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COUNCIL FOR CULTURAL CO-OPERATION

CULTURE COMMITTEE

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(room 5)

CULTURAL POLICY IN ALBANIA

**PART I:
CONTRIBUTION FROM THE ALBANIAN AUTHORITIES**

**PART II:
REVIEW OF CULTURAL POLICY IN ALBANIA**
Report prepared by Mr. Peter Inkei

DRAFT AGENDA, ITEM 9.1

DRAFT DECISION:

The Committee

- **took note** of the national and experts' reports on cultural policy in Albanian;
- **congratulated** the authors of the national report and the experts for their excellent work and thanked the Albanian delegation for its co-operation;
- **invited** the Secretariat to assist them in implementing the recommendations arising from this analysis.

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Report prepared by Mr. Peter Inkei

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PART I: CONTRIBUTION FROM THE ALBANIAN AUTHORITIES

**GUIDE TO THE CULTURAL POLICY
OF THE ALBANIAN STATE**

**(PRIJËS NË LËMIN E POLITIKËS KULTURORE
TË SHQIPTAR)**

Document prepared by the Albanian authorities

GUIDE TO THE CULTURAL POLICY OF THE ALBANIAN STATE

PREFACE BY THE MINISTER OF CULTURE, YOUTH AND SPORTS

I had to consult with subtle workers of the mind to find the Albanian word "prijës" instead of the foreign word "guide", after wavering an instant between "prijës" and "përçor" (bellwether) without being able to decide, perhaps and since either one word or the other, both anyhow not so familiar for the ear, evoked besides the nowadays meaning also the other meanings which, as it seemed perhaps unjustly, might offer to the evil mouths "meat for their teeth". Anyhow whatever was done, at last this first prijës (guide) of the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports was made, and it is reasonable that it has its own defects, but of course, it has its own goods.

Hoping that, anyway, the goods exceed the defects and with the conviction that my successor, that probably will wish to make the second guide, will make it better than this first one and so on, I would like to list some words for the reader who will have not only the curiosity to leaf this guide to see the pictures, but also the patience to read it word by word to in order to understand where this Ministry, so much slandered in "my time", is trying to go and what it is dealing with, whose directors of the directorates, including the people of my cabinet, are almost all younger than I am, and I am not so old.

To accept to become Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports Affairs in the Albania of end of April '98 meant to face a structure and infrastructure of cultural and sports institutions which were held alive by an indescribable miracle of nature, whereas till that time, about eight years in freedom, it sufficed for the state to give for these affairs that so small budget of it (God has been willing that they have not Albanianised the word budget, which as it is told in the language of the old French, with its diminutive shape bougette, meant exactly "a small purse"), so its small purse now extremely small, somewhere between 0.3 - 0.5 %, without ever thinking to the proper measure and way for the undertaking of a multiple reform in the domain of culture and sports. Because the Ministers in succession, the same if "left" or "right" had preferred to pull but not to break the rotten thread of the old logic of the cultural administration, without managing even in a single year to spend that nothing comma something % that the governments had left in their hands with destination the institutions and the affairs described in this guide.

I suffices to pass in review our cultural and sports institutions, their calendars of activity and the data of the attendance of these institutions by the consumers of the cultural production, in order to see in what point of need were reduced the affairs, while nobody had undertaken to raise in public the illusive curtain of beautiful words to show the cultural heritage in everyday ruin, the institutions peeled of moisture, the seats abandoned by the spectators, the empty pockets of the culture protectors and culture producers, the miserable conditions of their daily work, the shivering indifference of the potential native and foreign contributors and donators towards our culture and sport, and above all, the excruciating monologue of the Albanian culture of transition.

Without waiting for a certain time to adjust or build something in the depreciated scene of the culture institutions, the author of these lines thought to raise the curtain in the eyes of the public, perhaps from the desire to find understanding, and why not, solidarity, in the paralysing ministerial armchair. This no doubt was his great tactical mistake, the most secure

evidence of the lack of political pragmatism, a result of the intellectual directness which is possessed in politics only by those short life protagonists who lack the ambition to "ascend". This mistake led to hundreds of articles devoted to the Minister personally ever since, usually contesting where, grosso modo, he was invoiced no more and no less but the destruction of the Albanian culture. But... anyway!

