goskova, who was the brigade commander, died in Tirana.

#### If you had met those who killed your father, how do you think, what would you do?

What would I have done? I, for God's sake, to say the truth wholehearted, I have been worried, but even if I would meet them. It would be difficult for me, because it is not an unimportant thing that someone has harmed you ... But, I have not met

### You must work and kee

him, and I am worried, for God's sake, that I have not met him, no one has ever shown me: people have told me afterwards. Someone told me that one of them lived here, his house was here, I can't recall him now, but he told me where his house was, but he died, he died in Tirana, he died after democracy came.

#### What do you mean by "I'm worried"?

Yes, I'm worried that ... what can I tell you ... When you are left... or a member of your family being shot, your father being murdered as it happened to me, I was left alone, in an oak house, one year and a half old at that time and grown up with difficulties during those times and for all my life, for God's sake, until democracy came, I mean I spent all my life "bow your head and look down!"...

till the day I die, when he made me sit down, and then...how could you speak...

What could I say? God, I did not say anything, man, so! I spoke about work, work conditions and things like that. -Sit down, sit down, -he said, because the other one said to him "he has his father shot". -You, -he said, -you have no right to speak! You sit down and stay sit!

People, on those times held weddings, got married, had parties and I could not go anywhere, not even my son, my child could not go anywhere. Once, my son went to a funeral, because a neighbour had died and the Party Members had said to him: - You must mind your own business -But why? -That you are not allowed! When I got home in the evening, my son was crying. I said: -What's

## -You have no right to sa

Once, at my workplace, I asked for my word to speak. I stood up to discuss and that chairman, because at those years there were professional committees and this man was the chairman of the professional committee of the district, and he knew me. The instructor of the party committee asked:- What did he say? He said: -This man has a bad biography! – Sit down, sit down! -he said -we do not need to hear you to speak anymore! You must sit and stay with your head down! The workers turned back staring at me; there were 200 workers in the canteen. They kept looking at me and, for God's sake, I will never forget that

wrong? He said: "For God's sake, dad, I went to a funeral, because Kola, Kolë Pjetri had died, they came together and said me- "Go home! "

I found him crying and said to him: -Come on son, it's nothing to worry!

So we have suffered a lot, me and my sister. My sister died 8 years ago. Oh God, we have suffered so much... in an oak house, leaking from outside. My mother and grandmother, we lived together... the fire never warmed us. My sister and I stayed next to the cow, wrapped in with an old thin cover...

## -You sit down and stay

## ep your head down!

When my father was shot, his father's house was burned down. They took his livestock and burned perished. God might have heard her, because that night, I left work early and went to see her and then, she suddenly died.

For God's sake, she has died 41 years ago, and I cannot spend a day without thinking of her, about my mother ... and so...

Could you keep any personal belongings of your father?

## ay a word!

There was only one watch he kept here in his pocket, nothing else.

#### Have you suffered any psychological violence? Have you and your children been insulted?

No, not physical violence, because since we began to realize and comprehend what shooting was, and what the regime was, from that time onwards, we remained silent, we saw our life and work that for God's sake, neither I nor my sister never wanted to know, my mother even less. God, the fear I have had when people told me about that...biography thing ... even today I try not to break the state rules or to make any mistakes. By God, during all my life, even when we had run out of food, I hadn't not touched a thing, not the tiniest thing. Even if I would find something on the road, I swear to God, I wouldn't get it. Why?

his house. At that time, we were living in my mother's mother's house, because her husband and son had died and she was left alone with my mother. My mother died at the age of 59, suffering. She got a cold, I sent her to the hospital where she hospitalised for 10 days and 10 days later she I was afraid, I was afraid that I would be jailed; because we were different... we were standing apart from the others in the neighbourhood. No, we were never tortured, we have always mind our own business, working only...

#### Have you suffered financially?

At that time we suffered for everything, but for my mother and my mother's mother, who lived under an oak house, for God... We only had two cows and from those cows, we had milk, yoghurt, cheese, but we had no bread and any other thing

They just went to our neighbours and took 5 kilos of grain, ask 5 other kg to another neighbour and bring it home. When I asked to my mother "mother give us some bread because we will go to school" she replied -"eat cheese and yogurt, without bread, we haven't cook it yet, when you'll come back from school you will find it ready". They did not have it at all, but they used to go and take it to a neighbour or any generous person of theirs. They used to take 5 kilos of grain, ground it in the grain mill and cooked the bread to be ready for dinner, but the next day it would be finished, they had nowhere to ask for some more grain, in fact, poverty was everywhere, and most of the families were poor but we had nothing, only the cows that my mother's mother had had. Two cows, calves, we had milk and yoghurt, nothing else, a few trees, no grapes, nothing at all, we didn't have anything.

#### The salaries were low?

Salary? What salary? Till I started working at the age of 14...

At the age of 14, I went out and started working. The director of the Fushë Arrëz Plant, Dali Hasani, assigned me the duty of removing the sawdust. I worked there for 6 or 8 months. I do not know. I swear to God, and they reported me and wanted to fire me. But why did they fire me? "Because he has a bad biography and can burn the plant."





## For God's sake, I will never forget that till the day I die.

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They discharged me from there. Dali Hasani said to me: - Hey Lin, I am obliged to discharge you from here, but I am taking you somewhere else. - Why, man? - I'm not telling you the reason why! But I realized what happened next, someone else replaced me there. I was discharged from the plant and taken to the forest, then I took a sawmill course. I took the chainsaw and started cutting wood in the forest. I worked in the Krrab plant, in the middle of the snow and rain for 30 years and 8 months, without interruption.

Then I provided bread, I had bread. I built a house of planks and other things and then I built another house because my children grew up. I found a job for two of my sons, I worked too, and with our hard work we built the other house, good enough, in '93. In January '93 we came to Tirana and we live in Lapraka.

#### How did you experience the absence of a father during your lifetime?

Hey, I swear to God, how could I not feel his absence ... since I was old enough to remember things and afterwords, nothing has come out of my mind. How was it possible not to feel it, man? When you do not have a father...

To be honest, my father had a lot of kind friends and God too, have helped me to be educated, earn respect and love and other things. The old people at that time helped me a lot. Whose son are you? I am Mark Tushi's son. Uuuu ... Mark Tushi who was shot? Yes! They used to take my hand and said "Let's stay together for 5 minutes".

"Well, what a man your father was, Lin! You must take care to keep the authority and respect he had. You had a friendly, loyal and a good father ", I, too, by God, tried hard, I benefited a lot from those men at that time. Even by working, even giving respect, but also taking care of everything, that they were really well-educated, real men and they weren't mean as for example, to tell me "you had a father and now he has gone, do whatever you like ".

God, I have heard them and I took advantage of those old men who educated me at that time. Yes, by God, they have educated me as if a father teaches his child, that it is true that the mother raises and sustains you, but the father educates his child. I did not have a father, except for those two old women, my mother and my mother's mother, I did not have ... I had my sister too.

## Did you ask for his presence, to be by your side on your life? When exactly did you ask for him mostly? When did you get married? When you, yourself became a father?

By God, I was married when I was 18 years old. At that time, my mother and grandmother wanted to marry me as soon as possible, not being 18 yet, I went to be celebrated in the court, as we were not officially married.

At the end of my second year of marriage, my first son was born; my second son had left me a month ago. For god's sake, I felt greater joy ever; so did my mother and grandmother when the first son was born, as well.

Even when I got married, my father wasn't, even when my son was born, so he has always been

on my mind, since I was old enough to realize what a father is, that is, since I was 7 years old and onward he has always been on my mind, till the day I'll die he will be there. The same thing happens to me with my mother.

My mother died 41 years ago, on April 29, I swear to God, there is not a day of the Great God that I do not think about them. I have also said to other people, I swear to God, if someone would say you will live for another 5 or 6 years, I would say.... those years I would give to my mother, and 1 year to my grandmother, just to see where I am and the way I live today, because I have had so many sufferings. My desolate mother got up all night to clean that house. And what to clean in such a house: it dripped at night, it was on soil, the yard too. Now, I swear to God, we never had even a lek (ALL) made for nothing, for free, only by working hard, everybody knows this, so they would see how I live now and the way I went through.

We have suffered a lot, for God's sake! Who cannot understand this, only the ones who...

#### How did you expect the communism to fall down? Where were you, how old were you at the time?

How was it for me? I swear to God, I have been waiting this for so long, I had no greater joy, neither when my child was born, nor when I got married, nor when ... I do not know what to say... when communism fell down...

Because I already told you, when you cannot go to a wedding, when you cannot go to a dinner to a friend... or for example, he was happy to invite you, but he couldn't because he was afraid of the others, he was happy to stay with me, but he couldn't.

I worked in Krrabë. We had pigs, we called them "thi", but now we call them "pigs". My friend with whom I worked, slaughtered it and told me "come tonight". We were 4-5 workers working together. We went there. The party secretary, a teacher, were at a meeting and there they heard that this friend had slaughtered a pig. He came to the yard, saw us from the window and recognized me, that

I started working when I was 14 years old. They reported me and wanted to fire me.



"He is of a bad biography and can burn the plant." I was afraid, I was afraid that I would be imprisoned; because we were different ... we were standing apart from the others in the neighbourhood...

The next day we had no more bread, and nowhere to ask for...

In fact, poverty was everywhere, but we had nothing!

Two cows, calves, we had milk and yoghurt, nothing else, a few trees, no grapes, nothing at all!

the electric light was on, and he said to my friend and I heard him: I was coming because you have slaughtered the pig, but I cannot come, because you have invited Lin, Lin Marku over there. I do not know what he said next, but I felt it and when he came in I said to him: -O Dedë, because we called him Dedë, I am leaving, I have to go home in half an hour, but tell him to come in. -What are you saying, man? —he told me. —May he never come to my house again! We work together, we live together, and I swear to God, I won't let you go anywhere!

#### How did you feel about the fall down of the communism?

I was at the village at that time, about 47 years old. My son came, because he studied in Tirana, he had gone a year before, even Deda participated in the student demonstration. My son came to the village and held meetings. By God, I did not believe it. My son said "This is over, that's done!" I still don't believe it, you dear brother. I did not believe, that it was impossible, man. I could not believe it, I could not believe it. – No way, son. What about you, have you seen the protest we organised as students? The eldest son, Mëhilli, with about 3 friends, raised the section of the Democratic Party in the village.

We moved to Lapraka on January 20, 1993.

#### Do you know anything about the grave of vour deceased father?

Three months later, when the partisans left and there were no more men from the IV<sup>th</sup> Brigade, my three cousins went at the place, together with 2 of their godfathers and examined the place. They were told where he has been dumped, so they exhumed and secretly put it in their graveyard at night, in their own graveyard.

Now there are all four brothers, because they are all dead. At that time they used to bury women in separate places from men. My father is with them in the same grave too.

#### Are you expecting the final tests to be completed?

Yes, tests to find my father's bones. I want to exhume and put them in my mother's grave ... I will do it because it's a burden on me. I'm worried about finding some photos of my father too.

You are right, we will do our best! God bless you! Thank you very much for the interview. Lots of respect for the excessive suffering you have gone through!

The elder men at that time helped me a lot I, too, by God, tried hard, I benefited a lot from those people at that time. I, too, by God, have heard them and I took advantage of those elder men who educated me at that time, as a father teaches his child!

I did not have a father, just those two old women, my mother and my grandmother and my sister. Since I was old enough to remember things and after words, nothing has come out of my mind. How was it possible not to feel it, man...When you don't have a father ... Even when I got married, I missed my father, even when my son was born, so he has always been on my mind, since I was old enough to realize what a father is, that is, since I was 7 years old and onward he has always been on my mind. The same goes for my mother, I swear to God, there isn't a day of the great God that I don't think about them.



## Missing person: Dom Nikollë Gazulli



**Dom Nikollë Gazulli**, was a Franciscan Catholic priest, notable as the most erudite among them

He has collected people's treasure and published it in the magazines of the time. His publication "Dictionary of Geg" published in 1941 on the magazine "Visaret e Kombit", is of great value - a work that not only collects and records words of

Albanian language, derived from the deepest locations of the northern highlands, but also proves the way how the variety of the words developed spontaneously and naturally, at that particular historical period, without the formalized forced interventions that were later imposed, as a result of Albanian language standardization process.

During the reign of King Zog, Dom Nikollë Gazulli was sentenced to life imprisonment in Gjirokastra prison, while his brother, Dom Gjoni, was sentenced to death and executed by hanging. Thanks to the intercession of the priest and the great national poet Gjergj Fishta, Dom Nikollë was spared his life.

After communism taking over, he became the target of their pursuit and it is not known his fate nor where his body ended up after his death.

## Testimony of **Enkelejda Shkreli**, linguistic researcher, albanologist

## The priest who has collected in a dictionary, the treasure of the Albanian language of "North Albania", as he called it.

#### ... but he is still without a grave!

Interviewed by Marçel Hila

Good day, Mrs. Enkelejda. You have expressed your willingness to provide us everything you know and you have been able to prove, regarding the priest Dom Nikollë Gazulli.

By profession I am a linguistic researcher, an albanologist. Working on a series of dictionaries of a period beginning from 1954, I found a dictionary of rare words published in '41 in "Visaret e Kombit" journal, by Dom Nikollë Gazulli: The Dictionary of "Geg North Dialect, of Northern Albania, as he called it.

I didn't know anything about who Dom Nikollë Gazulli was. The dictionary was ready on Christmas time of 2005, but I also required to have a photo of Dom Gazulli. I went to father Zefi who gave me the contacts of some distant relatives of Dom Nikollë in Shkodra, Edmond Gazulli, a teacher. He was the one who found and brought me some photos of Dom Gazulli. When I asked him where

Dom Gazulli was resting, he told me that somewhere in the graveyard of Rrëmai, but when we asked to clear up, it turned out that there was the grave of Dom Gazulli's brother, Dom Gjoni, who was hanged by Ahmet Zogu.

I noticed that even in publications Dom Nikollë had been vanished for about 4-5 years. At the time when his brother was hanged, he was taken and sent to Gjirokastra prison, sentenced to life imprisonment. Fishta had interceded and his life was spared.

I asked everyone I could, if they had any information about the place where Dom Gazulli might have been buried, but no information at all. Then I went to father Zefi and told him that I had to ask for some information, to go to the mountain, to Shkrel.

When we went to Shkrel, one of the residents who took care of the church told us that it was

said, by a person who used to send him food every day that Dom Nikollë Gazulli had been killed in Vrith - Nikollë Prekusha from Vithrre.

Yes, such words have been rumoured, but it is also said that this variant is not true. It is about the time after the end of the Second World War, when the communists took over and Dom Nikolli was forced to put out of sight because they wanted to seize and execute him.

Yes! It is said that he stayed in a place, located at the way in Fushë Lugje, for two or three days because the pursuit forces had come to seize him. I also took a picture of that place: it is like a slit to hide a fox. Ivanaj has placed a juniper cross there, as by tradition.

After leaving the place he was hidden, he went to Vridh and there, he was given food.

There are rumours that Preng Nikollë Prekusha killed him.

It is said that many bullets with no blood stains were found in his body, just one bloody bullet in his forehead. Some rumoured about he killed himself, but a priest is forbidden to do that, so this version is not convincing.

After they found his body, dragged him by a cart and took him to the church of Stërkuja. They had ordered to bury him with no trace around. However, the boys who buried him had their own chapel, so they marked the place with stones around to be distinguished. Afterward, Dom Pjetër Gruda, the last parish priest of the church, together with four men, taken on trust, tried to secretly remove his body and bury him to Shkrel.

It is rumoured to be sent at the altar "Shna Ndou" church, where they opened the planks and put his body underneath.

From the data we have collected, it is known that Dom Nikolli sheltered on 28 to 29 November Dom Lazër Shanto, who as a friend of Mustafa Kruja, was targeted by the communists who were trying to seize him. They were aware of the methods used by the communists and feared that if he would be seized, they would torture him. And that's what really happened, even worse.

When Dom Lazër Shanto was seized by the communists, a man named Isuf Mersini, together with Vas Koleci cut off his legs and broke his arms. The convicted was still alive, lying backwards on the ground. Under these conditions, Colonel Esat Ndreu - Head of the Military Court of Shkodra District, Dali Ndreu's brother, sentenced him to death: The amputated detainee lying on the ground and the colonel looked at each other...and sentenced him to death.

I had heard that he had been tortured in front of his mother.

Under that time rules, the family had the right to see their convicted relative after the death sentence was handed down. His mother, Lugjia, went and found his body covered with worms and his own faeces, because they did not move him even for his personal needs. When she smelled the stinking rotten smell, she realized that his body was decaying ... He himself asked his mother to tell them to kill him. Head of the People's Defence Section and begged him: "Please, kill him, because the boy cannot stand anymore!"

But they did not kill him, because they had a memo from Enver Hoxha, that maybe he could have information about Mustafa Kruja and Maliq Bushati as exponents of the fascist government. They took him to Tirana together with Sulço beg Bushati.

They were tortured till their bodies were covered with blood; they wrapped them both with the same blanket and their bodies soaked with blood stuck to each other. In the book "Double-headed eagle, sickle and hammer" Beqir Ajazi notes that in 1945 they were brought to the prison of Tirana, nowadays known as the "House with

Dom Gazulli has been the most academic among the Franciscans. Well known for crucial research on the Illyrian period.

He defines Meshari as "The oldest book of the Albanian language".

Leaves". The wounds were stuck. There was no greater pain: Separating the body of an 80-year-old man from that of Dom Lazri 52 years old! They screamed - a pain that had no voice! After they saw that they could not get anything out of Dom Lazri, they killed him on February 19, 1945. Today, Dom Lazri is declared a Martyr.

There were 67 files containing facts, but now they're lost.

I talked to Dom Vlash regarding Dom Nikollë Gazulli, and he told me that he is convinced that Dom Gazulli does not rest in Shkrel, but in Dedaj. His remains are in the church in Dedaj, not in Shkrel. However, all the places that have been mentioned as possible places, where he may have been buried, should be carefully verified.

I have been looking for it since 2006. I possess every letter that man has written, those that have been published, of course, because I have no other source, nowhere to find the others. He has left a wonderful dictionary, which I will republish it soon, I have collected them from "Hylli i Dritës" magazine, up to letter K.

He has collected songs from the highlands, church songs before the Ottoman conquest. Each of them is very beautiful all. Oh, how beautiful they are, I will republish them all; none of his letters will remain unpublished. His letters are extraordinary!

Dom Gazulli has been the most academic among the Franciscans

I presume that Çabej had met him, because in a small agenda of Çabej, when he was in Rome, among the telephone numbers was also Gazulli's number. At that time Gazulli was studying in Rome, as he completed half of his studies in Innsbruck and half in Rome. He is well known for crucial research on the Illyrian period. When he talks about Meshari, Dom Nikolli defines it "the oldest book of the Albanian language".

Academics tell that at the Vatican libraries there are about 4300 meters full of books on Albania.

It is our duty to find the place where the remains of these martyrs are located and to build a resting place, worthy of their work in the service of our nation and to inherit to the younger generations the respect for these erudite and for all those who contribute to the national cause despite of their costume or affiliation.