His observations, right or not, on the past of this Ministry and the dramatic reality of the system of culture in the Albania of the years '90, are only one side of the medal. The other side is the work done in these 18 months in the administration of the Albanian culture, a summarising view of which I hope will be given by this first guide in the domain of the cultural policy of the Albanian state, which comes out exactly in the first moments of the years 2000. Many things might have been done better, as everywhere, but, if not for other things, for one thing I am very sure, for the fact that some good works have started to be made in a way that has only one direction:

Forward!

Edi RAMA,
Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports

MINISTRY OF CULTURE, YOUTH AND SPORTS

The Ministry of Culture Youth and Sports (MCYS) is the state administrator of the culture in Albania founded with the Decree of the President of the Republic No. 1, date 08.05.1991.

MCYS aims to bring the structure and the infrastructure of the Albanian institutions of culture and sports to European standards; this is an unalienable aim in facing successfully in the domain of culture and sports the everyday and comprehensive challenge of reforming all the Albanian state structures as a state of the European model.

An Albanian State of the European model can not be understood without the cultural institutions of the standards of the civilisation to which the Albanians belong and at the same time without creating real chances - within a space of inviolable human rights and freedoms and known and legally approved obligations - to guarantee the fund of the cultural heritage, and the future itself of the Albanian culture defending its spiritual, material and intellectual constituents and by inciting their cultivation.

To the function of its aim, MCYS holds as motives of its being:

- The processing and application of a national cultural policy to reflect the necessity of a considerable cultural dimension in the overall democratic development of the country; the need of the assertion and strengthening of the cultural identity of Albanians in the context of the region in which they live and as an integral part of the European cultural identity; the tendency towards the international cultural co-operation;
- The instigation of the cultural dialogue in the region of South-eastern Europe as a vital source of harmonious relationships among cultures characterised not only by different specifics, but also by common things, as means to promote an interethnic cohabitation, a culture of peace and tolerance in an area of variegated conflicts;
- The protection, defence and promotion of the national cultural heritage as a condition for the moral perfection of the society and as a source still not exploited for the economic development of this society;
- The following of a cultural policy which relies on the fact that in the reality of a democratic space, which tends continuously towards the expansion, there is no other way for the civil society than to win more and more weight in the sphere of culture and that relying exactly on this fact, it works to ensure the legal conditions to release all the creative energies of the society;
- The compilation of the cultural and sports policies which aim at the enlargement of the ways of the social integration and the increase of the life quality for all the members of the Albanian society by instigating the solidarity and the tolerance towards The Other.
- The necessity of the co-operation with all the social factors, the media ones, and the international partners, for the creation of an atmosphere in which the cultural production in everyday life of the society be as sensible as possible;

By having in mind these motives of its being, the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports defends and respects while exercising its activity the following universal principles:

- There is interdependence between the economic development and the cultural property;
- One of the objectives of the human development is the social and cultural development of the individual;
- Since the participation in the cultural life is a fundamental right of the individual, it is the task of the state to create the conditions for the complete exertion of this right based on Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- The definition of the objectives, the creation of the structures and the provision of the necessary income to establish a successful environment for the complete realisation of man comprise the fundamental aims of a cultural policy;
- The dialogue between cultures is one of the fundamental cultural and political challenges of the contemporary world as a basic condition for the peaceful cohabitation of the individuals and the peoples;
- The cultural creativity is a source of the human progress and the and the cultural variety a property which constitutes a fundamental factor of development;
- Having in mind that the new inclinations, especially the globalisation, besides the ever closer relations among the cultures and their interaction, may also cause the violation of the creative variety and the cultural pluralism, the mutual respect between the cultures becomes more necessary than ever;
- The harmony between the culture and the economic development, the respect of the cultural identity, the tolerance towards the variety in the framework of a plurality of values, equality of social-economic chances and the respect for the territorial unit and the national sovereignty are some of the preconditions for a just and stable peace;
- The acceptance of the cultural variety helps in outlining and strengthening of those relations inside the community which are established on values accepted by all the social-cultural components of the society;
- The individual creative commitment is of first hand to build the future cultural legacy, therefore the creation of the conditions for the creativity and its promotion is a necessity;
- The protection of the national culture, and the local cultures in its constituency, from the danger of globalisation must not change these cultures in relics without and inner dynamics of development.
- The cultural policy that the Ministry of Culture Youth and Sports follows, in the framework of the efforts of the Albanian Government for the European integration of Albania this conceiving axis which starts at the principle that the cultural policy itself must become a key element of the general strategy of the development of Albania within the Stability Pact:
- The promotion of the creativity and the participation in the cultural life;

- The strengthening of the policies and the perfection of the protection and enrichment practices of the cultural heritage, the tangible and intangible, the movable and the real estate, as well as putting to work and instigation of the cultural industry;
- The increase of the human and financial resources for the cultural development.

The Cabinet of the Minister

The cabinet analyses and applies the state cultural policy in co-operation with the directorates of the Ministry:

- by undertaking reforming initiatives through the draft laws or the legal amendments that it forwards to the Government;
- by administering well the funds given by the budget of the state or the donors in the support of the individuals and the associations which support the cultural pluralism;
- in the organisation of the national or international cultural activities which have as a purpose facing of such challenges like urbanisation, globalisation and the changes in a continuous progressive development of the society itself;
- in the instigation of the participation of the civil society, including the media;
- in the sensitising the public opinion about the importance of the factor culture in the process of the democratic development of the country;
- in the uninterrupted process of the mobilisation of the state bodies, the international community of businessmen and partners with the purpose of destining of the ever greater human and financial resources for the cultural development.

CULTURAL HERITAGE

The cultural heritage together with the intellectual and natural ones are terms which are defined with difficulty. With the increase of the interest for the cultural anthropology during the last decades, the meaning of the term itself and this topic in itself are enlarged in a sensible way. Today are treated as a cultural heritage all those material and/or spiritual treasures which witness for a certain history or identity. The concept of this heritage has the tendency to expand also for the Albanian state.

In the transition period the existing mechanism in the field of the protection of the cultural heritage has not yielded the expected results, therefore the reorganisation of the attitude and the intervention in this field was made necessary. For this reason in the structure of the MCSY in July 1998 was created the Directorate of the Cultural Heritage.

The long term aims of this directorate:

- The protection of the cultural heritage in the most effective way, having in mind the modernisation, the economic developments of the country, as well as the developments of the tourism industry;
- Absorption and involvement of the qualified specialists, which are distinguished for an advanced mentality in the field of this heritage;
- Making conscious and informing properly the citizens about the legislation in this field;
- Establishment and strengthening of the co-operation with international partners;
- The creation of the possibility of financing in various ways:

The short term aims of this directorate:

- pilot projects for the protection of the objects which are threatened directly from damages, the bad conditions, the clandestine digging, the robbery, etc.;
- the improvement of the level of training through pilot projects, seminars and the creation of a training centre;
- the improvement of the communication among the experts of this field;
- the involvement of the protection of the cultural heritage in the processes of the development, as for example in the construction field.

The role and the organisation of this directorate:

1. It creates spaces and legal and professional conditions in the field of the cultural, material, spiritual and environmental heritage;
2. It compiles an applicable strategy through the plans and the pilot projects, which aims at the rehabilitation of the museum centres and cities, the intervention for their restoration and protection, the continuous improvement of the infrastructures having as a purpose their transformation in open centres for native and foreign visitors in accordance with the development of the cultural tourism too;
3. It manages and orients, in accordance with the ministerial policies, the processes of the change and reforming of the content and the structure of all the institutions which have to do with the cultural heritage in the national and the local network as well;
4. It leads the formation, the professional qualification of the personnel of these institutions;
5. It co-operates in the regional, European and further plane for the promotion of the Albanian cultural heritage;
6. In co-operation with the counterpart institutions, the international organisations and bodies, it co-ordinates the work for the integration of the values of the Albanian cultural heritage;
7. In co-operation with the groups of experts, it prepares and issues decisions and orders for the study, the restoration, the protection of the values of the cultural heritage, for the publication of studies in these important fields;
8. It organises the activity for the increase of the sensitivity of the public opinion in connection with the protection of the cultural heritage.

The Institute of Cultural Monuments

The Institute of Cultural Monuments (ICM) is created in 1965. The work object of this institution is tracing, study, restoration and protection of the values of the immobile cultural heritage in the Republic of Albania; at the same time it has the duty of publishing of the most important achievements in this field by this institution, and informing the interested public about the achievements of the field in general, that is also by other organisations.

ICM exerts its activity in all the territory of the Albanian state to administer, maintain and/or protect the objects declared "culture monuments ". It realises this activity mainly through its eight branches and ateliers of Culture Monuments established in the districts of Shkodër, Durrës, Tiranë, Berat, Korçë, Vlorë, Gjirokastër dhe Sarandë.