Thank you, madam, for your modest help in searching for Dom Nikollë Gazulli remains!

Dom Nikollë Gazulli's brother was sentenced by King Zog, to be executed by hanging... While Dom Nikollë was sentenced to life imprisonment in Gjirokastra prison, Gjergj Fishta interceded to spare his life.



## Missing person: Shemsedin Mulosmanaj



**Shemsedin Mulosmani,** son of Gjetë Mulosmani.

He was interned in the camp Tepelena, when he was only 9 years old and suffered unjustly for 3 years. He was killed in the Tepelena camp by a war landmine.

Under daily surveillance by the communists, Shemsedin Mulosmani's father, Gjeta Mulosmani, fled because of the fear that the communists would imprison and then kill him and his adult sons, as they did with his brother and cousins.

Crossing the border was very difficult, due to the very rough mountainous terrain, therefore it was impossible for him to take with him the whole family. He planned to run away with his older sons who, were directly at risk of imprisonment, as well as with his wife, in order not to leave any adult in

the family, on whom the communist regime would strike. Considering the young age of their children and that they would not have any consequence about their fled, they were temporarily left alone at home.

Beyond any normal logic, the children left alone at home, Shemsedin 9 years old, his sister Mine 13 years old and the other sister 11 years old, turn into the target of communist hatred and violence: they were imprisoned and transferred from one prison to another, until they ended up in an internment camp, in Tepelena.

The children suffered for 3 years as internees in the Tepelena camp, till someone raised his voice saying that these children had no head of the family and should not stay in internment. After that, they were released, but could not find any transportation means to travel home, to Tropoja from Tepelena, which was far away in northern Albania. Waiting for a car to leave, they stayed for more than a month in the Tepelena camp.

Unfortunately, while playing, Shemsedin found a war landmine and was accidentally killed. His body was smashed. His head was never found. Mine gathered all the remains of his body and buried them somewhere on the camp outskirts.

She seeks to find her brother's remains and bury that child, who suffered unjustly in internment and whose life was cut short as a child, in a decant tomb.

## Testimony of Mine Mulosmanaj, Shemsedini's sister

## Although they were lone children, they were imprisoned and interned in the Tepelena camp

There is nothing that makes me forget how I have left him there, on the ground...

Everyone had had somebody, but for him I was his mother, sister, father and brother

I have been with him. I have prepared his food, I have buried him...

Interviewed by Fatmira Nikolli

Hello, Mrs. Mine. Thank you for taking your time and tell us about the tragedy that hit your family, when you were still a child.

My name is Mine Çel Mulosmanaj (Balaj), born in Bujan, Tropoja, in the family of Binak Alia. My father's name was Gjetë, mother's name Gju. Our parents and our two older brothers, the four of them fled.

In which year did your parents leave Albania?

In 1947.

What happened in 1947 that your parents made that difficult decision?

My uncle, my father's brother, died in prison. A cousin of mine also died in prison: in Shkodra prison and that of Durrës. So, we were worried about our father. He was watched everywhere, in order to find a minimal pretext to put him in prison. He was careful even when passing the yard. I was a child. My father called me and said: - We have to flee!

I said, "What flee?", that I did not know what the word "flee" meant. My father continued: - We will leave: me, your mother and your two brothers. I shouted "ku-kuuu", "where will you leave us?" and I burst into tears.

He told me: - You are 13 years old, Elmi 11 and your brother 9. Tonight we will leave, but tomor-

row do not report us to the police. My father told me that if he would leave my mother home, with us, then we would be interned, because the mother was considered as the head of the family, but if we would be alone, they couldn't send us in internment because we were young, under 13 years old. They got ready and I accompanied the four of them, by myself, to the outer door.

They went out, we accompanied them and they left. We went and locked home with my little sister and brother, gathered like that, like chickens. The next day I did not report anything.

Some people came and asked my brother: - Where is your father? He just cracked a piece of wood to sparkle: tak tak... - Where is he? He did not speak at all and just looked at me.

The next day we went to the police and I said: -I do not know where my parents are. Today, when I got up, I did not find them. I do not know where they are. I am left alone with 2 little kids, my sister and my brother ... I do not know where my parents are. Paf, he knocked on the table.- Auuuu – he said. They did not flee last night, but the day before yesterday! Then I replied: If they left the day before yesterday, why didn't you tell me anything?

They left the day before yesterday? But, when I got up late at night they were not home. That's the lie my father had told me to say to them.

I was kept there for a couple of hours, and then I ran home. 3 weeks later, the police came home, took us and sent us to Tropoja. When we went to Tropoja, we were put in prison where there were many other people from Tropoja. It was Drane Jaku, a man named Xhavit from Pac and many others. I spent a couple of weeks in Tropoja prison.

A cousin of ours came and took us for a week, and then they sent us back to prison. The police took us and we have walked from Tropoja to Kukes. My brother's shoes ripped. We stayed imprisoned in Kukes for three weeks. From there we were sent to Berat prison. Even there, we stayed imprisoned for a couple of weeks, all of us

My father called me and said: - We have to flee!
I said, "What flee?"
I did not know what the word "flee" meant!

in the same room. After two weeks, they sent us to Turan, Tepelena. There was the time I became a woman, 13 years old. We had never seen bread with our eyes. And we were given our portion, I took it away to give it to my sister and brother. When the vehicle that delivered bread used to come...ohooo... I shared the corn spike: The largest portion I used to give to my brother, then I shared the rest with my sister.

Afterward they took us to Tepelena, to the barracks, down there, surrounded by barbed wires. We were watched by guards. The bread was full of worms, flies, the food was awful ... I do not know how we managed to live! We went out every day...

Drane Jaku's son died and she buried him there.

Once, my brother got sick for 6 weeks and he used to shout day and night: -Oh, my mum...

I said: - Here she is. Why are you shouting, stay lied down, you are sick! Here's your mum, she is taking care of you. I do not know how I managed to take him twice to Gjirokastra, for medical aid. I do not know how I did it. I took some medication.

#### The bread was full of worms, flies, the food was awful! I do not know how we have lived!

for 3 days. We stayed there for about a month. We came back. They hardly gave us a slice of bread, that's all... We barely stayed alive.

On 28-29 November, were called all the head of the families. We went there one by one, on a row. When it was my turn, I entered and they said to me: - Why did you come, young woman? - I came, because I am the head of the family. They said: There is no way! You must live with any old man or woman in the barracks.

I told them: - I, I am the head of the family! – How is it possible? How old are you? -13 years old! - How is it possible? You are the head of the family and you are in internment? -Yes, I live with my younger sister and brother. Then he shouted "uiiii ..." and put his hands on his head. – How could it be possible that a Party, an organ or any organization takes the kids and intern them at this very young age?

Afterwards they said they would release us.

#### In which year were you released?

In 1950.

#### So, you were interned in Tepelena for 3 years, from 1947 to 1950?

Yes! It was November 28-29 when we were released. But after that, we have been waiting for any transportation means to send us to Tropoja. No car, no means at all.

My brother used to go out. -A car came! - He saidbut nothing. Now that we were released we were even worse; it would be better to be in internment, as we were before, altogether. My brother used to go out and say: - No car is coming. - Huh - I told him - it will come at any moment.

My brother wanted to play out with friends. - Mine, I will go out to town with my friends - he told me. I did not know what they were doing. They used to find certain spheres, like pots and play with them. So, even my brother, had seen one alike, digging on the ground ... There were two friends. The other one was called by his mother to feed and so he was left alone digging, after a while... boom buuum ... I rushed towards him. When I went there, I didn't see anything, except for some clothes, I screamed.

I don't remember what I did. I tore my hair and I was held by 2 or 3 men at a time. I went there and I gathered, with my dress those dispersed body parts of him. I removed a sheet and put there every part I had gathered in my dress. I do not know, he died in front of me!

Till my last day, what happened there will stay forever within me.

When I'll die, my last will is for everyone, to find and burry him with me, in my grave! No one can look at him anymore! Listen! I just entombed him.

When I buried him, I have placed there some sticks like that, bad branches. The sheet was stained with blood. I do not know, are the bones mixed with his flesh? His head was separated from his body ... Did anyone find his head that was taken off? But who has ever looked for it?

## When the explosion happened, you were inside the garrisons and after hearing the blust, you went there and found out that he was your brother? Did you alone gather his body pieces?

Yes. When I went there, I also saw the body, his clothes were there. I began to cry, scream and began to gather his parts with my dress and then wrapped on a sheet...I placed those sticks there too. I don't know if anyone else has gathered. It was his sock there too...

#### Do you remember where you buried your brother's body?

The grave is there behind the...

#### Behind the garrisons?

If I could go there now, I do not know, but it has not been right behind the barracks.

#### Did you open the grave by yourself or did anybody help you? Did you have a mortal casket?

No, no, it was opened by others, not me. I do not know who did it. There was no nothing. I put him in, like that, just in that sheet. I removed it from the bed - a white sheet, I put those parts in there, wrapped it and dropped down it in the grave.

Without a coffin, just wrapped with that sheet. No plank, without concrete, nothing, except those sticks, like that.

Two of my brothers have died, the 2 sons of my sister have died too, I have had many losses. I have been very sad and I have grieved for them...

I could never forget that, the way he was buried. The others are buried with a coffin and everything necessary... he was buried only by his sister.

#### Was it December 29, 1950 when this tragedy happened?

Yes!

#### How long did you stay there in the barracks?

A little.

My father died in Yugoslavia. My mother had died 14 days before our arrival. We went there. I could not bring with me their brother, but I also could not meet my father and mother!

#### Did you go to the grave during this time?

How couldn't I?! I have even been thinking of it lately, because if I could think like I do today, I would have exhumed his body and bring him here in Tropoja land, but I had no permission and I was a just child.

If I could set up a tent there, because we covered him with a tapestry, that was covered in blood and mud. I would never leave that place, if it wasn't for my sister, that it has been a great horror.

A car came to take us to Tropoja, 1 month later. The road meandered, round and round Tepelena, and it was a spot from where I could see the grave one more time.

The car took us to Has of Shkodra and left us there, four families altogether. What should we do there? They left us so that for the car not to consume anymore. What could we do? My sister's brother-in-law passes by, together with a po-

... I buried him. When I buried him, I have placed there some sticks like that, bad branches. The sheet was stained with blood. I don't know, are the bones mixed with his flesh? His head was separated from his body ... Did anyone find his head that was taken off? But who has ever looked for it?!

No letter, not a thing from them:
We didn't know how they were, alone in God's land! For 46 years I did not know if any of my brothers was alive, or if I had a sister.
When I found out that my father had died in Yugoslavia, I fainted. These are the sufferings of this 85 year old woman today!

liceman from the same village of that of my sister, because at that time they used to transport the food on horseback to Shkodra and asked: - What are you doing here?

-We are interned and they dropped us here. - But what are you going to do? - What to do now, we will just stay here. When he says to me: Stop, I am your sister's brother-in-law. He took me and my sister from Shkodra and sent us to Lushn-ja, where was living our sister. How did we walk on our own feet? How could we? Now, I tell to myself how could you walk from Shkodra, with no food, no water, we left our brother ... - How could you? My sister was on the horseback, in front. When we arrived at my sister, our feet hurt, because of the long road on foot.

Ever since we came from the internment, with lice, it was terrible. She washed us, cleaned us, looked at us and talked to her husband. She told us that our father had come to pick us up, but he had not found us home.

So, your father, since he left in '47, after sheltering your adult brothers, had returned again to take you too?

Yes, and he did not find us there. He was accompanied by another man, but they had found the house burnt down.

Police used to guard at night...

We stayed at my sister's house for three days and returned home, because we were worried that our father would come.

The police used to come every evening and guarded all night. Our uncle came to pick us up. He asked for some food, but I only had a slice of cheese and bread. He asked: -Do you have anything else? - No, just a handful of salt. Then my uncle went straight to the town, to Bajram Curr, and asked the authorities to take us with him, that we had nothing to eat and so he signed for our custody. Our father wanted to take us, but my uncle refused, otherwise he and his family would be imprisoned... We stayed with our uncles and got married here.

No letter, not a thing from them: We didn't know how they were, nothing, alone in God's land!

For 46 years I did not know if any of my brothers was alive, or if I had any sister. When I found out

He was sick for six weeks and stayed for some days with no food to eat.

I used to put his ration of bread on the tile, dried it and put it in a white bag, so that when he would be hungry, I could give him as much bread as he wanted.

I have boiled oak grapes for him....

I do not know how I managed to live!
Nobody has ever sent me a penny!

that my father had died in Yugoslavia, I fainted. These are the sufferings of this 85 year old woman today!

### After the '90s, when communism collapsed, did you try to connect with the rest of the family abroad?

Yes. We went and enter to the American embassy. I was with my two sisters and one of our cousins ... We were asked by an Albanian and an American. Their eyes were in tears when I told them about our story in internment, when I was only 13 years old and that they called me "head of the family".

When I went there, to America, my father died in Yugoslavia. They wrote us a letter and they sent us the guarantee letter to go there for a visit. But when we got there, my mother had died 14 days before our arrival. We met our two married brothers: one was married with no children, the other had 5 children 3 daughters and 2 sons. We went there. I could not bring with me their brother, but I also could not meet my father and mother!

I tried to seem as if I was enjoying myself... I was really pleased that we met our brothers, our brother's children, but I couldn't take my brother to meet them, I did not see my mother and father. It was great boredom! We met, we stayed... I've been there since '92.

#### When did you go to Tepelena after the '90s?

How many years? I have always said that I don't want to die without going to the place where my brother died ... When Simon said that we will go together with all the member of the association, that day I went with the association. When I got there, I went down that road with my two sisters and brother. I looked all over the place and said to my son "come here" and showed him the place where I had to sleep, me and my brother.

-O my god, how do I feel! Here's where my brother died ..., O god let me die!

We went and ... - Look, behind that... - I said to them- my brother was killed there.

I could not go to the grave, but I remember.

#### Do you really remember the grave?

Yes, I remember the place! If I would go there, I can find it and say: Here it is!

While we were there, I saw all those places: where my brother was killed and where I have stayed and when I was released...

#### How do you remember your brother?

After so many years, I remember my brother, but I cannot describe him. There were no pictures

.He was white, I remember, he was white and he had white hair. Do you know how? He had blue eyes. He was white and he was not very thin, but fat. He has been a good boy, very smart, that's all I remember. There was no photo. Ah, if it could be any photographer, to take him a picture, so I could have it!

### During the time you had been there, after your release, you told me he waited for the car.

Yes, yes! He was waiting for the car to come and pick us up, because 800 of us had been released. There were 9 thousand people there and only 800 people were released.

He used to wait for the car every day: When will it come, when will it come? How many cars were from other districts? He used to say to me: - Mine, the car did not come, did it? I said: - Even our car will come too.

The day he was killed was Thursday, the next day was Friday, and the car came on Saturday. I couldn't move and barely got in the car...

#### So, two days after your brother died, the car came?

Two days, two days after he died. He died on Thursday, and then it was Friday, the car came on Saturday... I neither know nor think of it now.

I fall asleep and wake up, I swear to his soul, every day and every night, how old I am so far, if



I always said: I do not want to die without going to the place my brother died ...



I have ever fell asleep one night, only one night or spend only one sole day without thinking of him. Nothing can get him out of my mind, how I left him there on the ground that he died in that horrible way: Everyone had had someone, while I was his mother, sister, father and brother. I have been with him. I prepared him food. I had buried him...

He was sick for six weeks and stayed for some days with no food to eat.

I used to put his ration of bread on the tile, dried it and put it in a white bag, so that when he would be hungry, I could give him as much bread as he wanted. I have boiled oak grapes for him.

I did not use to eat it but in order not to have diarrhoea, I added a spoonful of sugar ... I do not know how I managed to live.

Nobody sent me a penny! Even once, I saw a lot of money, fall out there, on the ground. I did not know who belonged to. I took them and put them in my pocket.

I was walking to the barracks when I heard someone shouting.

- -What's wrong Sab, why are you shouting? I asked. What's up? I missed something. What did you miss?
- I lost one thousand lek. I had them wrapped in a white striped clothe. I said: - I found it, - and I gave it to him.

This is my life...

They called us reactionaries. The children were not allowed to study. My daughter had excellent grades, 10, the best student in the village and they didn't give her the right to study: -You are persecuted!

I have 6 children. All have only high school diploma. They were not allowed to study, except to attend the night school.

Now my brother died and his 2 sons also died. The two sons of my sisters also died...

The first brother who died was younger than the other. When I went there and saw him, I said crying:

"Where are you, my brother? You died on the same date, the same day and exact hour with your brother in Tepelena!"

No one knows, except me, so I won't forget that hour and that date!

Thus, in the course of time, my brother died there, my two sisters died here, my brother's two sons died there, and the other boy died...

Those I had there also passed away.

This is my life!

This is my life... They called us reactionaries. The children were not allowed to study. My daughter had excellent grades, 10, the best student in the village and they didn't give her the right to study:

- You are persecuted!



### Missing person: Koço Kota

#### **Sufferers: Family members and his relatives**



put salt inside the opened wounds. In the last days of his life, they did not give him a

He was imprisoned in Burrell Prison, cell 7, where he was subjected to inhuman torture. The executioners pierced his flesh with bayonets and then

drop of water and left him to die of thirst. Transformed into a living corpse with infected wounds, he died on September 1, 1947. The remains are not yet known where they are.

He had two children: a daughter and a son

Koço Kota member of Ismail Qemali government, holding the position of Chief Secretary in the Ministry of Education, one of the organizers of Lushnja Congress, in 1928. He was elected as Prime Minister of the Albanian State during the kingdom period and was the last prime minister before the fascist occupation.

During World War II he stayed illegally in Cameria, where he organized the Albanian Çam Movement against Italy's attack on Greece, in cooperation with the Greek anti-fascist movement.

On January 1, 1945, State Security Service organized his abduction in a van in Thessaloniki, imprisoned him and sentenced him to death, which was later converted to life imprisonment with 30 years in prison.

Nuçi Kota, Koço Kota's son, had studied at the Sorbonne University, France, where he defended a scientific study on the Albanian-Greek border, a work that was later used by the communists themselves. Participated in the resistance movement through the Legality organization. Died in the US from a heart attack at the age of 46, in 1965.

Jorgji Kota, Koço Kota's cousin and activist of the Antifascist National Liberation Front. He was sentenced to 7 years in prison for attitudes against the communist party, but with the intervention of Haxhi Lleshi his sentence was converted and he served only 14 months in prison, in Tirana and Durres. He died in 1975.

## Testimony of **Harallamb Kota**, **Koço Kota**'s relative

# The Albanian Prime Minister, who illegally organized the anti-fascist resistance in Çameria against Greece invasion from Italy

They cut his flesh with bayonets, filled his wounds with salt, and left him just like that... without a drop of water, till he died.

Interviewed by Marcel Hila

Mr. Harallamb, thank you for accepting this interview to the Authority on Access to Information of the Former State Security Documents regarding the personality of Mr. Koço Kota.

#### First let's talk about his life and activity.

Thank you for inviting me. I am very sensitive about everything that belongs to the history of the prominent personality of the Albanian nation, Mr. Kostaq Kota or Koço Kota, as he preferred to be called - a story that has involved me, made me proud, but also has made me feel bad by his tragic end, a story that has prompted me to be fully engaged in highlighting his historical character and also expressing my deep outrage at his tragic end.

Koço Kota was born in Korça on May 5, 1886, in an Albanian patriotic family that had contributed for generations to the Albanian National Renaissance both, in Albania, in Korça and in the Albanian lands now called Kosovo, but also in Alexandria, Egypt where they had substantial support from the successors of the Albanian dynasty of Muhamet Ali.

He first studied in the "First Albanian School" in Korça, continued his education in Bitola and high school in "Zosimea" gymnasium in Ioannina. He completed his higher education in Athens where he was graduated in the Legal Sciences of International Law, but also in the Sciences of Public Administration and Public Administration.

In 1908, at the time of the Young Turks revolu-

tion, together with other Albanian students, they met Ismail Qemali, who guided them to get the necessary trainings to be ready as teachers because after the Independence from the Ottoman Empire, Albania would need to open a lot of new schools. For this reason, he followed an accelerated course for pedagogy. After graduating in the university in Athens, he was offered great opportunities to work in the Highest Greek administration in Athens, but he refused. He wanted to return to his hometown, Korça, to teach the Albanian children.

When Ismail Qemali returned from Istanbul to Vlora, to organize the uprising of 1911, he came to Vlora and teached at the "Muradie" high school in Vlora. The uprising failed, because of organizational issues and Koço emigrated to the US. The Albanians from Korça, who lived in America, elected him Head of the Patriotic Homeland Federation.

Together with other patriots such as Sotir Peci, Fan Noli and Faik Konica, established the Pan Albanian Federation "Vatra" and was one of the 7 co-signers of the membership card of this Federation in the USA.

Koço Kota, on his own initiative, came to Albania to participate in the flag-raising day in Vlora, on November 28, 1912. Some disagreements between Konica and Ismail Qemali did not allow him to come as an official representative of "Vatra" Federation. In the government of Ismail Qemali, he was elected Chief Secretary of the Ministry of Education, headed by Luigi Gurakuqi.

In 1914, when Prince Vidi came to Albania, after those turbulent events that took place in the period of 1912-1914, Koço Kota together with Fan Noli in Durrës, Sotir Peci and many others worked for the establishment of the First Political Organization in Albania "Krahu Kombëtar "/ "National Wing", an organization that supported Prince Vid as well as all patriotic movements in Albania.

After Vid's departure, the organization moved to Shkodra, where it supported the national movement for defence, against Montenegrin- Serbian invasion.

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## When the Serbian army entered Shkodra, he was arrested and interned in Cetinje, Montenegro. Fortunately, the Austro-Hungarian army arrived and released him from Cetinje prison. From there he left to Italy.

When the Serbian army entered Shkodra, he was arrested and interned in Cetinje, Montenegro. Fortunately, the Austro-Hungarian army arrived and released him from Cetinje prison. From there he left to Italy.

After coming back from Italy, he was one of the organizers of the Lushnja Congress, in 1920, where he was elected Senator and was among the personalities who contributed to all the commissions set up by the Congress such as the Committee on Education, Culture, Health, Economy, etc., considering his academic education.

During 1920 - 1939 he was regularly elected Member of Parliament representing Korça. In 1921-1923 he was prefect of Korça and then Prefect of Berat

From 1923 to 1928 he was elected in all governments, established during these periods, as Minister of World Affairs, Health, Economy, where he headed 3-4 departments, except the period when he left, because of June Uprising leaded by Fan Noli and returned in December 1924. In 1928, Koço Kota was elected Prime Minister of the Albanian State, during which, Albania was transformed into a kingdom, Kingdom of Zog I.

From 1928 to 1939 he was also elected Speaker of Parliament and again in 1937 -1939 he was the last Prime Minister of the Albanian State before the fascist Italy invasion.

The Albanian government led by Koço Kota from 1937 to 1939, with respect to Italian state, established a very friendly relationship and the agreements concluded by King Zogu I with the Italian government, deepened it even further, intending Italian strong protection to Albania, considering the tense situation with neighbouring countries, which aimed to tear it into pieces.

Meanwhile, the Albanian emigrants had founded an anti-Zogist Union asking Zog I<sup>st</sup> abdication and the overthrow of the kingdom. But Koço Kota tried to maintain a patriotic nationalist line and took the opportunity, when he went to be cured in a hospital in Paris, to discuss over their requests, meeting their representatives 3-4 times.

The last meeting was before the Italian invasion, when he presented their declaration to King Zog, where was noted that if they agreed on a joint resistance against the occupation of Albania by fascist Italy, then King Zog would abdicate. The agreement was not concluded because anti-Zogist groups accused Zog, for consolidating his power, through Pasiç's Serbian bayonets.

On the other hand, the documents reveal that even those immigrants and their unions, in order to harden their activity, have been supported from the Comintern, the Soviet Union, Serbia and even by the fascist Italy.

I'd like to tell this, too, during the pre-invasion period, Koço Kota's government has opposed all the ultimatums sent by Mussolini and Duçe. This was the reason that on April 7, 1939, the Albanian army, resisted passively, organizing the defence mainly by the gendarmerie, while the royal court left. There was resistance in the Drini Valley, but this was opposed by the Yugoslavs who ordered: "Do not come near, we will shoot you".

In these circumstances, was considered the option to cross Krraba, towards Qafë Thana, in Pogradec. It was asked the Greek's help, to supply them with weapons, but they refused and sent an ultimatum noting that they would be allowed to cross their board, only within 48 hours, then it would be closed. Mussolini sentenced to death, not only King Zog, but also the Prime Minister Koço Kota as well as ordered their property's confiscation. When they crossed Kapshtica and fled to Greece, Koço Kota did not support the King anymore, so King Zog dismissed him from the position he held as Prime Minister on December 1939.

After he cut off the relations with the king, Koço Kota stayed in Greece, in Çameri, in complete illegality, because, as I mentioned before he was sentenced to death by Duçe.

According to some few documents that I could barely find, I read that the Greek syllogs had put pressure on Koço Kota's son, after he defended his scientific thesis at the Sorbonne, on the borders in the interest of the Albanian state.

In Greece, Koço Kota has been organizing an anti-fascist resistance by creating armed groups of Albanian Cham, Orthodox and Muslim fighters, to counter the Italian offence on Greece. These groups also were in contacts with the anti-fascist movement, operating within Albanian territory, and later with the Cham army that was founded a little later.

After the war ended, Koço returned to Thessaloniki, to his father-in-law's house, father of his second wife, Vasilika Dallamanga, who was later interned by the communists in Savër in Lushnja. I believe that there must be a file for her as well. His relatives, including my father, Jorgji Kota, informed

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In Greece, Koço Kota has been organizing an anti-fascist resistance by forming armed groups of Albanian Çam, Orthodox and Muslim fighters, to counter the Italian offence on Greece.

These groups also were in contacts with the antifascist movement, operating within Albanian territory, and later with the Çam army that was founded a little later.

He was home, in Thessaloniki. On January 1,1945, New Year's celebrations had just ended, three people knocked on the door and tell him that by order of E. Hoxha, he should go with them, as Albania needed his contribution... they took him by dragging to a van waiting outside, put him inside and left immediately.

## Koço Kota's Goveri

him about what was happening in Albania and about the dangerous situation that, if he would come back, he would be arrested and imprisoned.

Koço prepared the required papers at the US embassy, to flee there. On January 1, 1945, after the New Year's celebrations of December 31, at the door of his father-in-law's house, three people came and told him that Koço Kota should go with them, as Albania needed him. They told him that they were commissioned by Enver Hoxha, who asked him to contribute to the new Albanian state. Koço was aware of the situation, he was previously informed of what was happening in Albania, and replied that he would not go with them.

After that, they pulled out their pistols to force him

This action was taken, first, to eliminate the last former prime minister of King Zog and, second, Koço Kota had expressed the Slavo-communist danger from time before that happened.

There has been a lot of rumours that the whole action was supported by the structures of Serbian agencies. I do not know how reliable it can be, but I think it was true, considering the past of Koco Kota, a personality like he, the former Prime Minister of Albania before the Italian occupation and if he would be alive, he would continue his anti-Slav-communist activity, being a major obstacle to the new declared bond of the Albanian communist state with the Serbian communist state.

He was abducted by Koçi Xoxe, the Slavic confi-

## the ultimatum of Ita

to go with them. When Koço objected and his family members intervened, they forcibly seized him, dragged him to a nearby van, put him inside, and left immediately.

We think that they were supported by the Greek communists, because after the war they no longer needed him and was considered as a "burnt card". They took him straight to Tirana. Based on the information we have, one of the most active persons, insisting in abduction and punishing him was Koçi Xoxe, the most powerful man close to Enver Hoxha and who had strong Slavs support.

dant who had declared himself to be of Bulgarian origin.

This man operated with the communist group of Korça, with the only purpose, to bring Slavic influence to Albania under the communism pretext.

So, in my opinion, these situations are closely linked.

In many places, where I have been given the opportunity to express myself, I have asked for a review about the way Koço Kota's personality has been assessed.

## for Albania's invasi

## nment opposed

There are two elements that honour Koço Kota during World War II, despite his brilliant patriotic activity in the past:

First, in Greece he was in charge of the resistance groups' organization, to fight the Greece invasion from the Italian troops. This fact is the complete opposite of what is propagated, that Albania has allegedly attacked Greece.

Second, he is the most powerful man to fight Slav-communism and the most ardent defender of the Fanolist Church. When he held the position of the Prime Minister, it was enabled to obtain the form of the Patriarchate, to recognize the autocephaly of the Albanian church. For these reasons, he was also wanted where he was, abroad and was eliminated

#### What influence did he have on the issue of church autocephaly?

Koço Kota was Berati's prefect, when the Congress of the Autocephaly of the Albanian church in Berat took place. Durrës did not accept the meeting, nor did Korça, because it had Greek influence. It was this prefect who supported the issue of autocephaly, so the Congress was held in Berat.

Regarding to the accusations made by the communists and the way they treated him, these should be in his file. The prosecutor asked the execution to death, but the court commuted his life sentence to 30 years in prison, which he served in Burrel Prison.

The prosecutor of his case was Bedri Spahiu, while there were three members in the trial panel. Koçi Xoxe was the President of the Special Court at that time.

The least to say is that he held a manly attitude there, that he was a steady man inflexible, very determined, and very brave.

It is interesting: when man has done nothing

against his country, when he has worked for his country, he is not afraid to face everything. Thus, he faced everything by contesting the ridiculous charges against him such as "Why did not Koço Kota's government during King Zog reign, defend itself and fight against the Italian army?"

Koço Kota provided arguments. He clarified pre-invasion circumstances. His government opposed the Italian ultimatum to invade Albania, but the key problem was that the Albanian army, was all controlled by Italian instructors, based on the agreements that Albania had with Italy.

Despite the fact, that on the basis of the latest agreements, the Italians should supply Albania with heavy weapons, in order to be defended from Yugoslavia and Greece, but they have left us with old and useless weapons.

Fascist Italy betrayed Albania. "The faith" for us is an institution, so the government could never think that Italy would invade Albania.

When the Italian troops were landing, only the gendarmerie countered, it was not the army: in both Vlora and Saranda there were gendarmerie commanders who fought, it was Mujo Ulqinaku, Abaz Kupi.

Yes, Abaz Kupi was bravely confronted. In fact, everywhere the gendarmerie strongly resisted, in Durrës and Shën Gjin. It was the gendarmerie that created the defence cordon across the coast-line. In addition to what I said before, there was another very important element that historians do not say: If our government would deploy the army to stop the Italian landing, as long as we had some military agreements with Italy, then they would use that as a pretext to international arena as if we had declared war to Italy. Albania would emerge as aggressor and they would justify the invasion.

That is why our historians must do thorough researches on documents, go to the Italian archives,





After Koço Kota
was his son, Nuçi Kota,
who died at the age of
46, from a heart attack,
was Jorgji Kota, who
suffered an unfair
sentence,
was his daughter, were
his grandchildren.
- all of them suffered
persecution, trauma
and tragically left at
young age.

because there, in the archives of fascism in Rome, must be documents that would better explain this moment in history. Today we cannot speak the same way as has been said so far... Xhufi says "at least King Zog should have surrendered".

A new data has emerged regarding this moment. Hysen Selmani - commander of Ahmet Zog's troops, claimed that King Zog was told by the British "Leave, let go, that we will bring you back" and he obeyed to this British order and left. The English told him "Do not give up! "Leave, we will bring you back."

#### Further, after the sentence, what has happened to Koço Kota in Burrel prison?

In Burrel Prison he was put in a special cell - cell No. 7. There, whoever entered did not come out alive, it was determined that he would be dead. They tortured them in the most inhuman ways.

#### The commander of the prison was Petraq Rrëmbeci.

They used to hit him with bayonets and filled the opened wounds with salt. He died on September 1, 1947. He was truly a hero who suffered all those tortures. They did not even give him water to drink. The wounds festered. They turned his body into a living corpse. This was suffered by Koço Kota.

#### What happened to his body? Do you know where he was buried?

They spread rumours as if he was jumped out from the prison window and died. Those windows are all of grid-irons. He was buried in the courtyard, near a cherry tree.

That's what was said to date, near a cherry tree. That cherry tree is not there anymore. They also say that many others have been buried in that place and some have even been removed outside the prison.

It is said that the Burrel stadium was built on the place where they were reburied. More than that, I do not know.

#### What happened to his children?

Koço had two children. The boy was named after his grandfather, that is, Koço's father, Nuçi Kota. Nuçi graduated at the Sorbonne in France, where he defended a scientific study entitled "Albania and the issue of Albanian-Greek borders", a paper that was used by the communists in 1946, in international conferences on peace, after the war, but they do not mention his name.

Nuçi was engaged in the anti-fascist resistance movement in Tirana with "Legality". When it became clear that the communists were taking power, he left for Europe, to France in November 1944.

From there he left for America, where together with Mit'hat Frashëri he founded the "Free Albania" Committee and Nuçi Kota was a member of this committee. From CIA's document that I have read, the Americans say that after Mit'hat Frashëri's death, Nuçi Kota would be the next leader of a democratic Albania. He had great intellectual and political activity. He has been the Secretary-General of the "World Organization for the Salvation of Communism- Captive Nations" and a member of many intellectual societies.

#### What about the other child?

His daughter? She lives in the US too.

#### How were the destinies of their lives?

Although in emigration, after Koço's abduction and his tragic death, there has been an uncontrolled persecution of the State security Services against them. They have suffered a lot. His son, Nuçi, left two children, both with trauma. His daughter too. One of his daughter's sons also died with trauma. Two of their cousins, Leonora and Beatriçe, daughters of his brother, Ilia who lived until recently in Tirana, after the system changed, they have been interviewed about Koço, surprisingly they also died. Their father, Ilia, was a lawyer, and he and my grandfather were like brothers.

The only person who lived a little longer than the

The road to the central ambulance towards the New Bazaar, has been built by Koço Kota himself. The street could have his name.

They used to hit him with bayonets and filled the opened wounds with salt. They did not even give him water to drink. The wounds festered. They turned his body into a living corpse. He died on September 1, 1947.

## In Burrel Prison he was put in a separate cell - cell no.7.

## There, whoever entered did not come out alive, was determined to be dead.

others, was my father, Jorgji Kota. He died at the age of 75. We were very frightened and very reserved, but he could not remain silent, especially after Koço was abducted in January 1945. Jorgji had been an activist with the resistance groups in Tirana, with the Front groups, and Nuçi with Legality. They both worked together in Jorgji's house, where members from both the "The National Front" and other groups gathered, until 1943 when a conflict broke out between these political groups.

Jorgji had the opportunity to get information about Koço's abduction in 1945. After hitting Koço Kota, Koçi Xoxe planned to hit Jorgji, my father as well. He was surveyed by the State Security Service to provoke him and to see what he would say, what were his objections and then he was arrested for anti-party attitudes. They required a sentence of 7 years, but with the intercession of Haxhi Lleshi, since he had participated in the resistance, they commuted it. He served his sentence in Tirana and Durrës prisons for 14 months, but later he was pleaded not guilty.

I want to emphasize the fact that after Koço Kota died, his son, Nuçi, died as well, in 1965, at the age of 46, allegedly from a heart attack. This is dubious. How could he die when he was at the height of his power? I also have pictures of him and his activities ... And in the newspapers of that time, it was written that he died of a heart attack.

After Koço Kota was his son, Nuçi Kota, it was Jorgji Kota, who suffered an unjust sentence, it was his daughter, there were his grandchildren - all of them suffered persecution, trauma and tragically left at young age.

#### Do you know what is done with their properties today, in Korça?

After system's change Nuçi's wife came, Koço's son, a Frenchwoman, but she came in the '90s and we were still frightened, we stayed fearful.

#### Reasonable, because State Security Services still existed.

She met some people, a notary, they confused her even more, they scared her. She prepared the documents quickly and sold them. We had three houses in Korça on the "Metropolis" - one belonged to Koço's father, one to my grandfather's father and the other to my other brother.

As the notary prepared the documents to her... He had a house in Tirana in the "Bllok", even the land where the Ministry of Education is built, was Koço Kota's property. He had a hotel, but during the time of the Albanian-Italian friendship, he donated it to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy, iano.

I want to add something: the road that is to the central ambulance towards the New Bazaar, was built by Koço Kota himself, so I asked to the "Tirana" Association, to take the proposal to the Municipality of Tirana, that the street be named "Koço Kota"...

Mr. Harallamb, it was a pleasure to have this interview. There are so many new things we do not know, which help to clarify the painful past of many Albanians, dedicated to the cause of the Homeland. Thank you very much!



#### **Communism Crimes against the Clergy**

### Father Josif Alqiviadh Papamihali, Catholic priest of the Unitary Byzantine Rite.

#### Prepared by PhD Mirela Sinani

Father Josif Papamihali was born on September 23, 1912 in Elbasan, of Albanian citizenship and nationality. He completed primary school in his hometown, and high school in Italy at the religious gymnasium "Grotta Ferrata" near Rome. He was awarded a scholarship to study philosophy and theology at the Greek Pontifical College of St. Athanasius in Rome, where he graduated in 1936. He went for 6 months to Lungro, Calabria, where he stayed with the Italian-Albanians living there.

He had good knowledges in foreign languages, spoken and written, in Italian, Latin, Greek, Albanian and a little French.

As soon as he returned to his homeland, he started working as a unit priest in Elbasan as an assistant to Father Pjetër Skarpel and then in Korça to Father Bruneti, then in Berat, Lushnje and Pogradec, until 1946, when he was returned again to Korça for 2 years. As a Byzantin priest he was part of the Catholic Church line, but not directly related to the Vatican. The Byzantine Church

was led by the Albanian Catholic Bishop based in Durrës.

He was arrested by the State Security Section in Korça, on October 31, 1946.

At the end of the investigation and trial he was sentenced to 5 years in prison, as an Enemy of the People. As a Korça prison convicted, he was taken to forced work in the Maliq swamp. There, he was drowned alive in the swamp's dirty waters and mud.