Though among the smallest countries of Europe, Albania has a variegated cultural history, with a still vivid tradition. Its cultural, mobile and immobile heritage, comes to our days with a variety of monuments, which are distinguished for the architectural values, and for the cultural ones. In the territory of the Albanian state protected by law are about 2400 architectural monuments, castles of the ancient and Medieval periods, various fortifications, people's engineering constructions, cult monuments, works of the iconographic art, frescos of the after Byzantine period, etc.

Distinguished in this heritage are the archaeological centres of the ancient civilisations, like those of Butrint, Apollonia, Durachium, Bylis, the historical monumental centres of the museum cities of Berat, Gjirokastr, Krujë, and the construction of the bazaars of Korça, Shkodra, etc.

ICM today has under its administration and control these typology of constructions:

Cult monuments in total 179, among which:

churches	109
ruins of churches	33
monasteries	12
mosques	11
tyrbe	3
tekke	5
Islamic complex	1

Ancient and Medieval monuments in total 591, among which:

castles, ruins, sites	483
bridges, aqueducts	
engineering constructions	108

Folk constructions, which are divided into:

first category	373
second category	1151

Their location and number according to the cities:

Berat	428
Gjirokastra	378
Elbasan	20
Korça	150
Shkodra	80
Vlora	25

Currently, only Butrint is included in the list of the world culture property (World Heritage Site) which are protected by UNESCO; candidates for this status are also the museum cities of Berat and Gjirokaster.

ICM has a very rich archival system (the most important of the field in Albania) of technical and scientific documentation, a fruit of an over 35 years of work of some generations of scholars, restorers. Which is made up of:

- a) 2.300 files of the graphic documentation of the monuments;
- b) 130.000 black and white and coloured films;
- c) 250.000 pictures of monuments in black and white.

The archival material will soon be passed in magnetic support to be made not only more consulting and protected by the possible dangers of being only in original, but also more usable by the interested ones which are not members of this institution. The specialisation of the personnel has started to realise the complete cataloguing, according to the normative criteria CE, of the culture monuments in all the territory of the Albanian state.

ICM is equipped with a library specialised on the field that it covers with over 5.000 volumes. From the technical-scientific point of view ICM functions on the basis of the interaction of the three basic sectors:

- 1) Sector of the monuments of the ancient and Medieval architecture;
- 2) Sector of folk constructions;
- 3) Sector of art monuments.

It is helped in its work also by other sectors, like the Sector of international relations, that of information, the editorial office, the juridical office, etc.

The personnel of ICM is made of 342 employees, of which:

scientific personnel	25
technical personnel	274
administrative personnel	63

Their distribution in the centre and in the branches is as follows:

In the centre	54
Branch of Monuments Tiranë	63
Branch of Monuments Gjirokastër;	49
Branch of Monuments Berat	49
Branch of Monuments Shkodër	40
Branch of Monuments Korçë	36

Branch of Monuments Vlorë	19
Branch of Monuments Durrës	20
Branch of Monuments Sarandë	12

In the scientific personnel employees with the title "Professor" and with the grade "Doctor of Sciences". A number of employees follow the SHPU (post university schools) to get a degree of doctor in various branches of history, archaeology, restoration, etc.

ICM publishes in a periodical way the six-month magazine "Monuments"; in 1999 this magazine, interrupted since 1991 came out again with an increased number of copies (from 500 to 700) and with a summary of the articles in English. Presently ICM has some important scientific works ready for publication. ICM conceives and organises national and international scientific and cultural activities, exhibitions, pavilions, etc.

The national heritage of Albania, which has been conceived in two big lines (mobile and immobile monuments), today faces problems caused by the influence of the natural factors, from indifference and lack of intervention in time by the specialised institutions, from lack of commitment of the Local Government to protect the archaeological and museum areas from the constructions without permission, from robberies and malevolent interventions and/or for profit purposes, as well as from lack of legislation which takes under protection the values of cultural heritage created in centuries. This heritage appears grave and with a lot of problems which come as a consequence of the insufficient funds given by the Government in 1992 - 1997. In the last years this heritage has suffered sensitive losses from the "haemorrhages" caused by the robbery of the values and from their illegal traffic. Presently the efforts have increased to face with ever increasing funds the restoration of some primary monuments which need an urgent solution; in this way was realised, for example, total funding of the rehabilitation of the castle of Kruja with state funds with a value of about 370.000 million \$.