Reverend Josif Papamihali is one of the Catholic priests, proclaimed by the Pope "Martyr of the Catholic Church".

His hometown, Elbasan, gave to Papamihali the title "Honorary Citizen", on November 5, 2021, on the 5th anniversary of his martyrdom.

# Sentenced for opinions, affections, likes and dislikes

By religion's law, it is banned that religious adherent deal with politics

My mission is to evolve people of the Catholic religion.



Father Josif Alqiviadh Papamihali, born in Elbasan in 1912 and a unit priest by profession, is one of the priests who, despite his very young age only 34 years old and with a very poor life, could not escape to the communist program to crack down on clergy as powerful rivals, considering their authority in the people. The Communists feared that they, through their influence on their believers, could create powerful social upheavals, extremely harmful to their power.

On October 31, 1946, Father Josif Papamihali was arrested under the charge:

With the arrival of Italian fascism in Albania, he manifested and cherished the invader and was closely related to priests such as Father Bruneti, etc. After the liberation, he continued the reactionary strategy of the Vatican. He held meetings with reactionary elements and talked ill about the popular power and held meetings with Catholic leaders to sabotage the elections of December 2, 1945, in order to create the Christian Democratic Party in Albania, etc.

Contradicting this charge, the investigators' reports on Father Josif, state that he remained indifferent during the invasion. There are no relatives arrested or convicted.

For a 9 months period, Father Josif Alqiviadh Papamihali, underwent investigation with a series of frequent hearing session. If we'd just note the period before the trial on August 1, 1947: May 21,

May 22, June 16, June 30, July 2, July 23, 1947. The 9-month duration of the investigation, make us suspect that the hearings sessions have been much more frequent and long-lasting, in order for investigators to extract the data they would need to support the charge.

On May 21, 1947, in the Investigation Record's Annex, Father Josifi testified about a meeting of priests in Tirana, in October 1945, among whom Pater Mëshkalla, Pater Gjadri, Pater Tërshani, Pater Krama and two Franciscan priests, a total of 9 people, where they discussed about the election issues, to vote or not. There they agreed to ask their superiors.

On May 22, 1947, in the Investigation Record's Annex, the defendant Father Josifi, giving answers to the questions related to October 1945 meeting, declares:

"Dom Shtjefën Kurti, parish priest of Tirana said: "Since the elections that will take place on December 2 are close, I am of the opinion that we should vote, because for a long time, for almost a year, it has been the state that governed the country and this government can be called legal due to its expiration time.

At the meeting it was said that due to the critical situation in which the church is, it would be better to vote for the Front, although the PKSH/AKP (Albanian Communist Party) was in power, because even if it would be any other, they would also be under its influence. The problem was: "Should we vote for the Front, or not?".

Father Krama spoke: A state is called legal, when it has people's votes and as long as it does not have them, it cannot be legal, but it is illegal and the state needs these votes to be legal. Since the issue is pending and the people have not voted yet, it is good for us as clergy to abstain.

The debated thesis was: "Is it acceptable for us, religious people, to vote for the people of the Front who were communists, atheists?" Does religious morality allow cooperation with atheists?"

The Charge: ...he manifests and cherished the invader; After the liberation, he continued the reactionary strategy of the Vatican. He held meetings with reactionary elements and talked ill about the popular power; He held meetings with Catholic leaders to sabotage the elections of December 2, 1945, in order to create the **Christian Democratic** 

Party in Albania.

Sot më datën gjashtëmbëdhjetë Qershor njëmijë e nën tëqint dyzet e shtatë, merret përsëri në pyetje i quajturi AtJosid Papa Mihali, i cili mbasi u ptet dekllaron sa ma poshtë:I.P.P. Unë me Waskë Qeleshin jam njohur që në Kallnor të njëmijë e nëntëqint dyzet e gjashtë, me këtë më ka rekomanduar At-Pjetër Isaku nga Durrësi dhe me shërbim n'Elbasan. Në dyqanë e Vaskës unë kam vajtur shpeshë herë dhe në disa raste e kam pyetur në lidhje me situatën Ndërkombëtare.

291.P.P. Unë me Vaskë Qeleshin gjatë një bisedimi që kemi bërë,da ta dhe muaji nuk më bijen ndërmënt, i kam thënë që nga Shkodra bëhen luftime midis partizanve dhe Organeve të Sigurimit Publik. Se kush ma ka thënë këtë nuk më bijen ndërmënt.

I pandehuri
At- Josif Papamihali
At Your Papamihali

I ngarkuari Seksionit (Llambi Nako )

Sot ditën e hënë datë tridhjetë Qershor viti njëmi jë e nëntëqint dyzet e shtatë me rret përsir në pyetje i ëandehuri At-Josif Papamihali, i cili deponon sa ma poshtë vijon:

1.P.P. Pranoj që kondra Pushtet ( prishen dy fjalët e nënvi zuara) me Vaskë Qeleshin kam biseduar kondra Pushtetit të sotmë.

Le di që ai që flet kundra Pushtetit është kundërshtar i tij. Kam biseduar me Vaskën e jo me elementë të tjerë kondra Pushtetit se kisha frikë, me Vaskën bisedonja se dhe ay nga fjalët që më t thosh kuptoheshe që nuk e desh Pushtetin e sotmë.

I pandehuri At-Josif Papamihali H Jonf Payramihali Ingarkuari Seksionit (Llambi Nako)

> I pandehuri (At-Josif Papamihali) W Jeri Vapamihali

I ngarkuari Seksionit ( Llambi Nako )

Tenang

Father Gjadri says "to abstain"; Father Isaac was contrary to, therefore, we should not vote at all or vote against the Front, as they were communists; Pater Mëshkalla and Pater Tërshani agreed with the theory that we should not vote for religious motives;

Father Mëshkalla said that we should not take this matter upon ourselves, but we should expound it to our superiors and they will guide us; Father Tërshani said: We cannot wait for a decision from our superiors as this is a free matter. Father Tërshani was to abstain. The two Franciscan friars were in doubt on the matter, but the most of them were not to vote.

In the ongoing discussion, it was brought up for consideration the creation of a Catholic party, if we could have one like the one in Italy, would the government accept this? We supposed not.

We charged Dom Kurti to go to the bishop, to present all these to him, since he was the parish priest of Tirana and not because he was any chairperson in charge.

.... I told Dom Shtjefën to inform me in Elbasan as well, about every novel, in order to find any element for the Christian Democratic Party, but the issue had to be legal, that is, it had to be recognized by the government.

We also talked about having our representative, our MP from the Catholic clergy or from Catholic members...

For the Christian Democrat party, I know it helps the church. The Vatican helps this party, but I do not know if there were any in Albania. I learned from the newspapers that it was headed by Jesuit priests of Shkodra.

I do not know a lot about how the Jesuits were organized, but I know that Father Fausti has been the foreign minister of the Jesuits and he has held this position before. I do not know anything about the Christian Democratic Party either... the first time I heard about it was at the meeting we held in Tirana."

From his declarations about the meeting of some priests in October 1945, regarding to the elections of December 2, attracts attention the very interesting issues that are discussed, interesting in the practical sense of the time, but especially interesting from the theoretical point of view, raising questions about the legitimacy of governance, for the legitimacy dependence of the of governance merely only from the formal aspect of time, or from the essential substantive one the will of the people expressed through the vote; questions are raised about the attitude towards the electoral process, opposition by abstention,

I do not know a lot about the organization of the Jesuits...

I do not know anything about the Christian Democratic party either...I heard for the first time at the meeting we had in Tirana. Deponon perseri At-Josif Papamihali:

Eshte e vertete qu une 1 kan thene Vaske celeshit çë çështja e Kishes Eshte kritike, për Ersye së në krya të çeverisë ushte Partija Komuniste, doktrita e së ciles Eshte afetare. Për kute ne ishim kundra Pushtetit dhe nuk është e vertete fjala që kan thene se mendonja për një bashkëpunim midis Kishës dhe çeverisë. E dinja dhe isha i sigurte që vija politike e Çeverisë nuk ndronte dhem shte gjithnjë ajo që ishte paracaktuar në Statutin e Republikës Shqiptare:

I pandehuri (At- Josif Papamihali). W Youf Vapamhali I ngarkuari Seksionit ( Llambi Wako )

Na biseda e sipar na mbledhje na Tirana parfunduana da Shteti nuk le ta dala nja Parti tjetar e casrado tendence quita Po pranoj qa kam thana se po ta kini ndonja gja ma lajmaroni se na Elsbasan mundet ta gjej elementa kundarahtera par ta ngri tur Partina Demo-Ariatiana.

I pandehuri ( At- Josef Papamihal) ngarkuari Seksionit ( Elambi Mako )

It Youf Poparwhali

to klandestine dhe kondra Shtetit.

I pandehuri At Josii Papam nali I ngarkuari Seksionit ( Llambi Wako)

It Joint Papenihat

nt dyzet e antate rimerret ne pyetje At-Josif Papamihali i cili

dekllaron sa na poshtë vijon.

1.P.P. Mbassi u këtheva prej mbjadhjes që kishim në Tironë mia nuk më ardhi ndonjë udhëzim me shkrim ngalart (nga Episkopata) në lidhje me nëndrimin që do të mbardin ne si klerikë me rastin e votimeve të dy injetorit, bbas mbledhjes nga mezi i muajit Në ndor të vitit djënijë e nënteqint dyzet e pesë, jam thirë në Tiranë për të merrë dy vajza që do të bëheshin murgedha; në Famu

li të Tiranës kan takuar në Episkopin e Darrësi t Imzot Prepichin nga i cili mvarem aty bisaduam në lidhje ne qëndrimin t'o në me rastin e zgjedhjeve: shkuamë në një vënd të veçantë ku ishte dhe Dorintjefni dhe unë i thashë që dua të votoj për Frontin së kam frikë: Despota ("Episkopi) më tha që kjo gjë nuk ishte e mirë sepse nuk mint të pajtoheshe me parimet fetare, mbasi de putetët ishin ne parime antifetare dhe afetare.

5419. P.P. Englese to Unress que orche na Kisha i kas folir ken par overina. I kas thans que katu nuk ka parti ta tjera parveç Frontit ku saktu na krye me Partin Fosuniste.

I pandohiri At-Josi Papamihali Itt Jaiif Papamihah (Llashi Nako )

voting against or not participating in the process at all due to deep ideological and moral contradictions between the clergy and the communists, both religious and atheist.

In the investigative and judicial file of Father Josif Papamihali, is drawn attention to a series of "Record's Annexes" with his brief testimonies on the same sheet of records, one after the other, for events and persons for whom he has given declarations before, written one after the other but unrelated to, but at the bottom of each page is the signature of the defendant, Father Josif Papamihali, and the name and signature of the representative of the section in charge, Llambi Nako.

For example: In the Record's Annexes, dated 16 June 1947 the defendant testifies:

I have told to Vaskë Qeleshi that there are fights in Shkodra between partisans and security service organs.

On the same sheet is written: Monday, June 30, 1947, the defendant is interrogated...

I used to talk with Vaske against the government, because he also did it. It was clear, from what he said, that he did not like today's power.

Below is another declaration:

The proposal to gather and discuss our stance on the voting issue, was done by Patër Trushani

In the same way follow a series of declarations, e.g.

Today, July 2, 1947, the defendant... declares: I met the Archbishop of Durrës, Monsignor Prenushi. I told him that I, out of fear, would vote for the Front. The Despot told me that this was not right, that he did not conform to religious principles, that the PMs were anti-religious and atheists.

When I have met the U.N.R.A. Englishmen I spoke ill about the government. I said that there is no other party here, than the Front, led by the Communist Party...

From the procedural aspect, in every record, as a rule should be recorded the complete procedure: Question, answer, questioned and answered, etc. These "Records Annexes" do not contain any question.

This kind of phrasing of "Records Annexes" raises the suspicion that these annexes were added specifically to fabricate some allegations of the defendant, to be considered as evidence against him and use it against him himself and to plead him guilty.

In the document "Ordinance. In order to expand the investigation, the defendant should be interrogated about his acquaintances with his friend Lec Tusha", there is no Order's issue date, nor who issued it, nor to whom it was addressed.

If this document is any Record's page, pursuant to an Order, it should have been written at the top that "pursuant to the Ordinance, date ...., no..., this investigation is being carried out as follows...", but none of these is written on the document.

Below the title "Ordinance. To expand the investigation..." as above, the document follows as below:

Today, on 23/7/1947, the defendant Father Josif Papamihali declares: I met Lec Tushë in the Catholic Church, where he as a believer attended our church. We have criticized the foreign policy and the connection with the USSR and Yugoslavia... we wanted to have economic relations with the Anglo-Americans who being rich could have helped our country.

In those notes called "Records" there are statements such as:

I told Pope Isaac not to talk about having spies. He was an enemy of the government and the communist party, that it was turning the people away from religion. His policy was for people to gather around the church and religion. The anti-religious policy of the government was contrary to the line of our church.

REPUBLIKA POPULIORE E SUCIPERISE
PROKURORIJA PUBLIKE B PREFEKTURES HORD:

( Seksioni i Sigurimit )
Hr. 115/3 Prot. Hes.

LANDA: dergohen proceset gjykstes ushtarake ver miykini

PROKURORISE USHTARAKE DIV. VIII-te

KET U

E. P. D. PROKURORISE PERGYITAESHAB (Drejtorise Sigurisit)

TIRANE

Bashkengjitur po ju dergojne nje proces-verbal prej njembedhete faqesh te mbejtur kunder te pandehurit At Josif Papakihal ngu Elbasani, i cili akuzohet per veprintari politike kontra Fushtetit Populler duke patur lidhje ne elemente anti-Pushtet dhe sidomos ne klerin katolik ta cilet kishin per gellim organizimin e Fartise Damo-Kristiane dhe rezimin e Pushtetit ne violence duke u mleshtetur ne nja naerhyrje te jashteme.

Sikunder shihet edhe nga deponimet qe'i naltpercenduri ka bere na proces-verbal, del e garte se si ka nje simpathi per sistemin fazhiot. Italian dhe kete, e ka manifestuar atje ku i ka shkuar fjela. Gjate gendrimit te tij ne korce ka pere levisje te medha duke hvre reper shtepita a reaksionareve dhe ka patur takina te perhereshne me ta.

Pasi eshte njojtur mire me profesor Nikoli Dakkaj (i cili so teshte i denuar me I5 vjet burg per faje komdra popullit dhe Shtetit) shtemine e tij e vizitonde per here, dhe qe të dy, bissdonin c'do gje per kondra. Pushtetit t'one. At Josifi ishte me dijeni te te gjithe aktivitetit politik qe Niboli Dakaj zhvillonta ne shkollen "Lice". Ay ishte rekomanduar edhe ne studentin Trajan Kheka (idepuar me 8 vjet burg per faje Kondra pollit dhe Shtetit) i cili ashte tashkapunetor i ngushte i Nikollas, dhe ne kete menyre At Josifi ka deke ne korent te siithe tunes volitike sa Niboli Dakaj e Trajan lbeka chvillonin në studentet me mellim ber ali lavenar men vija e Fuentezit t'one, dhe aq me teper per ti percare Esdaet e

rinipa studentesce.

I maltpermenduri ka yatur micesi dhe ka frekhentuar per here shtepine e te molturit jec funda(i cili ne vere te vitit 7046 emite aratice mitres ne Great) dhe dic depunon ne proces verbal, se bashku kane biseduar dic kritikuar Pushtetin t'one siburmos ne politiken ekonomike dhe administrative, duke e gojiur kete te fundit burokraci mbasi i gjithe populiti u be imepunes. Gjitheshtu edhe politiken e jashteme te Shtetit t'one migas bisedinit se kane pere, ata nuk e kane gojiur te drejte, mbasi sipas a mejtimit te trim dhe menitamionit se benin duheshe se maye te lidheshim edhe se sua lo-merikamet dhe te kishim nje politike te njellojte me ta, si siburmer ne . Dovietik e sugoslavine. Alesnoen 'inne me Jugoslavine ata muk e manne no nje perfitim ekonomik, kurse anglis dhe amerika jane sabate te pagira the keshtu do te na ndimmorin.

Sio deponon ne proces-verbal ka patur lidhje edhe takime edhe me Veeke Deleghin(i grestuar per faje kondra popullit dhe Shtetit) i cili ka qene nje element i pakënaqur, dhe qe punonte dhe ashitonte kondra Puantetit t'one, aldomo armik i mash i reformavet'ona.

nga githe rjedhini i procesit del se, at Josifi ka mene nia asjend i i savkenit se vendin t'obe, dhe per kate ka bere nje pure rekrutimi dhe ashitative ner elementet e pakenagur, duke i bere seta ma wente, In the final report, contrary to the defendant's declarations, is stated that "Although he slips to the interrogations, it turns out that this (Christian Democrat) party would be subsidized by the Vatican.

...the abovementioned has had meetings with the U.N.R.A. to whom he provided information to the detriment of our independence. They complained that the Albanian government did not allow them to organize the Christian Democrat party.

... He has developed a pro-fascist policy under the guise of the clergy since his arrival.

... Father Josifi visited Lec Tusha's house, who fled in the summer of 1946 in Greece, and together they criticized our power's economic and administrative policy. They did not call accurate, our alliance with Yugoslavia because it was a poor country and we had no economic benefit, while England and America being rich countries they would help us.

....as resulting by the process, it turns out that he has been Vatican's agent.

The document of the Public Prosecution of Korça Prefecture, No. 45/3 Protocol through which are delivered the processes to the Military Court for verdict, to the Military Prosecution of Diviz.VIII, here and to the General Prosecution (security directorate) is attached a record of 11-pages against the defendant "He is accused of political activity against popular power by having connections to anti-government elements, especially the Catholic clergy, which aimed to organize the Christian Democrat party and to violently overthrow the government, having support on foreign intervention."

On August 1, 1947, on Friday, at 10 am, based on the minutes of the Military Court, Korça, no. act 176, decision no. 155, the Military Court in Korça, with the ready military prosecutor Aranit Çela, began the trial against Father Josif Alqiviadh Papamihali, priest of the Byzantin Rite profession.

The defendant, Father Josif Papamihali is defended in court by the lawyer Kristaq Pilika.

We have criticized the foreign policy and the connection with the USSR and Yugoslavia...
We wanted to have economic relations with the Anglo-Americans who being rich could have helped our country.

In the trial Records, in his declarations, Father Josifit states: "By religion law, it is banned that a religious adherent deal with politics. My mission is to evolve people of the Catholic religion."

The allegation of the Military Court in Korça, far from being a document that reveals facts and evidence in terms of law, is openly expressed in a propagandistic way, with a journalistic style, full of pathos, incites prejudice and feelings of abhorrence. The claim resembles to a propaganda leaflet of the communist party's ideas against the other party having the reverse ideologies.

For the first time in the post-war courts, the phenomenon of imposing criminal sentences on the opinions expressed, influences, and inspiration began the destruction of the legal concept of immediate cause-and-effect rapport, by establishing links between opinions, people's consents, that is, not based on facts, on the one hand, with the political acts of the occupying governments or that of the fascist system.