Applying a new strategy and integrating policies, recently work is being done also in the direction of the expansion of the co-operation with stable structures in the country and abroad to absorb additional funds for certain archaeological areas, for intervention in special monuments or in characteristic houses of the museum areas. 50 thousand USD have been allocated now from UNESCO and about 20 thousand other USD will be given for restoring and conserving works in the ancient city of Butrint, etc. Besides the planned fund by the Ministry for the restoring interventions in the other monuments, by the co-operation with the religious communities funds have been ensured to rehabilitate and restore of the churches of Berat, Ardenicë, Myzeqe, Mborje, Boboshticë, of the mosques in Durrës, Elbasan, Tiranë, etc. ICM is in the stage of the absorption of the funds and through the cultural offices of the German, Austrian and Italian embassies for urgent intervention in Rodon, Rubik or different places in the axis of the road Egnatia.

More problematic currently appears the protection of the people's architecture. The difficulties in this sector come from legal, economic and property factors, from factors of public order, finance, etc. To precede the possible negative effects of the legislation in force buying of four monument of culture buildings is planned; making them state property is based on the historical, architectural values and the ancient constructing tradition.

The transition in market economy has radicalised the way of administration and exertion of control on the territory by the state and the respective institutions which exert directly or indirectly the competencies through the legislation, planning construction and the

preservation of the national cultural values. This administration and control has not been exerted satisfactorily on any part of the Albanian territory. This situation came from the lack of a suitable legislation in the field of the cultural heritage, from the lack of the General Regulating Plans, from the continuous lack of an institutional will, from the lack of the commitment of intelligentsia in the problems of the urban planning and those of the preservation of the cultural heritage, etc. ICM is, in this way, in front of a great challenge, perhaps the greatest from the point of view of its existence and among the greatest from the point of view of the institutional moral.

ICM presently is involved in the preparation of the new Law on the Cultural Monuments in Albania, in its institutional reorganisation and increase of the status, and the reorganisation of its new seat.

The National Historical Museum

The National Museum is created on 28 of October 1981. It is the biggest museum in Albania and one of the most important. This institution plays an important role in the architectural plan of the centre of Albania.

The National Historical Museum (NHM) has in its fund 3.600 objects of the Albanian cultural heritage, the most interesting part of which belong to the periods from Palaeolithic Age till the late Antiquity (IV century AD); these have been exhibited inside the Archaeology Pavilion, which counts above 4.000 objects. Among the most valuable collections of this sector are those which evidence the archaic period and the protourban Illyrian period of the Albanian Culture. In the Pavilion of the Medieval Period, with more than 300 objects, the documentation of the Illyrian-Albanian continuation is realised. The collection of the objects of the Medieval period includes heraldic emblems of the Albanian princes, columns of the ruined cathedrals relieves and icons of the great Albanian iconographs, like Onufri (XVI century) and David Selenica and Kostandin Shpataraku of. XIII century. A very precious object is the epitaph of Gllavenica, worked in gold by an Albanian prince of the 14th century, Gjergj Araniti. To the collection of this period is added the new pavilion of Icons which has an iconostasis from Elbasan and 50 icons taken from the collection of the Institute of the Culture Monuments and collected from cult objects during the last 50 years in all the territory of Albania. The other pavilions have documents and testimonies of the other periods, like, for example, of the Albanian national resistance, of the Independence and the foundation of the Albanian state.

The National Museum "Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu", Krujë

The National Museum "Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu" was created on 1 November 1982. It is placed on the known castle of Kruja, the capital of the state of Arbër and symbol of three victories against the Ottoman armies in XI and XV centuries. The sections of the museum have original objects, documents and authentic reproductions which give a complete idea on the history of Albanians from the XV century and later. The museum is equipped with objects and generalising murals in big dimensions.

The museum is divided in some pavilions which represent these subjects and periods: Antiquity, Middle Ages, Ottoman invasion, further: the Medieval castles, the Albanian

resistance, the library of Skënderbeg and the hall of the princes. There are also exhibitions of objects in brass and iron, of the original icons and authentic copies, collection of manuscripts, a bell of a church of the year 1642 and a sword of the XV century.

The National Museum of the Tomb of Skënderbeg, Lezhë

It was created in the form of a memorial, on 23 November 1981. The most important element of it is the building of the Cathedral of Saint Nikolla, which is at the same time also the centre of a historical central moment for Albanians, that of the League of Lezhe on 2 March 1444. This cathedral has been also the place where our national hero Gjergj Kastrioti-Skënderbeu was buried on 17 January 1468.

A selected series of objects comprise the selection of this museum, including also the fresco of Saint Nikolla (absid), three original windows and the original door of the church, the arch over the door and other original elements of the inner decoration of the church. Like a number of other museums in Albania, here also are interesting exhibitions in the area around the museum, where many archaeological traces of the early life of the city of Lezhe are found:

The National Museum of Independence, Vlorë

The National Museum of Independence was created on 28 November 1962. It is in the building in which the first Albanian Government convened in 1913. The original two-storey building, preserved, is declared culture monument.

The museum is made of eight rooms equipped with original furniture of XIX century. Exhibited are also objects, documents, books and art works, which are connected with the period of Albanian Independence. Among the most important elements of this museum is the office of the Albanian First Prime Minister, Ismail Qemali, as well as the temporary hall of the meetings of the first Albanian government.

Museum of Medieval Art, Korçë

The Museum of Medieval Art, Korçë, declared National Museum on 29.10.1992, is the only national institution in the field of iconography. For its very nature, it preserves in the funds the most valuable heritage created by the native painters in this field, including an historical period of about five centuries.

In the pavilion of the iconographic art exhibited are the works with the most value of the art of the post-Byzantine painting. The most distinguished works are those of the XII-XIV centuries, works of the distinguished authors, like Onufri, David Selenica, Kostandin Shpataraku, Zografi brothers, Konstandin Jeramonaku, Onufër Qiprioti, etc., which reflect the Albanian school of the church painting during the period of the Ottoman invasion. The restorers of this museum managed to identify about 150 Albanian and foreign authors, which have given a sensitive contribution in the enrichment of the Balkans tradition and further in the field of the Byzantine and post-Byzantine art.

The museum reflects and has objects and models of the architecture of the people's buildings and objects of V-XIII century. The works in metal are represented with decorations of everyday use made with silver in XVIII-XIX centuries.

The National Museum "Onufri", Berat

The National Museum "Onufri" is erected inside the environments of the Cathedral of Saint Mary, which is in the quarter inside the Medieval Castle of Berat. The collection of the museum is rich in iconographic and religious objects, and it holds the name of Onufri, one of the greatest Albanian iconography painters. In the works of this painter of XVI century, who created and used the murals and the icons, the new elements that he introduced in the church painting, represented by the vivid life and the real environments, are distinguishable. His works are found in many cult objects, like the churches of Berat, Shpati, Elbasan, in Macedonia and Greece.

The museum is represented by a structure made of the central hall, the altar, the North section made of one floor rooms, the West section made of two-floor rooms. The building of the Cathedral is close to the oldest church, which later receives the name of Sant Mary. The Cathedral differs from the church in the height, which places it in the position of a cult architecture which dates back in the XVIII and XIX century.

Among the exhibited elements there is an icon placed in the gold-plated iconostasis of the church: it is part of a very important series of icons realised by the painter Joan Ceri. In the three main halls of the museum the most brilliant works of Ceri and other artists have been unfolded. There are also works in textile and metal which are an expression of a development of the craft tradition of the city of Berat extended largely in time.

The Pavilion of Icons

The pavilion of icons is a personal initiative of Minister Rama which was finalised with the inauguration in the presence of the President of the Republic on 28 November 1999. It is near the Historical Museum and it has about 60 icons which belong to the Byzantine and post-Byzantine period taken from the fund of the Institute of the Culture Monuments.

The ensemble of the icons exhibited symbolises the achievement of an interesting equilibrium between the Western rationalism and the Oriental mysticism, and especially, the achievement of a synthesis between the sub-national and transnational culture which has its origin in the Byzantine culture. On the other hand these icons represent a protected and autonomous culture, inside which, the production of the holy icons during the seven centuries XII-XIX has comprised one of the apexes of the Albanian national expression, especially this being expressed in the works belonging to the post-Byzantine period. Starting from VI century the period of the production of icons of the Albanian school of Berat starts, in fact, and it was founded by the great painter Onufri and was continued by his son, Nikolla and his pupil Onufër Qiprioti. The works of these artists reflect the so-called first evolution of the original Byzantine language. The icons of Onufri appear closer to the concepts of the Renaissance by presenting such elements as the body of Christ, of Virgin Mary and of the Saints equipped with a noble elegance and freedom until then negated for the images which should evoke the mystic body and not the physical one. However, not for this reason, the way of presentation

by Onufri of the Biblical characters might be called naturalistic, with it also his iconographic repertoire which has cycles of historical stories and new typologies of pictures, the scene, in general, is made more articulate and the various elements, from the characters and architectures up to the landscape seem to connect among themselves according to the concept which attempts to have the unity of the whole more than a hierarchical categorising or symbolic counter-position.