This allegation proves that the trial and priests and clergy 'charges in general were no longer something strange, never seen or heard before, but not even a random event. With the coming to power of the communists, the crackdown on clerics in public in the courts became a common, programmed, and systematic phenomenon.

The allegation of the Military Court of Korça stated:

"The defendant has done nothing but faithfully pursue the anti-popular policy of the Catholic clergy, a policy that has its arsenal in Vatican.

The presence of Father Joseph and that of the other priests in court is not strange, it is not spon-

taneous for the people, it had become something random and that would come naturally as a result of the prostitute policy that they all follow.

Father Joseph himself in front of the court defended the Vatican by not condemning its actions, defended Father Anthony and other convicted clergy by giving different opinions about their activity.

... Worked hard for the reaction, encouraged the reactionary elements and caused some ignorant and fanatics to lose their logics for a while.

..... Even the Byzantine Rite preached by Father Joseph was a mean of fascism to connect the people with the Vatican and consequently with fascism."

Korça Military Court, at the end of the trial, on August 6, 1947, pleaded him guilty. The Record states:

The court declares the culpability of the defendant as "Enemy of the Albanian People and the Democratic Power" and based on the law sentences Father Josif Papamihali to 5 years of prison and forced labour and ban from political and civil rights during the time of sentence.

Even the High Military Court, on October 3, 1947, despite the appeal by Father Josif Papamihali himself, who asked for the sentence to be modified to the minimum provided by law, upheld the decision of the Military Court in Korça.

The convicted father Josif Papamihali was taken to the infamous Maliq swamp Camp. There, along with hundreds of other convicts, was forced to work in the middle of the swamp. They drowned him alive in the middle of the swamp mud. His body disappeared into the mud of the swamp.

A state is called legal, when it has people's votes and as long as it does not have them, it cannot be legal, but it is illegal and the state needs these votes to be legal. Since the issue is pending and the people have not voted yet, it is good for us as clergy to abstain. The debated thesis was: "Is it acceptable for us, religious people, to vote for the people of the Front who were communists, atheists? Does religious morality allow cooperation with atheists?"



Lef Nosi

# Missing persons: Maliq Bushati, Father Anton Harapi and Lef Nosi – charged of being the Three Heads of Treason

#### Prepared by PhD Mirela Sinani

Maliq Bushati, son of Hysejn Bushati, born in 1890 in Shkodra. He completed his primary and secondary education in his hometown. He was graduated in Istanbul. In 1921-1923 he was elected Member of Parliament representing Shkodra. After Zog took the power in December 1924, he was re-elected Member of Parliament until 1936. In 1938 he changed his attitude towards King Zog until he became an opponent of his reign. At the time of the Italian invasion, he was Minister of the Interior and then Prime Minister until May 10, 1943, after he resigned from the position he held, because of medical reasons.

He was arrested on December 3, 1945 by the communists, as a collaborator of the invaders and on February 12, 1946, the Military Court sentenced him to death and executed him on February 20, in Tirana, at the place known as "Kodra e Priftit".

Father Anton Harapi, son of Loro Harapi, born in 1888 in Shiroka, Shkodra. He had an advanced theological education and practices the profession of the Catholic priest. In the Franciscan Assembly, he was member of the editorial board of the Magazine "Hylli i Dritës"/ "Star of Light". At the time of the of the fascist Italy capitulation, he became a Member of the Regency. For this reason and for his activity as a Catholic priest he was

arrested and charged as a war criminal, enemy of the people, and saboteur of the Power and sentenced to death on February 12, 1946, by the Military Court of Korparmata I.

Elefter Nosi, known as Lef Nosi, son of Stilian, born on April 9, 1877 in Elbasan, unmarried. He was educated first in his hometown and then in Athens, where he completed only 2 years in higher studies for pharmacy. After returning to his homeland, he devoted himself to Albanian history and culture. Together with Faik Konica in 1907, they drafted the project for a political movement called "Ana Kombëtare". The movement had a 24-point program. The new Albanian state would be a laic state and would include the four Albanian vilayets under the Ottoman Empire: Shkodra, Kosovo, Bitola and Ioannina. The best way of governance was believed to be the monarchy. He participated in the Declaration of Independence and was one of its signatories; he was appointed Minister of Post-Telegraph in 1912-1914; in 1918 he was a member of the Durrës Government; in 1943 he was chairman of the National Assembly and helped many Jewish families escape the Nazis.

The three were charged as traitors, sentenced to death and shot dead in "Kodra e Priftit", in Tirana.

Nothing is known about how and where their bodies were buried.

Në Vlone më 15/28 të Veshtës së tretë 1329 Pas faliret ge tha L. Kryetari Binail Kemel. Ben, me te celat tregor vrenchen e math në të cilin ndodhet sot Shqipëria të gjithë delega tet me një ta venduan gë shqipëria me sot të bahet në rehte, e lirë e e mosvarme. وَنَدَ بِنَ اللَّهِ لِللَّهِ اللَّهِ اللَّهُ اللَّهِ اللَّ Innailking Hacorie J. Karbinara Umayboco vel. kare. I. Bruci Mondy King Rether & Monte Abdi Aba Delever Mechatraore Coffet Lig Lihne Abbas Kanina; J. led us Horsand Stastryon Salih Gjuko Drurad Topdani Pande Eale, Luz Guratug, Bown Reform Spoirot Thomas, V. Flog. Land Muly Lef Nois . D. H. Muly two Meetinfa drem Kriga M Jeris nokorola New sofar lutya Tubris. Oheia

## Charged of being the three heads of treason

"I had agreed with Jacomon to fight only against the armed groups not against the civilian population."

"Albania will not collapse because Father Anton Harapi is being sentenced to death."

"Albania will not collapse if Father Anton Harapi is not being sentenced to death."

"... I am presenting herewith a list of people I have rescued and released from prison."



The accusation act for Maliq Bushati states:

He was a member of the Kuisling Government as Interior Minister in Shefqet Vërlac's cabinet and is responsible for the collaboration policy of this cabinet. ... He was Prime Minister of the Quisling Government from February 1943 to May 1943.

In the Record of Sigurimi of 25.1.1946, Major Tuk Jakova-Prosecutor of the Military Court, Tirana and the secretary Thoma Rino, interrogated Maliq Bushati, son of Hysejn and Qamile, 56 years old, divorced, who claims that in the period 1921-1923 was elected Member of Parliament of Shkodra. After Zog came to power, he was re-elected Member of Parliament of Shkodra until 1936. Due to his opposition to Musa Juka, in 1937, he and Kole Bib Mirakaj stand as independent candidates.

In December 1938, Italy began to change its attitude towards Zog, by establishing connections with persons who were his opponents.

#### Deklarate

Une i nenshkruemi Khemal Idrizi nga Shkodra, deklaroj e vertetoj se ne kohen e Regjimentit Kosova ne Shkoder, jam kontollue ne shtepine t'ime prej patrolles, ku me kane gjete 12 Komunikata, 400 fusheke mitlarozit te rande, 500 fusheke automatike dhe kater mushemana.

Per ket arsye u burgosa, por me nderhymjen e Maliq Bushatit u lirova mbas 10 diteve. Sikuer mos te nderhynte Maliq Bushati une do te pushkatohesha nga Myslim Bejgora.

Per hir te vertetes e leshoj ket deklarate te firmueme prej meje.

Shkoder 1 Fruer 1946

Deklaruesi

(Xhemal Idrizi) Shkoder

Maliq Bushati claims that on January 25, 1939 he contacted Mustafa Kruja in Milan and discussed about the Italian plan for organizing an uprising to overthrow Zog and bring a prince of Savoy to power. Mustafa Kruja, Ernest Koliqi, Bahri Omari, Kol Tromara, Sejfi Vllamasi, Ali Këlcyra, Qazim Koculi, Rexhep Mitrovica agreed with this plan.

After Albania invasion on April 7, 1939, Shefqet Vërlaci went to Rome, where he handed the crown of Albania to Victor Emanuel, the King of Italy. In May 1939, Vërlaci proposed to Maliq Bushati the post of Minister of Interior, which he accepted and held it until 1941.

Then, in February 1943, Maliq Bushati became the Prime Minister of the Albanian government. He claims that in March 1943 partisans attacked in Patos and killed 100 policemen, and he, as Prime Minister, gave orders against the rebel groups:

"I had agreed with Jakomon to fight only against the armed groups, not against the civilian population. The Italians demanded reprisal in the Gjirokastra operational area."

He claims that he talked to Ali Këlcyra and Nuredin Vlora about this request of the Italians and they were alarmed. Based on this situation, Maliq Bushati arranged a meeting between them and to the others with General Dalmazzon. At the end of all these efforts, the protocol known as the Dalmazzo-Këlcyra Protocol was signed.

"As Prime Minister, I established the Albanian gendarmerie that stood parallel to the Italian carabineers," says Bushati. On May 10, 1943, I resigned as Prime Minister and went to Monte Casin for treatment. In August, I returned to Tirana, without any political activity until the capitulation of Italy. "

"The German Legation invited various personalities to set up an Executive Committee to govern the country in the circumstances of Italy's capitulation."

In January 1944, we gathered to organize a group collaboration with Legality against the Commu-

In March 1943
partisans attacked in
Patos and killed 100
policemen,
"I had agreed with
Jakomon to fight only
against the armed
groups, not against the
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nists. On May 15, 1944, was established "The alliance of Shkodra, Dukagjini, Malesi e Madhe, Mirdita, Lezha, Puka".

In the Record, dated 9.2.1946, pg. 62, of the trial by the Military Court, Tirana, the defence witness Karl Teja, resident in Tirana, states:

"In 1938 I came to Tirana as an emigrant. 2-3 months before the Italian-Greek war, the Italians wanted to send me to Germany as the Israeli I am. I went to Maliq Bushati and asked him to cancel my departure. Maliq Bushati promised me and later informed me that he had arranged for me to stay in Albania. Some of us stayed in Lushn-

LIRI POPULLIT 293
Shkoder me 2.II.1946

#### DEKLARATÉ

Une i nenshkruemi Ferid Bushati deklaroj se në kohen e Okupaterit Gjerman jam kenë në burg dhe në Fushen e perqendrimit të Shkodres per me u nisë per Prishtinë e Maliq Bushati ka nderhye e më ka pështue pa u internue dhe ma vonë më ka lirue edhe nga burgue tue më këshillue qi të largohem nga shpija per arsye se tesh t'arrestojnë prap.

Deklaruesi Shoku Ferid Bushati

The state of the s

je, some in Berat and only 3-4 families stayed in Tirana. The convicted defended the Israelis who were against fascism and at that time he saved us. I also received Albanian citizenship, that's why I did it."

The prosecutor asks: How is it explained that he escaped even though he was from Israel and we know that the Germans did not follow him from a national point of view, but racially?

Witness: I have not worked since the Italians entered; I lived on the money I had before.

Another defence witness, Skënder Allamani, 23 years old, born and living in Tirana, testifies: In August 1944 he was imprisoned in Shkodra and was in danger of being exiled to Prishtina. I was arrested by Hasan Isufi's gendarme, but Maliq Bushati saved me. I was on the council of the National Liberation Movement and was declared as pro-Movement.

Witness Hysni Peja, 66 years old, resident in Tirana, claims that Maliq Bushati during the time he was Minister of Interior had conflicts with Shefqet Vërlaci. This one has tried to protect different people. When the Italians would execute some young men, he opposed them.

Even in the Kurvelesh operation, he opposed the movement suppression, saying that these are Albanian partisans.

Maliq Bushati himself, as a convicted, opposes the accusation of having contributed in the internment of many people: "It is not true that I contributed for the internment. The internments were done by the Germans and happened unexpectedly. My cousin was also shot at that time. I housed two active communists, Koço Sotiri and Jorgji Spaho, how could I allow my cousin to be arrested? I went to hounding to release two people. "

"Salus Patriae Suprema Lex Est" - Salvation of the Homeland is a Supreme Law - this is how defence attorney Vasil Xhaj titled his speech in defence of Maliq Bushati.

The defence attorney Vasil Xhaj brought facts that

On May 15, 1944 was established "The alliance of Shkodra, Dukagjini, Malesi e Madhe, Mirdita, Lezha, Puka" was created.

proved Maliq Bushati's activity, the salvation of his compatriots endangered lives.

He listed facts that showed Maliq Bushati's human dimension of sensitivity and solidarity with people in difficulty and in danger of life. The defence attorney mentioned the fact that he housed the Communist Party members: Jorgji Spaho and Koço Sotiri.

With fake documents and his car, he drove from Shkodra to Tirana hospital and hospitalized the communist partisan Nezir Idriz Selmani.

The defence Attorney asked the Judicial Panel to take into account the statements by Nezir Idriz Selmani, Xhemal Idrizi, Ragip Gjyli, Ferit Bushati, Mehmet Bushati, Professor Ismail Anamali, Professor Taip Shkodra, Moja Kapisyzi, Ismail Kapisyzi, Ymer Kapisyzi, who brought facts about the good things that Maliq Bushati did to these people. The lawyer requested that the Judicial Panel, to take into account the testimonies of the defence witnesses, Karl Teja and Hysni Peja.

Regarding to all the written documentation at the time, when he was Minister of Interior or even Prime Minister, the defence Attorney emphasized the facts that all the documents and circulars were a logical and normal result of being a minister in a government under a foreign invasion.

150

kur unë nuk isha drejtor i "Hyllit të Dritës", por qesh largue. Kur erdhi Jakomoni unë kam qënë;me 'të ishte dhe Ernest Koliqi. Jakomonine prita si të huej; nuk mund t'i visha pushkën këtij;këtë nuk e prita as keq as mirë, por me nji pritje të zakonshme.

Prokurori: - Jacomoni nuk erdhi në Theth aksidentalisht ose ši turist, por me qëllim; gjithashtu dhe Patër Anton Harapi nuk qëndronte atje më kot dhe me kënaqësi por këto kishin qëllimet që u kuptuan më mbrapa.

Këndohen shkrimet në "Hyllin e Dritës" mbi ardhjen e Jacomonit në Theth.

Prokurori vazhdon: Kush i pregatitte të gjitha këto skena? A kish fuqi Lulash Gjeloshi, një bajraktar i thjeshtë? Jo. Këto i ka kryer Patër Anton Harapi.

I pandehuri: - Unë nuk i shoh me të drejtë që ato që shkruhehin në Hyllin e Dritës me m'i atribue mue. Por le të gjindet ay qqi ka shkrue.

Prokurori: - Patër Antoni nuk mund të çkëputet nga Hyll'i Dritës, sikurse Hyll'i Dritës nuk çkëputet nga Patër Antoni.

<u>I pandehuri</u>: - Unë geri në vietin 1937 kam shkrue në Hyllin e Dritës por ma von s'ham shkrue. Mund të kem shkrue nonji herë vetëm. Kam shkrue nji herë për Luigj Gurakuqin. Hyll'i Dritës ka kenë organ i Franceskajve dhe ky në disa raste e ka ndihmue popullin Shqiptar, por në disa raste jo. Për veprat që kanë shkrue pro italianve s'ka ba mi mirë po keq. Hyll'i Dritës ka ndrrue shkrimet sipas drejtorave qi kishte.

Prokurori: - Nuk mund të ndrronte Hyll'i Dritës sipas drejtorave por ky ka nji program qi ishte program'i Franceskajve q që çdo gjë jepet me urdhër.

Prokurori këndon një artikull të Hyllit të Dritës i cili favorizon ardhjen e Italis në Shqipri dhe ngreh lartë Ushtërinë Fashiste Italiane, duke e konsideruar të mirë Bashkimin e Italis Fashiste dhe duke lavdëruar Mussolinin dhe Perandorin Italis.

I pandehuri: Kleri katolik ka mbajt qëndrim pasiv karshi lëvizjes Nac.Çl. dhe insistoj se unë s'jam kryeta autor i ktyne shkrimeve dhe se këto janë shkrime të damshme për popullin. Sipas mejti-- mit t'im ky qëndrim muk ishte i keq.

Unë në Tiranë erdha i dërguem nga Kleri dhe me gjithë se kam protestue mos me ardhë prapë se prapë erdha. N'Asamble jam ken si spektator. Karshi Ciano-s kam protestue, tue i thanë se: unë jam shqiptar, mburrem për këtë dhe s'baj politikë tjatër përveç atë Contrary to the communist practice, according to which, any government during the invasion, automatically is considered as accomplice of the invader and a traitor, as well as any member of this Government is considered as such too, the defence attorney brought to the court, but also for the public opinion, the fact of the logic and the naturalness of a government function, even under a foreign invader. It is more than normal for a country to have a government, even under an invader. There is no case in the history of a civil society, when a nation or people have not had any kind of government under a foreign invader.

If any government, under an invader, is a priori considered as its collaborator, then we must expect such a situation, that in order to escape the accusation of treason and collaboration with the invader, no group of people will agree to take on the role and duties of the government under an invader. Such a vacuum situation is not verified in history, because there is always a government. Then governments under an invasion must always be automatically collaborators with the invader.

On the other hand, even if a government, in case of the country invasion, resigns, in order not to be considered collaborators with the occupier, in the endless cord of people there are always other people founding the government, representing the local state authority, the invasion. Is it right for these people to be labelled as invader's collaborators? Is it not better for the country to have its representatives even in the most difficult situations of invasion, than for the state building to completely collapse and the vacuum to produce anarchy?

If the historians would watch this issue at this point of view, the so-called cooperation with the invaders and without a priori, the results of assessing historical events during the war would be much different, as would be the values shown by the people at the time.

In addition, a government, especially during invasion and war times, has very important tasks ahead, such as protecting the lives of civilians, maintaining peace at all costs and extending it as long as possible, providing economic means of

#### "Salus Patriae Suprema Lex Est"

#### - Salvation of the Homeland is a Supreme Law

livelihood, etc. To achieve these objectives, a government under invasion must use every possible means, diplomacy, even talks and collaborations with the invader. And here must be always considered the goal "what for?"

This Defence attorney's remark drew attention to the fact that the pile of documents, of all official activity of Maliq Bushati as Minister of Interior and as Prime Minister should be considered differently, which means that not every official document means automatically cooperation with the invader to the detriment of the homeland, nation and compatriots.

Defence Attorney noted that unlike the defence witnesses, who were concrete, "the testimony of prosecution witnesses do not testify any concrete fact and are very affected and emotional against the defendant."

He questioned the testimonies of a witness named Rasim Guri, imprisoned in Ventotene, Italy, according to whom, by order of Maliq Bushati, he had been banned from corresponding with his family, considered as a dangerous person and, as such, should have been taken apart. Such documents are highly secret and for this fact, they cannot be taken either by the convicted or any other person. Where did the witness base his testimony, when he was talking about this? On the other hand, while this person was locked up in Ventotene prison, how did he know that Maliq Bushati used to spend 3000 lire every night in hotels in Rome?

të holla dhe po të ishte kaqë naiv nuk do të harrinte në pozitat politike kyç dhe të dorës së parë gjatë okupasioneve. Maliq Bushati ësht kommeguent në vijën politike tradhëtare të tij që nga fillimi deri në fund.