Thus the icon "Deisis" (O.Qiprioti) of XVII century is exhibited received from the churches of Berat and it is a typical example of the following of the iconographic tradition of the iconostasis which decorated the inside architecture of the churches or "Christ Pantocrator", an icon of big dimensions. Qualitative works of other anonymous authors have been presented which belong to an earlier period than that of Onufri of XVI century, like the small icon with three Biblical scenes: Entrance of Saint Mary in the temple and the knight Saints Saint Dimitri and Saint George.

One of the main exponents of that artistic relief represented by a greater intellectual opening of the artists towards the aesthetic experiences of the West and the ever increasing tendency to enrich the icon with naturalist elements (XVII century), is Kostandin Shpataraku. Though he highlights a more folk and traditional aesthetic taste, he expresses a special interest in the presentation of the objects which do not any longer belong to a symbolic repertoire, but to that of the everyday life of the citizens of his city (as it is seen in his work "The mystic dinner"). Kostandin Jeramonaku, one of the best known creators of this period, is presented in this pavilion with the icon of Saint Peter and Saint Paul. The works of Joan Athanasi (end of XVIII century) and Anagnosti (beginning of XIX century) are considered the last real Albanian manifestations in connection with the holy icon. With the works of the above mentioned authors the icon is made, more than a theological symbol, an affective subject that the masses of the believers feel close almost to the sentimental level. The expressions of the characters have been treated in a warmer and more realistic manner while the classical two dimensionality of the icon is replaced totally by the third dimension. Athanasi is presented in this pavilion with the icon of Saint Mary with Christ, a work considered of high quality by the critique, especially for the very elegant taste of the painter.

With the iconostasis which decorates the front side of the pavilion, besides the other icons, which complement this work of art carved in wood, another work of Athanasi is exhibited, the icon "Christ on the throne". Christ is presented seated with a gentle movement of the feet which is accompanied with the right hand directed in the form of a blessing and with the other hand holding the open Bible. The golden background of the Icon and the golden illumination the clothes bring the solemn atmosphere of this character. From the works of Korça painters, like Kostandin Athanas Zografi (XVIII century) is taken the icon "The meeting of chief Angels", the pictures of which attract you for the refined aesthetics of these masters related to the realist observation that they make on the human picture.

The anonymous painters occupy an important place in the in the exhibited works. The beautiful doors of the Church of Saint Mary from Gjirokastra which date back to 1665 show the values of this artist which comes from the Southern Albania. The two prophets with medallion stand like crowns on the angel and Mary in the subject of evangelism, while under them the hierarchy make solemn the marked event. One of the moments inspired by the Western art is the icon "Saint Mary with Christ", an anonymous work of XVII century taken from the church of Vllahogoranxia (Gjirokastër) and another icon of XVII century "Entrance of Christ in Jerusalem" taken from the monastery of Apollonia.

The cycle of the church celebrations, like 'The Mystic Dinner', 'The recovery of the lame', 'All the saints' are qualitative works and from the last of the iconographic style in our country which show the brightness and the values of this brilliant art.

The National Ethnographic Museum, Berat

This museum was opened in 1979 to give space to the show of the "material culture" of the life in Berat city and other areas of the South of Albania. The architecture of the two-storey building in which the museum is situated is typical of Berat and belongs to the XIX century.

A typical Medieval street with shops on the sides, reconstructed as a separate monument, leads to the museum. This element may be visited on the ground floor of the building together with the objects which have been used to produce olive oil and other by-products of it. On the first floor there is a typical village sitting room and a typical kitchen of the early city of Berat. Besides the crafted works exhibited, the museum has a rich archive and an area to receive people. On the ground floor of the museum have been exhibited larger objects, like typical machinery for tilling the land, etc.