Veprimtarija e të pandehurve u provua plotësisht dhe parashikohet prej neneve 14 e 15 të ligjës Nr.41, datë 14 Janar 1945 mbi organizimin dhe funksionimin e Gjykatave Ushtarake, dhe prej nenit 1 të ligjës Nr.21, datë 15 Dhjetor 1944.

Me qënë se të pandehurit nuk përfitojnë nga shkaqet lehtësore të nenit 16 të ligjës Nr.41.

#### Prandaj,

Në bazë të neneve të naltërpëmëndura Gjykata i konsideron fajtorë si kriminela lufte, armiq të popullit dhe sabotatorë të pushtetit popullor dhe në bazë të nenit 18, gërma "g" të ligjës Nr.41, konform me kërkimin e Prokurorit,

#### VENDOSI:

Ndëshkimin e fajtorëve: 1) LEF NOSI, i bir'i Stilianit dhe i Anës, lindur më 1873 n'Elbasan; 2) PATËR ANTON HARAPI, i bir'i Loros dhe i Luçis, lindur më 1888 në Shirokë të Shkodrës e 3) MALIQ BUSHATI, i bir'i Hysejnit dhe i Qamiles, vjeç 56, nga Shkodra, ME VDE KJE, humbjen e të drejtave të tyre qytetare e politike dhe konfiskimin e pasuris së lujtëshme e të palujtëshme.

Ky vendim, në bazë të nenit 31 të ligjës Nr.41, datë 14 Janar 1945, i dërgohet Gjykatës së Lartë Ushtarake për aprovim.

Tiranë, më 12 Fròr 1946

Sekretarët:

Anët and

Anëtar:

1

On page 65 of the Trial Records, when asked for the last time, Maliq Bushati as a convicted said: "I started my patriotic activity in 1910, when I was a student in Istanbul.

I was one of the only Muslims in Shkodra, who went to war for Shkodra liberation. I collaborated with Muço Qulli for the Homeland protection. I published the notebook "People" with a popular spirit. I was against Zog and Musa Juka. "

Since February 12, 1946, when the Military Court of Korparmat I read the death sentence to them, the former Prime Minister, who saved human lives during the war from the Nazi-fascist beast, sat down and wrote a request to the Supreme Military Court appealing to spear his life, with the argument that during the Nazi occupation he was not in politics at all, he even asked to discuss this cause to the Constituent Assembly, appreciating with this act the organ that expresses the broader and higher will of the people.

In the Military Court Records, Tirana, dated February 12, 1946, **Father Anton Harapi** is charged with the ridiculous accusation that he, Maliq Bushati and Lef Nosi allowed the German invasion in Albania, as if they were the holders of the nation's sovereignty which they handed over to them.

He is further accused of being a Member of the Regency, being the National Front member, creating the Executive Committee, the National Assembly and "has propagated to set up a quisling state apparatus at all costs and therefore incite all the people to unite against the army and the National Liberation Movement, trying to divide the National Liberation Front according to Goebbels propaganda, calling the freedom fighters "terrorists" and "sold to foreigners"

"Father Anton Harapi in the Franciscan Assembly, was part of the editorial board of the "Hylli i Dritës" journal and propagated the great and poisonous slogans of fascism, deceived the Albanian people for a greater Albania, praised the Duce and King Victor Emanuel, encouraged the people of Shkodra Highlands to mobilize against Montenegro protecting fascism interest."

Ever since I entered the mouths of Hausding wolves, I have tried to do good and save some lifes from the savages. Since they were wild beasts, I could not tame them ...

In the High Military Court Records, dated 14.2.1946 it is noted that:

"Father Anton Harapi has allowed "Hylli i Dritës" journal, to be the best propaganda organ for fascism... After the capitulation of Italy he became a Member of the Regency."

The Decision of the Military Court of Tirana, dated 12.2.1946, "In the Name of the People" charges all the responsibility of the country invasion by fascist Italy on a handful of people, who were not at all decisive at that time and with this historical trick has acquitted, without being noted, the policy of King Zog and all the agreements he signed with fascist Italy, which actually gave Italy the keys to the Albanian state in their hands:

Maliq Bushati and Father Anton Harapi have organized the fascist occupation before April, by contacting the traitors of Mustafa Kruja's group and the National Union such as Bahri Omari, Kol REPUBLICA POPULIORE SHOIPTARE

Vdekje Fashizmit 388 Limi Popullit

USETRIJA KOMBETARE SEQIFTARE

KOMANDA E PERGJITHSHME

"GJYKATA E NALTE USHTARAKE"

Numri i Vendimit 9

1

ET G J YOU I M n Bu hy tre POPULLIT SHOIP TAR

Chykata e Nalte Chtarake e formuene prej;

N/Kolonel Gago Flogi

Kryetar;

Major Frederik Nosit

Antar;

Kapiten Ire Veledin Zejneli Antar;

Ne prezencen e Prokurorit N/Kolonel Pellumb Deshnica dhe me asistencen e Sekretarit Aspirant Thoma Rinos, sot me daten 14.II.1946 mori ne shoy tim aktet e padise Penale kundra te denuarvet 1) LEF NOSI, i biri i Stilia nit dhe i Anes, vjeç 73, lindin e baides ne Elbasan, 2) PATER ANTON HARAPI, i biri i Loros dhe i Lucis 58, lindur ne katundin Shiroke te Shkodres, banue ne Shkoder, fetar, dhe 3) MALIQ BUSMATI, i biri'i Mysejnit dhe i Qamiles, vjeç 56, lindur e banues ne Shkoder, pronar, te cilet me akt-gjykimin Mr. 24 date 12.2.1946 te Gjykates Ushtarake te Tiranes, jane denuar me VDEKJE ne baze te nenevet 14,15 e 18 te Ligjes Nr. 41 date 14 Janar 1945 mbi organizimin dhe funksionimin e gjykatave Ushtarake dhe prej nemit 1 te Ligjes Mr.21 date 15 Dhjetor 1944, mbasi jane cilesuar si kriminela lufte armiq te popullit dhe sabatatore te Pushtetit .-

#### Gjykata:

Mbasi shqyrtoj akt-akuzat e proges-verbalet e Prokurorit te gjykates ase faktit;

Mbasi shqyrtoj proçes-verbal et mbaj tur nga Komi sjoni Metues per krimet e krimine ave te luftes dhe ato te Mbrojtjes se Popullit;

Mbasi shqyrtoj dokumentat qe vertetojne akuzat e tre te pandehurvet; Mbasi shqyrtoj deponimet e deshmitareve te mbrojtjes e t'akuzes te bera me betim para gjyqit;-

Mbasi mori mejtimin e Prokurorit i cili kerkon te vendoset aprovimi 5 akt-gjykimit te siperme d me vend dhe i bazuar ne dispozitat ligjore perkatese;

Mbasi shqyrtoj çeshtjen nga pikpamja e faktit dhe e ligjit;

Observen:

Tromara, Qazim Koculi, etc., to overthrow Zog and bring a king from the house of Savoy.

After April 7, 1939, they welcomed in Shkodra, the Italian fascist army as liberators.

Father Anton Harapi came to Tirana as a delegate of the Catholic clergy, to participate in the Assembly, to offer the crown of Skanderbeg to Viktor Emanuel, while Maliq Bushati participated in the first treacherous government of Shefqet Vërlaci as Minister of Interior.

.... The convicted Father Anton Harapi was assisted by his representative, defensive Attorney Spiro Stringa.

In the Military Court Records, Tirana, the convicted position is further aggravated when it is stated that:

Father Anton Harapi and Maliq Bushati even after the country liberation, through their connections and in cooperation, organized the remaining reaction forces in the North of Albania.

..... They have ordered the assassination of many elements of the national liberation movement as evidenced by Mark Ndoja, Arif Gjyli, etc., as evidenced by the signing of the Covenant program by Maliq Bushati, or by the letter of Father Anton Harapi to Haver Hurshit, etc.

They have ordered the assassination of many elements of the National Liberation movement as evidenced by Mark Ndoja, Arif Gjyli, etc., as evidenced by the signing by Maliq Bushati of the Alliance program, or with the letter of Father Anton Harapi to Haver Hurshit, etc.

After the court gave the Verdict, the convicted were last questioned and as we note on page 65 of the Records, the convicted Father Anton Harapi closed it with a monumental speech, where full of elegance, the allegory of taming the wild beast to save human, life rises and slams jury faces, in front of which were these men who "begged" a little nobility. We single out his epic expression:

"Albania won't collapse because Father Anton

Harapi is being sentenced to death. Also, Albania won't collapse if Father Anton Harapi is not being sentenced to death".

"Mr. Presiding judge of the Jury, I do not ask for tolerance: I worked as much as, sweat and blood to make Albania a better place. The civilized France, the example of popular revolutions, judged and forgave him.

Even Albania, when judging the Regents, even if forgiving them, it would not be mean for Albania, but I believe that it would be even better.

Ever since I entered the mouths of Hausding wolves, I have tried to do good and save some lifes from the savages. Since they were wild beasts, I could not tame them, but with my own effort I saved a lot. Were there any Albanians like me who, in order to save people, go and enter the wolf's mouth? There are few who sacrifice morally.

"Long live To Albania!"

In the Records of the Military Court, Tirana, dated 12.2.1946, **Lef Nosi** is accused of "collaborating with Mustafa Kruja; he is accused of being the chairman of the Elbasan Commission for collecting wool donations for the fascist army; he is accused of being the chairman of the National Front Regional Committee in Elbasan."

"After the capitulation of fascist Italy, he is accused for establishing the Quisling Executive Committee for the creation of the Quisling National Assembly where he was its chairman. "During the Nazi occupation, he was a Member of the Regency."

"... It is accused that Lef Nosi, Mehdi Frashëri, Mid'hat Frashëri representing the National Front, Abaz Kupi and Fiqiri Dine for the Legality and the Independents Gjon Marka Gjoni, were accompanied to Tirana by Maliq Bushati an all together plotted the Coalition Government of all internal reaction... formed the "Kosovo" Regiment.

"After Nazi invasion, Lef Nosi, in collaboration with Gestapo agents Von Scheinger and Nu-

baher, took the initiative to create the Executive Committee and held the position of the Quisling Assembly chairman. He also called Father Anton Harapi, and even called the Pope in Rome to give him permission to become a member of the Regency. "

"They declared under the Nazi occupation "the independence and neutrality of Albania". They established three governments: that of Rexhep Mitrovica; of Fiqiri Dine in Tufina, where Father Anton Harapi also participated and that of Biçaku..."

"The convicted Lef Nosi, Father Anton Harapi, and Maliq Bushati have continued the treachery course until the end..."

Although not military, they were presented and were tried by a Military Court and took upon them an accusation that burdened them with "28,000 killed and wounded by the civilian population, without mentioning the other killed and wounded." of our heroic Army; "18,800 Albanians interned or imprisoned in Albania, Italy and Germany and elsewhere... more than 50,000 Albanians were killed and wounded, massacred or shot, died under torture in the camps of Dachau, Mathausen, Pristina and the islands of Italy".

Lef Nosi was represented in defence through the defence attorney Zoi Xoxe, who, to mitigate the severity of the trial, divided his activity into two periods: Period I before 1942-patriotic; Period II after 1942 when having a good intention, has shown political myopia. But his defense faced the rigid stance of the jury.

One of the witnesses in defence of Lef Nosi was Virgjil Papajani, 27 years old, resident in Tirana. According to the Records of the Military Court, Tirana, No. 24 of the Basic Register, he testified that in October 1943, when the Germans arrived in Pogradec, they captured him and registered him for internment in the Thessaloniki camp, but it was rumoured that he would be hanged in Korça.

His father went to Lef Nosi and through his intercession released him. Lef Nosi at the time was a Member of the Regency.

When asked what he had to say for the last time, the convicted Lef Nosi said:

"I have nothing to say because I've already told everything before, but I am presenting a list of people I rescued and released from prison."

The fact of saving the lives of dozens of people from the hands of the Nazis, should have been the greatest evidence of discharge from the serious accusations, but the facts aren't considered in propaganda trials.

The fact of saving the lives of dozens of people couldn't save one more life — the life of that one who saved the others' lives earlier.

Lef Nosi, Maliq Bushati and Father Anton Harapi, never being military, were strangely judged by a military court, in a theatre hall, where for the first time the real tragedy of human lives was being played - in the hall of the "Kosova" Cinema-theater.

The three were accused of being "the three heads of national treason: one former minister and prime minister of fascism and two members of the so-called Gestapo Regency."

The death sentence given by the Military Court, Tirana, was upheld by the Supreme Court.

Thus, one day or one evening in the dark, three men who tried in the time of Nazi-fascist cholera to do something good for their nation, even daring a glimmer of hope, were shot on the outskirts of Tirana, in the area known as "Kodra e Diellit"Priest Hill.

Stage curtain of the Cino-theater closed! No one knows how they were buried and where their remains are.

# Martyrs of the Catholic Church



One of the crimes of the communists in the first days of coming to power was the arrest, imprisonment and murder of clerics on the basis of false accusations and fabricated proof.

The Communists also used a ploy. A part of the clergy, who due to the complete lack of evidence, could not be sentenced to capital sentence, were sentenced to imprisonment for quite a few years, but even to them death was reserved in another way: taking them to work in the swamp of death where they drowned alive.

Among the 38 known martyrs from the Vatican, 20 are sentenced to death by shootting and their burial place is still unknown.

The Ecclesiastical Court for the Case of the Martyrs in Shkodra, established to review the file of 38 martyrs who were beatified by the Vatican after 9 years of research, proves that during the communist regime in Albania 31 clergymen were shot, 8 others died under torture, 3 murdered without trial, 23 died in prisons and internment camps or shortly after torture, 66 other clerics were released from prison almost dead.

The State and State Security archives during the dictatorship were used for this data, while the biggest problem was the lack of data and documentation for many people who were executed without trial. Certificates were found, but the date of death on the day they were executed was not recorded in the registry.

The martyrs whose remains have been found:

Vinçenc Prenushi Serafin Koda Jul Bonati Jak Bushati Dede Malaj Gaspër Suma

Anton Muzaj Maria Tuçi Ndre Zadeja Ndoc Suma Luigj Prendushi



**Dom Ndre Zadeja:** Priest and poet, shot without trial in the city of Shkodra, becoming the first martyr, victim of the communist dictatorship.



**Monsignor Vinçenc Prennushi**: Franciscan priest, bishop of Durrës, poet. He was imprisoned and tortured because he refused to detach the Albanian Church from the Holy Vatican. He breathed his last on March 19, 1949 in the prison dungeon, lying on the wet, cold, and barefoot, like St. Francis, whose son he was!



**Monsignor Frano Gjini: Bishop**. He was tortured in the most inhuman way, but again refused to detach the Church from the Pope. He was sentenced to death and shot on March 11, 1948.



**Monsignor Jul Bonati**: Intellectual priest, how he was locked up, for torture, in a madhouse and how he experienced unheard horrors in various cells of the bad-famed Sigurimi State Security Service, from Vlora to Durrës, died in the Durrës prison, near Monsignor Prenushi, who gave him the meal for the last pilgrimage: Holy Mourning.



**Dom Alfons Tracki**: The German priest, more Albanian than the Albanians, son of Breslau, was tortured and shot on June 25, 1946, at the age of 50.



Father Gjon Shllaku: The philosopher friar, who was shot together with the Jesuits Father Gjovani Fausti (Italian missionary) and Father Daniel Dajani as well as with the seminarian Mark Çuni, at the beginning of the communist massacre against the Catholic clergy. They were accused of "attempting to escape" and of forming the Christian Democratic Party. The Albanian State has awarded the decoration "Martyr of Democracy" to all four.



**Dom Anton Muzaj**: He was tortured inhumanely, just because he refused to deny religion. As they broke his legs and arms, they released him from prison and sent home, where he died amid terrible pain a few days later, at the age of 29.



**Dom Anton Zogaj**: Parish priest of Durrës, Secretary of Monsignor Prennushi, a priest prepared in all dimensions, was imprisoned and cruelly tortured. They left him locked up for a few days in a stinking bathroom while waiting for the day of the shooting: December 31, 1946.



**Dom Dedë Malaj**: Remained unforgettable in the memory of the people for the defense he did to the Christian religion in the trial organized against him, which sentenced him to death. He was shot on the shores of Shkodra Lake on May 12, 1959. He was 39 years old.

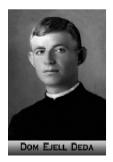


**Dom Dedë Maçaj**: Accused of being a Vatican spy, he was tortured, tried and shot for his religious resistance, at the age of 27.

**Dom Dedë Plani:** He passed away in hospital on April 30, 1949, after accepting no charges and resisting cruel torture.



**Dom Ejëll Deda**: Parish priest of Bushat, arrested for the reason that he was a priest. He died on May 12, 1948 in the hospital of the prison due to inhuman tortures.



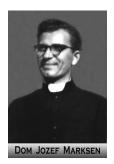
**Dom Jak Bushati**: He was accused of helping the saboteurs, of agitation and propaganda: pretexts which led to his shooting without trial on February 12, 1949.



**Pope Joseph Mihali:** Arrested and tortured only on this charge. He drowned alive in the mud of the swamp, in the extermination camp of Maliq.



**Dom Zef Maksen**: German priest, shot in 1946, uttering the words: "I die happy, thinking that I will be remembered by Albanians as a priest of the Christ's religion".





**Dom Lazër Shantoja**: Priest, man of culture, literature and art. He was massacred to such an extent that his mother asked the communist executioners to shoot him as soon as possible, which they did not fail to do in the deserted areas of Tirana, when he was 54 years old.



**Dom Lekë Sirdani**: Personality of the Catholic Church: priest, patriot, writer. He was brutally tortured and drowned alive in a sewage pit.



**Dom Luigj Prendushi**: Arrested, tortured and shot as a Vatican spy on January 24, 1947.

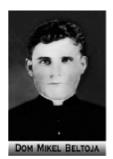


**Dom Marin Shkurti:** Consecrated a priest in 1961, he served for a short time in the Church with open doors and longer in that of silence: he dared to continue the priestly service in the times of terror. He was arrested, tortured and shot in 1969.



**Dom Mark Gjani:** Arrested for his priestly activity and extinguished during the tortures at the hands of his executioners in the prison cell, in 1945.

**Dom Mikel Beltoja**: He was shot on February 10, 1974, after defending openly his religious ideals in the trial that took place after six months of torture, which sentenced him to death.



**Dom Ndoc Suma**: He died 2 years after he was released, devastated from prison, where he was tortured on charges for which he said: "Only when I went to court did I find out why I was arrested."



**Dom Pjetër Çuni**: Priest; died hanging upside down over the sewage pit.



**Dom Shtjefën Kurti:** Priest, shot in front of the inhabitants of Gurëz. Sigurimi, the security service accused him of wanting to poison the people by using the bakeries for this.

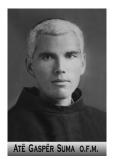


**Father Bernardin Palaj**: The great friar and poet, died in the Assembly of the Franciscans in Shkodra, converted into a prison for 700 people. Under Security Service torture he got sick of tetanus. He was the first collector of the Eposi i Kreshnikeve, a prominent mythologist, but also a talented musician and pianist.





**Father Çiprian Nika**: Franciscan priest, died under the defamatory accusation that he had hidden a weapon in the altar of Shna Ndou, in the Franciscan Church of Gjuhadol.



**Father Gaspër Suma**: A regular, a progeny of a family that was wiped out by the communists, he was arrested in 1947 and died in prison.



**Father Karl Serreqi:** The friar who refused to tell the story of a wounded man in the matches with the communists in the mountains, spent his life in prison. Died in Burrel on April 4, 1954. He is one of the few martyrs of the confession secret in the history of the universal Church.



**Father Mati Prendushi:** The friar who took part in the flag raising in Deçiq, was persecuted and pardoned by King Nicholas and King Zog, but was sentenced to death by the so-called communist "trial". His grave is still unknown.



**Father Serafin Koda:** Franciscan friar; breathed his last when communist investigators not being fed up with the usual torture, tore his throat with their fingernails.

**Brother John Pantalia:** Jesuit priest; was arrested among the first and died in hospital, after suffering indescribable horrors.



**Maria Tuci:** Young girl. They tortured her tied in a sack with a cat, they beaten the sack with a stick and the cat scratched the girl with its nails. Virgin and martyr, the girl breathed her last with extraordinary torment.









**Fran Miraka, Qerim Sadiku and Gjelosh Lulashi**, young people who were educated among the Jesuits; were killed just because they loved Christ.



#### Ill-treatment in prisons and crimes of communism

The missing persons in Burrel Prison

# Testimony of Demir Pojani, a prisoner in Burrel prison



Born on 12. 8. 1948 in Korça.

He served 17 years in Burrell Prison, from 1973 to 1990.

While serving his sentence he was re-convicted two more times, once for beating a representative

of the government and the second time for agitation and propaganda in prison.

Demir Pojani witnesses that when a prisoner died, their limbs, arms and legs were broken with a pickaxe and then placed in very small coffins. The bodies were buried in a place called Qershiza, after the name of a cherry tree that was there, 500-600 meters away from Burrel Prison.

After 1965, a stadium was built on the site and a bulldozer was used to clear the digs. After this time, the dead were buried elsewhere, behind the prison building.

He witnesses that during his time in prison 10-12 people may have died, among them 3-4 of his friends who committed suicide.

#### They used to say to us: Here it is Burrel, where someone enters but never gets out!

It was just like in the times of Ancient Rome: free citizens and slaves.

They had taken us two thousand years backwards, they had taken us to the slave class, while for themselves they became slave owners of those who founded the state.

Interviewed by Marçel Hila

Mr. Demir, thank you for receiving us for this interview. As a former inmate at Burrel Prison, what can you tell us about the way your inmates were treated there?

I was in Burrel Prison for 17 years and was re-convicted two more times: once for hitting one of the police officers, and the second time I was sentenced with imprisonment for agitation and propaganda. But first, I want to show you who were imprisoned as enemies of the people, because even today people do not understand this. The people branded as people's enemies had wonderful back ground: Their families had been contributing to the National Renaissance; their predecessors with great suffering achieved the goal of raising the flag in Vlora and the independence of the country. They were the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of this best part of Albanians who were exhausted in prisons.

The Communists established the Democratic Front organization. All those who were members of the Democratic Front had rights, and whoever was not a member had no right to defend the homeland, no right to wave the flag, no right to honor the martyrs of war, that is, they had no right. It was just like in the times of Ancient Rome: free citizens and slaves; they had taken us two thousand years backwards, they had taken us into the slave class, while for themselves they became slave owners of those who founded the state.

It's a song that became the anthem of Burrell Prisoners. Its poem was written by Gaz Përquli from Shkodra, a wonderful poet boy:

High mountains is named Burrel, / from the gorges, the winds bring frost /

The cold walls hinder us the sun / and the sky is broken by the iron window.

There was also the nephew of Spiro Bellkameni, the great patriot of Independence, isolated in the dungeon.

The commander of Burrel Prison was Vangjel Rrëmbeci, a criminal. It is said that when there were two young boys isolated in dungeons underground, they started singing the flag anthem. The other prisoners, witnesses of that time, whom I got there, said that it sounded like the voice was

coming out of the ground, it was so horrible.

In revenge to them, they nailed their door and no one went there until they died! After they died, they were taken out, thrown out, to the place called "gershiza".

It was a great shock as when a prisoner died there, they used to bring small coffins and with a machete broke their legs, folded their bodies in the coffin and took them someplace only they knew.

I remember one case when a convicted died, they left him in the room. We saw his legs broken, even though he was short. We asked what they were going to do with that man's corpse and they said to us: The garbage cart has gone to get some garbage in another place. As soon as they are done with the garbage, they'll come and get it.

That is to say, this was a man born and raised in a poor family who owed nothing to communism, let's say, large families owed to it, because they fought against communism, they also had a culture that was in conflict with the communism, but this man owed him nothing. Their hatred was so huge that they wanted to take him to the grave by a garbage cart!

A mate, a friend, told me an event that others out there, inside, had told him. A prisoner from Tropoja died, a good man, and had to be buried. What did they do? They took one man who had been recruited as a spy, and another good man as well, and they said to the spy: After you are done with the tomb, you will ask him to remove the last earth and you will hit him on the head with the pickaxe, then you will let them both inside the tomb. At first he objected. They forced him: You will do it! The two of them went to entomb the dead man, but only the spy came back - the one who killed his friend and buried him there, together with the one who had died and they went to bury.

I am now 73 years old and I have given interviews many times and I have said to myself: Demir, do not tell them all, because you do bad to your nation...the others will say "How malicious are the

...there were two young boys isolated in dungeons underground, they started singing the flag anthem. The other prisoners, witnesses of that time, whom I got there, said that it sounded like the voice was coming out of the ground, it was so horrible. and no one went there

In revenge to them, they nailed their door until they died!

66

It was a great shock as when a prisoner died there, they used to bring small coffins and with a machete broke their legs, folded their bodies in the coffin and took them someplace only they knew. Albanians! How could they have done this horror?" and so I thought not to tell, but no!

I see they are still walking in the way of those bandits.

I would like you to tell us something about that place in Burrell Prison known as "Qershiza". How far was it from the prison? How were the burials being made? Who brought the corpses there? How were the pits opened next to the other pits? Were there any hallmarks? What did you get to know during your 17 years of experience in that prison?

I know something. Listen here. The song says: The storm cannot wipe us all. / No...

Hundreds, thousands, have passed, / through this prison thousands have passed. / Hundreds rest down there to Qershia (cherry tree), / but the storm cannot wipe us all. / One day, the ship will arrive to the port.

Those who wrote the song, were prophets.

#### Who wrote this song?

Gaz Perquli with Spiro Bellkameni's nephew, I said. These two, but I do not know the name of the other, but I know that he was a nephew, by the sister or by the brother, I am not sure, but he was a nephew. These two, one of them composed the music, the other wrote the poetry and so came the song.

Qershiza was not far from the prison. It might have been about 500-600 meters. I was told that today there is a stadium there.

#### What happened with the bones that were buried there?

I found a skull there, bones ... I went there, nowadays in democracy. We went there to see if policemen were still there and in fact there were the policemen of our time, who tortured us. Yes indeed, we found them there.

There is no place else, dig where you want - find bones, find bones wherever you want to dig.

They used the bulldozer. Do you understand, that they used the bulldozer to do it. They turned the land into a sports field and with a bulldozer they freed the place from these pits that were there. They had no name, even tins. Usually a piece of paper is put in a bottle or a piece of tin that does not rust, with the name, in order to find the bones, because it was also needed for human rehabilitation, because it could be a mistake made...

#### In what year was the bulldozer used, in '88?

Now, I cannot recall the year, but...

Agim Musta, was in prison with Pjetër Arbnori and wrote that in '88 they opened the pit with a bulldozer, threw lime in, to dissolve his bones...

No, no no, listen! They have not done that, dissolve the bones. How did they know and in fact they did not want to know how to hide the crime. They say it today "We did well to them!" even today these bastards say this...

They took bulldozers there - criminal action. They dug the ground, dug it across and made a stadium or what they did. We were there with Minet Xhavdemi searching for his father, a very honourable man.

#### Mr. Et'hem Xhavdemi, the writer...

Actually, I think it happened before '65. Until '65, and rarely in '66, '67, we forgot the graves of the prisoners because they were not taken there anymore. They took them behind the prison, some 200-300 meters or 500 meters to some thorns out there. I took Fadil Dushku there, I took him there.

#### We have been told that it is a city cemetery hill, behind the hill, is this related?

No, no, it has nothing to do with the city cemetery. I have not seen the city cemetery.

There were policemen there who, when our friends died, used to say: "Hey man, you died? Come on, one less!"

...I have said to myself: Demir, do not tell them all, because you do bad to your nation...

"How malicious are the Albanians!
How could they have done this horror?
...and so I thought not to tell, but no!
I see they are still walking in the way of those bandits.

## There were policeme

You have never asked me how was our food, as the food is the basis that keeps the man alive. Some say 1, 8 ALL, 2, 0 old ALL, 0.7 ALL. How was the food cooked there? 6.9 grams of oil or fat; we used to take two ladles of soup, one at lunch and one at dinner; There were 45-46 grams of beans or pasta or rice. The pasta had a crocodile-like worm, it was the Russian pasta: we used to cut it in half, take out the worm and ate the pasta. This diet would take the man to the end within 3 months: their glands got sick, and if we have a more careful attention, the ones who did not have regular aids, none is living today. Younger than me, no one lives. That was the prison of physical elimination.

They used to say to us all day, "Hey, hey, this is called Burrel, when you go in you won't go out." There is nothing more horrible to say to a 25-30

Look ... As long as I was there, 3-4 people committed suicide by hanging.

#### In which years have you been there?

I have been there from '73 to '90.

I can count them...they were my mates and friends: Gëzim Kuqi from Pogradec hanged himself, Mustaf Bajraktari from Tropoja hanged himself, Lefter Baltovani from Saranda hanged himself, a boy from Korça later tried to hang himself, Fadil Dushku from Elbasan hanged himself. Four people hang themselves. During the time I have been there, Muharrem Bushpapa, Skënder Alushi's father, also died of cancer...

You know what they used to do? In order to have no death toll, as they could find out who was seriously sick, they took the person to the hospital,

# our friends died, use

year old boy! Being aware that the person had done nothing, and that the person belonged to a wonderful family.

I can say that in Albania there are people who take power and fan the flames. Today Albania is more divided than ever, while we who have the courage to say what we want, we are the most hated: they are ready to eat our flesh.

How many people may have died in Burrel during the time you have been there, or if you know further on? but from there he never come back, so it was not even known what happened to the body, where may they have thrown the body that was supposed to be in the hospital.

During the time I have been there, some 10-12 people may have died, 5-6 hung themselves, and among them my best friends: Mustafë Bajraktari, Fadil Dushku and Iljaz Vrioni, the poor Iljaz, he died there too.

How was the procedure there, when someone died?

# "Hey man, you died?

## en there who, when

But there was no procedure at all. They would give a spit on it... "thanks God, one less" and "come on...let's take him away and throw in the pit".

#### Who used to take the dead?

The prison's staff.

#### The prisoners?

Municipal external workers, yes.

#### Did they come every day?

Yes. The prisoner was taken out to the door, where usually was the meeting place. They took his legs out, there was a pickaxe, and they broke his legs "bam" and folded, closed the coffin, put them in the cart and took them wherever they

## ed to say:

wanted.

#### To Qershia place?

Qershia. Qershia... that Qershia ... how many big men were there, and how many were buried there.

... By killing the smartest remained the ones are left today, and communism further selected people. These came and for 45 years wiped out what the centuries had done and shaped the new man. Oh god, what did they create! We still today continue with this new man.

#### How was life like in Burrel? How did the day start, how did it end?

Look! The vast majority of prisoners had their minds on books.

#### They did not work in Burrel?

No, no, there was no work there. You were closed for 22 hours, you had only 2 hours to go out and those 2 hours were shortened sometimes. There was an idea born amongst prisoners "Even though you are in prison, do not stay in prison!" and we got to read. We used to choose a protagonist, according to the character, and went along with him. Many of us prisoners, without never seeing Paris with our own eyes, we know it from Hygo, London from Dickens and others. This was life and in addition we tried to guench our hunger with what we had, because there the hunger was chronic: no one was full; even those who had aids from home were not satisfied. A chronic hunger that lasted for years and years, and in addition, those horrible dungeons with only one blanket. They won't allow two pairs of pants, not a sweater, vest or jacket, but no, just one was allowed in order to die.

I wonder how they were parents, when they used to see persons of the same age with their children in those horrors?! How could they sign on the payroll, how could they get those money? There was a policeman, Xh. D., who used to eat human meat in prisons. But they are here now, among us.

#### Have you been tortured in Burrell Prison? Was there violence?

One of the dirtiest tortures was the operative, the operative office which picked up people to

# Come on, one less!"

The prisoner was taken out to the door, where usually was the meeting place. They took his legs out, there was a pickaxe, and they broke his legs "bam" and folded, closed the coffin, put them in the cart and took them wherever they wanted.

They won't allow two pairs of pants, not a sweater, vest or jacket, but no, just one was allowed in order to die. I wonder how they were parents, when they used to see persons of the same age with their children in those horrors?! How could they sign on the payroll, how could they get those money?

convert to spies and then started the procedure: he would not let you make an appointment, he would not allow food, he would make you have the worst of feelings, letting you understand that the whole family had died, not allowing to receive their letters.

We have found the family letters torn in the toilet: they used them. There was no greater torture than that, to see the letters that your mother had sent to you, which the policeman had used to wipe his butt and deliberately threw it there for you to find it. We have not uttered many things, but now that we see that they are still continuing, even worse, I will reveal where they come from: they come from those who ate human meat meat, and from those who would either make a spy of you, or you had no other solution.

I know cases of my friends, and myself as well...

I defeated them, I defeated them with bones, with fists on blood.

Yes it has been terrible for some! We could be aware when they broke. We cried for them, because we knew that the day they were broken, they were dead, they were not alive, and they had decided to stop the fight against that filthy regime.

I will never forgive what they did to Pjetër Arbnori by those who made the declarations and sentenced him three times in a row, up to 30 years in prison. I will never forgive that! The one who committed these outrages, the one who sentenced Pjetër, the one who sentenced my friends and me... Man is given a life to live. He is born to live it, because God has given it to us. You won't dare to take the lives of others by means of those declarations, simply to benefit an additional portion of soup! But, there were many good men, as well. There were Albanian men who suffered there with dignity.

Mr. Demir, I thank you very much for this interview.



#### III-treatment in prisons and crimes of communism

### Petrit Bazelli, a former political prisoner in Spaç and Qafë Bar, testifies



Former political prisoner, he was arrested in December 1980 on charges of agitation and propaganda and sentenced to 10 years in prison.

He served his sentence in the prisons of Spaç and Qafë Bari, where as a prisoner he worked in the mine.

He was released in 1987 after receiving a reduced sentence from the amnesty of that time.

Never apologized on the false witnesses provided in the trial.

When he was arrested, he left the little boy 2 months old, but after he was imprisoned, the little boy was visited by a doctor who told that the child was ill, so he had to be hospitalized. A few days later, the wife who went to the hospital to feed the baby, noticed 3 punctures in the spine. From that time on the child remained in infancy phase, undeveloped: neither walked nor spoke ever. Today he is treated with the status of a paraplegic-tetraplegic person.

In the years of democracy, Petrit worked as Director of the Korça Prison. A director of the Tirana prosecutor's office came to the institution for work issues and Petrit came face to face with the former investigator, who had once interrogated him in the investigator and prepared the file for his imprisonment.

Petrit Bazelli currently is retiring.

# We worked in the mine in prohibited areas. The gallery collapsed, blocked them inside

The prison could do nothing to me. I was not physically injured, but my son remained injured for life at home.

Interviewed by Marçel Hila

Welcome Mr. Petrit. Thank you very much for agreeing to give this interview to us to shed light to your family's sufferings, like the thousands of Albanian families that were hit by the dictatorship. What can you tell us about the circumstances and reasons on which you were arrested and convicted?

I was arrested on December 16, 1980, as soon as I quit my job at a factory in Maliq, on charges of agitation and propaganda. The investigation took place in Korça and ended in May '81. I was sentenced to 10 years in prison and taken to Spaç prison. After 4 days I started working in the mine as a miner until '83, then those who were able to work were transferred to Qafë Bari to work in the mine.

I worked there for up to 1 month before I was released.

Considering the work done in the mine we could benefit a few days reduction of the sentence, 3-4 days, according to the calculations made in prison.

I was released from prison on October 30, 1987 because I benefited from 2 granted amnesties. After I was released I started working on farms because no one would let me work in the profession, nowhere but in agriculture. Even in times of democracy, when the SP came to power, they fired us former prisoners. This happened 2 times. In the years of democracy I worked in the state police until I retired in 2014 because I turned 65 years old.

Do you have information on the deaths in prisons where you have been? What happened with the bodies of those who passed away? Where were they buried and how?

In prison we worked in the mine and there was not even a year without the 3-4 deaths of men blocked inside the mine. Once, I was also endangered by the pyrite wagon when I was in Qafë Bari prison, but I could survive well: I broke only one finger that then healed. For the other victims or dead we knew nothing where they were bur-

ied. We knew they were buried somewhere, but where, no!

They had their maps of the places and did not put up signs to show that this is the X-person when time would come to look for them. No one knew where the burial place was.

#### Do you know how many people may have died in Qafë Bari and Spaç working?

Every year in the mine gallery blocked 3-4 people, but if we couldn't find out, they buried them.

### With a simple calculation, just during the time you have been there for 7 years, at least 21-28 people may have died.

Qafë Bari prison was a small prison, of 700-800 men and we could find out when there was a death at work, while in Spaç prison we could not find out anything, as far as there were 1400-1500 people there working in 3 shifts. We knew only those we had in our working brigade, we couldn't know the others unless we had someone there from our acquaintances. You could not know everyone in Spaç...

We worked in places that were not permitted by law. The policeman guarding us also said that. The gallery collapsed and blocked them inside, but we had to work, to realize the norm, otherwise if we did not carry out the norm, then we had to go and eat and return with the next shift until the norm was completed. We were burning from the heat of pyrite acids...

#### I want to ask you two questions of human and emotional nature: Did you meet those who sued you along the way? What about those who sentenced you?

I do not know who did it, I only know those who witnessed: the secretary of the party in the village, the chairman of the village council in Maliqi and two others with whom I had absolutely never spoken. I knew them, but I had not spoken to them.



In prison we worked in the mine and there was not even a year without the 3-4 deaths of men blocked inside the mine. For the other victims or dead we knew nothing where they were buried. We knew they were buried somewhere, but where, no!

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Qafë Bari prison was a small prison, of 700-800 men and we could find out when there was a death at work, while in Spaç prison we could not find out anything, as far as there were 1400-1500 people there working in 3 shifts.

We knew only those we had in our working brigade, we couldn't know the others.

#### With the advent of democracy have you ever seen those people?

Witnesses were undercover spies. We could have been convinced that it was this or that, but we did not talk to them. You know!

#### Anyone who harmed you, now in democracy has he/she asked you forgiveness?

No! On the contrary, one, with whom we had worked together for 3-4 years in education and who was fired for not fulfilling the conditions, then got captain and started working in the military unit, when I got out of prison, he used to change his route, he did not want to confront, but even his colleagues had learned that he was a spy. He then killed the two officers who decided to fire him, committing suicide, as well. Another one has died.

#### That is, none of them repented, did not feel remorse for what they had done?

Absolutely not! They were afraid, they did not go out on the street, they changed route... But they also passed away.

#### What about your family, did anything happen to them, while you were in prison?

When I ended up in prison my youngest child was two and a half months old. I had a daughter and three sons. When I was arrested, the little boy was 2 months and 16 days old. While I was at the investigator, I did my best to inform them to be careful of two persons. But then I found out that a supposedly health car, but it was indeed with the doctors of the security service, took my little boy.

They had allegedly visited the kindergarten of the village of Maliq and asked about the number of children. There they had learned that there were three new-born children with my son, but my son was at home because my wife as a teacher was on maternity leave. They ask to call my wife because the boy should have a health check-up. My wife goes with the little boy, they visit him and tell her that he was ill, so he had to be hospitalized.

After a few days, my wife goes to breastfeed in the morning and sees the dead boy. Shouts and quarrels with the nurses. -No, we don't know anything! We were notifying parents by phone. The doctor did it! - they said. -We saw the child when we changed his clothes that he had three punctures in the spine.

My parents, brothers, went there too. My wife shouted: - What did you do to the boy and in despair she caught a nurse from the hair. They say: We don't know. The doctor! The doctor was Vangjel Çërrava's wife. Vangjel Çërrava was taken by Enver to the Central Committee.

#### He was a member of the political bureau?

Yes, and his wife was a doctor. He had also taken marrow from three other children. Two were maimed, one had died.

The prison could do nothing to me. I went in and out 7 years older. Physically I did not suffer any injuries to remain crippled.

My son was crippled. It's a pity for my wife, too.

#### Is your son alive or died?

Alive! He is 40 years old, 41 indeed, but he has remained like... it is a pity to say, we have him a coffin on earth at home. He lives, but does not walk, nor does he speak. We hospitalized him many times, until he was finally taken the paraplegic-tetraplegic status.

After I was taken in jail, my wife could not stay home. She went to his parents until I released from prison. But with the democracy, the boys left abroad, my daughter is married. Now I have him at home, neither talking, nor communicating, nor walking. His mother takes him out in a wheelchair, because he wants to go out, but he does not speak. Can speak about 20 words.

#### So you got a big wound.

This is our greatest wound, because the prison did nothing to us.

#### One last question: Have you thought of any revenge against them?

Absolutely not! We left it up to justice, to enforce the law, because we thought it would be done quickly and the witnesses, the spies, would anShe sees the dead boy. Shouts and quarrels with the nurses.

-No, we don't know anything! We were notifying parents by phone. The doctor did it! - they said. -We saw the child when we changed his clothes that he had three punctures in the spine.

My son is a coffin on earth, at home.

They had also taken marrow from three other children. Two were maimed, one had died.

From the glass I saw a face. Uff? I shook my head. Is this him or not? I got their names. First, the name of my investigator. I thought of taking him and putting him in jail and beating him and doing to him as he did to me in the time of the investigation. I did not do that.

swer, but this didn't happen. Thirty years have passed and they will never be revealed. I was the Director of the Korça Prison when three people came from the Tirana prosecutor's office.

From the glass I saw a face. Oooo! I shook my head. Is this him or not? I got their names. First, the name of my investigator, A. D.! Then I thought of taking him and putting him in jail and beating him and doing to him as he did to me in the time of the investigation. The Korça prison was four hectares. Inside there were two buildings, one for regular security and one for high security. I did not do that, because I did not want to be ashamed, I would offend the state.

Then I told them that we were fully loaded as it was Friday, that there were lots of meetings, that the lawyers were occupied with work because the family members came, and if it was ok to work with two people, let them come in, if they needed three let them come from Monday onwards. They talked to each other and told me that it was ok with two. I accepted and gave the other two names. I did not get him inside; it seemed to me as if I was offending the state.

#### Thank you so much for the interview!

Thank you very much, I wish you a long life with healthy families!



#### III-treatment in prisons and the communism crimes

Testimony of Llambro Nesturi, former politically convicted, suffered in the prisons of Ballsh, Qafë Bari and Spaç

# In the Day of Release they forced the prisoners to applause "Long live the Party"

But I said to them: with permission captain, is there any day left so that I can do it now?

Interviewed by Marcel Hila

#### Mr. Llambro, when were you arrested and on what charges?

I was arrested around the '80s in Saranda. I was working as a driver and I was having a coffee at the cafeteria, when the security service officers came and said to me: Come with us! I thought they would ask me to send documents to Tirana, since I worked as driver. -No, they told me, -we have other issues.

The Prosecutor Spiro Peçi came. After completing the papers I asked why I had been arrested. He told me: - You have been arrested for agitation and propaganda against the popular power. This

was an indictment fabricated ostensibly as if I was going to flee to Greece as it was close to the border. The person who testified was their spy. If I had faced him today, I would have killed him, but he is dead for about 10 years now.

#### How were you treated during the investigation?

I was tortured to accept what they wanted, fabricated things. I accepted the accusations because they were pressuring on me and then the beating started...

In the trial session 3 people were sentenced at the

They said. You will say in
court "I demand
shooting!",
But we do not
shoot you because
we have weapons,
they have
nothing.

same time: me, my brother-in-law and my nephew. The prosecutor said to me: - We tailored your dress in the investigator with Trifon Toska, the chief investigator. I turned to him and said: - The court tailors the dress for us, not you. - No! -he said. -What we say, the court do! "Okay," I said, "but why are you taking us to court?" Give us the sentence directly and finish it. Take us to camp or kill us! - No! -he said. - You will say in court "I demand shooting!", But we do not shoot you because we have weapons, they have nothing. They are useless, enough to say that "the court sentenced them".

In court they had prepared everything we had to say. At the hearing the trial panel asked me: - What do you request from us? I replied: - you got nothing in your hands? If you release me for 1 year, I will get 10 more from these others, from the prosecutor. - Do not speak like that! - the prosecutor said to me. I was sentenced to 10 years, but I served 7.

#### In which prison did you serve your sentence?

They brought me to Ballsh 2 months before Mehmet Shehu was killed, then they took us to Qafë Bari at night. They thought that Mallakastra would rise up and the slam the prison.

There were many elders in Ballsh who died in a row, elders from Gjirokastra accused of poisoning the city water, but they could hardly stand up, how could they do these things?

Kasëm Kaci said to me: - Hey, how do you feel? There was an almost naked old man. "but this one is almost fainted," I said. - Huh huh, - he turned to me - but he has the poison on his tongue. Let him suffer! - But who will he poison? -I said - He has cannot speak, how can he poison!

I have also been in Spaç prison where I worked in the mine and in Qafë Barit prison. When they interned people, they used to send the ones from north to south, and those from the south to north. Even the buildings in Qafë Bar were full of interned people.

My family was in a difficult situation: they tried to sell any flowers, wild cabbage and sent me some coffee packages. The letters we exchanged were read first by the security. My family could come to me in prison only 3 times in 7 years of prison. They couldn't.

#### How were the conditions of the prisoners in these prisons and how were they treated?

A revolt broke out in the Qafë Bari prison, a boy from Puka, who had been under investigation for 11 months, had fever. A doctor from Kosovo who was also convicted there, tells the commander not to take the boy to work, that his norm would be done by other fellow prisoners. But the commander refused and this was a reason that the prisoners revolted, destroyed public baths, shot the police.

Police troops came from Puka, Fushë Arrëzi, army planes ordered by Feçor Shehu flew over our heads ... Commander Dalip Xhabolli was taken to the investigator. His weight was 100 kg when he entered, one colossus man and when he came out he weighted not even 20 kg!

In Qafë Bari, a prisoner who died before being released was taken to a village in Fushë Arrëz. They used to take them in carts, opened a pit and covered them, letting no signs.

### It is known that the prisoners in these prisons worked in the mines. How was the workload and could you handle it?

The work plan in Qafë Bari was that you had to make 7 wagons with copper. The sergeant used to give a paper to state whether you had realized the plan. If you hadn't, you got beaten up and the next day you had to realise what you missed from the work plan. Under these conditions we used to help each other.

Neither fascism did their tortures. They dragged the man in the snow, opened his mouth and poured him hot tea: - Why didn't you fill the wagons? Who told you not to do it? And if you answered that the area where you worked hadn't



They used to take them in carts, opened a pit and covered them, letting no signs.

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There were many elders in Ballsh who died in a row, elders from Gjirokastra accused of poisoning the city water, but they could hardly stand up, how could they do these things?

There was an almost naked old man, fainted.

One of them said: - he has the poison on his tongue. Let him suffer!

- But who will he poison? -I said - He has cannot speak, how can he poison!

enough material to fill the wagons, then beating was next.

There was a form to be filled in for each prisoner. The operative chief of the prison had some people whom he used to reward by releasing them earlier. They went around to every dungeon and collected information suggesting who should be punished, telling that he had committed this or that crime. They provoked you to say something against Enver, so that when the day of release came they would punish you again, because they did not want you to go out after completing the sentence.

I had a heart attack in prison. I was hurt by prison, by its sufferings, and I had a heart surgery.

In the dungeon, we used to eat the food in the same dish with the dog.

A friend who was a policeman told me: - Do not eat there, because that is where dog food is made. Eat only bread!

So, how could my heart do well?

The day of release came. Vait Lamja said to me:
- Do not say "Long live the Party!", because the party does not love you or me. We will be released, Llambro. It will be a little late, but they will also suffer, what they have done to us, we will do to them too!

The camp gathered on Sunday. But at the moment of release you had to say "Long live the Party!", but I didn't. I was released on completing the sentence, that is, I had completed my days.

-"You will be released today," the commissar of the camp told me. - Get out of here! He no longer called you "defendant." - What do you have to say?- he asked me. I said: - With permission, Commissar, If I have missed any day, I can do it now, because I am far away. He revolted, took the papers, slammed them and said to me: - You are incorrigible, Llambro! Then my fellow prisoners took me by the hand and walked me around the camp.

#### What year did you complete your sentence?

I came out in 1988. I was married and had two children; The kids were kicked out of school. The woman lost her job and collected flowers and greens from the mountain and lived by selling them. And when she used to go to the store, in the butcher's queue, they called her enemy. No one wanted to speak to her

When I got out of prison I was taken to hard work with norms. If you couldn't do it, you got no payment. The brigadier assigned me a work with some women. The women reacted and said: - how can we work with the enemy? We were insulted everywhere!

#### How did you expect the advent of democracy?

The advent of democracy was a great joy. Ah, if I had money to make a big dinner and invite all of Saranda!

Did you hope that those who caused you all these sufferings would one day be called by their conscience to come and apologize to you?

I saw the one who testified in court after I got out of prison, but he was hiding from me. He never apologized to me! Stinky spy! He was an officer and he was sentenced to be shot in Korça; even his wife had stolen the club and was sentenced to 25 years in prison. Usually, whoever was in prison for theft was recruited and played the role of the spy.

Thank you Mr. Llambro for sharing with us these painful memories of you. I wish you good health and long life!



#### III-treatments in prisons and crimes committed under communism

# Testimony of Spiro Rexho, a former political prisoner in Vlora and Rubik prisons



Spiro Rexho, of minority origin, was born in 1943 in Nivica, Saranda.

He was arrested when he was a soldier in Vlora and sentenced to 1 and a half years on false charges that while performing his military service he planned to escape and that he had ill- spoken about the Party and Enver Hoxha.

He was transferred to Rubik where he worked as a prisoner in a copper mine. He was re-sentenced to 17 years. He served 12 years in prison, from 1962 to July 1973. **His father,** a priest who first served in Nivica and after the war in Mursi, he was sentenced to imprisonment and died there.

He was of minority villages origin, he was educated in the "Zosimea" gymnasium, of Ioannina and then continued to study in the Normal School of Elbasan. As a devoted believer he was dressed as a priest and left good impressions wherever he served.

He took part in the War against the fascist invaders. After the war he was imprisoned for his democratic ideas. The first time he was sentenced to be shot, but the decision was modified from 25 years to 3 years, due to the protests of the villages where he served his religious mission.

In the heat of the war against religion, he was imprisoned again and died in prison for maltreatment and malnutrition.

His bones were found in the Sharra cemetery and his body inside the coffin was violated: broken and thrown limbs.

# Father and son, of minority convicted on deceitful charges

Father was sentenced as a priest ... I got into it, because the others had signed. I was put in for 1 year and ended up for 12 years in prison.

Interviewed by Marçel Hila

Mr. Spiro! Both you and your father have been convicted and suffered in prison. Can you tell us how and why was your father arrested, what charges were brought against him, where did he serve his sentence, how did he die?

My father was an orphan child belonging to the minority. His father had died, but his father's brother, my uncle, as well. He himself has been obliged to take care of both his orphaned brothers and his brother's children.

Being young, honest and patriot, the village helped him and gave him the opportunity to study at the "Zosimea" high school, loannina, where he completed studies on teaching. Further on, he completed the Pedagogical School of Elbasan, with the approval of Josif Pashko's grandfather, Visarion Pashko. Some 10-12 persons of the minority went there, among them my father, who became a priest for the homeland. He was assigned to Nivica; it was a village where no one knew any Greek words; Albanian was his soul and they loved him.

He also took part in the war and this is evidenced with documents. My father was noticeable for his patriotic qualities, not because he was my father, but because he was one of the first intellectuals along with Lefter Talon to fight the Germans, and for this reason he is registered within the families of the martyrs of the National Liberation War, because he has really fought.

After the war, in 1946, he was arrested and sent to the Gjirokastra prison. It had been settled to shoot him, but the villagers of Nivica rose up, 19 men and women went to Gjirokastra, in front of the court and said: - he is a good boy of the minority, don't sentence him, sentence us all. They are still alive...then his sentence from 25 years reversed to 3 years.

When my father went out of the prison, he has been assigned to go in villages of Albanian origin, like in Mursi – a village where none spoke Greek – for 20 years more, same as in Nivica. He became well-known there, too.

Therefore, your father has been suffering in prison until 1949.

#### What happened next?

When there used to be Mass at church, he did not give me bread first, but to those who were fatherless and motherless, or to the one who had the father in prison. In cases of death, he never even discussed to ever receive money, even a coin. He believed in Christ, he was so faithful that no one else could be.

When I went to the military service, I wasn't of age for that, as I was born in 1943, but they had written it as 1942:

#### So, you were summoned to military service in 1960?

Yes, so I went as a soldier to Vlora at the age of 17, in the coastal artillery brigade where there were 70 others. A mate says to me: - Let's go to Greece? - How to escape, are you crazy? - I said. - We're going to leave, - he said...

While ... they come and arrest me. I was laughing, because I had done nothing.

They had written a document as if I had talked about escaping, and that I had ill-spoken about Enver. Tajar Bushi came, he is still alive today, and he says to the court: - This is the only man who has not spoken against the homeland of the party. - Did you come to release him? - They said to him. - No, - he said - I came to tell the truth.

#### Is it true that you wanted to escape?

No. brother, they know well. I was soldier in Vlora.

He proposed the idea to flee, accepted that he was guilty and asked for pardon. Yes he begged for pardon. He is of same age with me. They sentenced him to imprisonment. They summoned me to testify, but through the investigation I didn't admit to have had spoken to him.

#### In which place did they sent you to serve the imprisonment?

I was arrested in Vlora, when I was serving the military service as soldier, I have been in prison for 1 year and a half, then in Rubik straight to the cooper mine. There I got another sentence of 17 years, we were a group; I got arrested on 19 November1962 and in prison until July of 1973, so, 12 years.

After the war, in 1946, he was arrested and sent to the Gjirokastra prison. It had been settled to shoot him, but the villagers of Nivica rose up, 19 men and women went to Gjirokastra, in front of the court and said: he is a good boy of the minority, don't sentence him, sentence us all! They are still alive... then his sentence from 25 years reversed to 3 years.

- You go out today, but you have nowhere to sleep. So you better stay here, because today is Friday, tomorrow Saturday, Sunday, on Monday the prosecutor and the investigator will come and take you out because you are innocent. I was very happy, I didn't want to eat. I called my family and I said that I was going to be free. On Monday, at 10 o'clock, was a dark day for me.

From a false accusation of escape plans, let's say, that in fact you were not caught in any attempt, you were re-convicted a second time and this time 17 times more than the first time! You entered not-guilty, sentenced to 1 year and suddenly become a dangerous culprit.

You know? When I had already 7 months in prison, the decision came from Tirana, from the investigator, stating that he is innocent and have to be set free. But, there was someone else convicted with me, who was recruited, he insisted on me and said: - You go out today, but you have nowhere to sleep. So you better stay here, because today is Friday, tomorrow Saturday, Sunday, on Monday the prosecutor and the investigator will come and take you out because you are innocent.

I was very happy, I didn't want to eat. I called my family and I said that I was going to be free.

On Monday, at 10 o'clock, was a dark day for me. There came Petrit Akani, prosecutor, an honest man, he put his hand here and said: - Spiro, listen, you are indeed an innocent man, but those from the prosecution there, are refusing to sign your release, innocence.

I said: The one from Saranda did it to me, he did not carry out the orders, and he did this big disaster. And so they did not issue the document to me, but by involving 2 made-up witnesses they took me to Rubik, for 1 year and two months. The General also came. - Spiro, he said to me, - you will go to prison, but you should know that you are innocent. You are not alone, there are 82 other people.

What to do? They signed, I suffered consequences ... that's my story! I was sent to prison for 12 years minus 3 months.

When I was in prison, they also detained my father again because he was another problem, since he was a priest;

there were about 10-12 priests...they were preparing that of priests...

As for the documentation? They could arrange them as they wanted. My father died in prison.

#### Can you tell us about his death? Have you searched for his remains?

At that time I was working in Laç, in the superphosphate plant, I was a good electrician. At that time I was with Bardhyl Berishova. My father dies in Tirana prison. From the information I had, a prison sergeant was bringing food from home... I tried to find out who was him. It was a sergeant from Peshkopia who used to give him the food.

#### In which prison was the father kept?

At the old prison in Tirana. We learned that he was buried in the plant premises. The person in charge of the plant cemetery in Sharra had known one of our uncles who lived in Tirana and when my brother asked about the burial place, he helped us and we found it.

But something happened. When we went to get the remains, we all shocked: the body was not placed normally as a dead person, but it was a part of the body and the legs were thrown to the side ... I don't know. We all saw this: parts of the leg were like this ...

You are rightly surprised, Mr. Spiro. We also have information from other witnesses of former political prisoners that in prisons they had a practice of rapping corpses: they used to cut off their legs with pickaxes and placed them on or next to their bodies. Then they put them in sacks or small coffins. At least, you managed to find your father's grave, because the major part do not even know where they may have been buried.

Yes. We found it. We also received some rewards for the time of the war and with them we fixed his grave. It became all marble as a monument.

#### How did you expect the democracy?

We could hardly wait for democracy.

Thanks to you, Mr. Spiro!