The National Ethnographic Museum, Krujë

The National Ethnographic Museum in Kruja was created on 20 November 1989 and it was placed in a building of the year 1764. Besides the 15 rooms of this museum, there are also exhibitions placed on the ground floor of the building. In all the sections, in the characteristic building with a closed wooden balcony, as one of the special architectural kinds in Albania, there are various objects and relics which reflect through the symbolism the existing concept of the Albanian economic and social organisation during the three last centuries. A distinguished place is occupied by objects and works of wood, ceramics, woollen and silk works. 90% of them are original and 500 to 600 years old.

The mixture of the original building, today a culture Monument of I category, with the unique objects gives representing values to it, by distinguishing it among museums of this kind.

The National Museum of Education, Korçë

The National Museum of Education is situated in the building in which the first School in Albanian language came into being. Known as "The First Albanian School", it was opened on 7 March 1887 from the Albanian patriot Diamanti Terpo. After ensuring the permission from the Ottoman authorities for opening the school, Terpo gave his house as a gift to this school (now it is 150 years old) In the eight areas of the exhibition of the museum the history of the Albanian writing and publications is shown. Specially are highlighted the historic moments, like the Congress of Manastir of 1908, etc. One of the representing elements of this museum is also the known book written in Albanian by Naum Veilharxhi in 1744.

National Centre for the Inventorying of Cultural Property

The National Centre of the Cultural Property Inventorying (NCCPI) is established with a decision of the Council of Minister No. 142 date 23.3.1995 and it deals with the registration and creation of the information catalogue of the cultural heritage of the Albanian people. It organises the work for the registration of all the mobile and immobile cultural properties which are preserved by the museum network of the country, by the arts galleries, by private people and specialised local or national institutions and religious communities. The cultural properties of the country are a property of the state (the institutions depending on the Ministry of Culture and Academy of Sciences), of the religious institutions (of all faiths) and of private people (art galleries, studios, museums, personal created and inherited objects) To support NCCPI 5 Regional centres function in Korçë, Shkodër, Gjirokastër, Fier and Berat.

The computerising registration is done by relying on the passport (the card) of the mobile object, which has all the necessary data and a picture. About 11.000 cards and about 4.000 pictures of the mobile objects from all the institutions which administer them have been loaded in the computers, like the National Historical Museum, the Historical Museum of Shkodra, that of Peshkopia, Kruja, Gramsh, Lushnja, Fier, Tepelena, Kolonja, the National Gallery of Arts, the Gallery of Arts in Durrës, the one in Gjirokastër, the Institute of Culture Monuments and its branch in Berat, the Medieval Museum in Korçë, the Ethnographic Museum in Elbasan, the one in Kavaja, Vlora, the Museum of the People's Culture in Durrës, the Directorate of the Museums in Tirana, the Museum "V. Mio" in Korça, the national museum "The Congress of Lushnja", the private museum "Thimio", etc.

The strategy followed for the registration has aimed at receiving mainly the data and the images of the mobile state cultural property dispersed in all the districts of the country which are most exposed to damages. The technological infrastructure used before for this purpose has been simple, unusable in the distance and unsafe. In 1999 work was done for a new computer program of high quality to support the prospective development, foreseen in the project NICCP 9901/A. The aim of the project is to realise from the organisational point of view:

- a) The collection of the data and the images of the state and private cultural property and their very scientific processing for exploitation and identification;
- b) The compilation and distribution of the standard card for the immobile properties, collection of data and their registration;
- c) The enhancement in a scientific level of the IT (compilation of the terminology Glossary and the methodical Guide);
- d) The creation of two new regional centres to cover in a right proportion the territory of the country.

From the technical side may be achieved:

- a) The improvement of the technical basis and of software, in accordance with the project;
- b) The creation of the national information network, which foresees the realisation of the

connections with the regional centres, the main scientific institutions, those of administration and control;

c) Appearing in Internet and the optimal management of the information on the cultural properties.

Butrint

A few countries in Mediterranean have such beauties as to illustrate so faithfully the history of the Mediterranean civilisation. Butrint is held even from foreigners as "an extraordinary place" Since it was included in UNESCO list which has all the sites of the World Heritage, it is assessed as a property of the first class in the world, a place which "must be seen" and by importance it is listed near such temples as Hollywood, Pompei, Piramides of Egypt, etc.

They think that Butrint is discovered as an important archaeological centre by an agent of the English secret service , colonel W. Martin-Leake. In 1805, when he was attached to Ali Pasha, colonel Leake informed him about Butrint and advised him to visit the ruins which he described also in his memories.

In 1925 the Italian Luigi Ugolini travelled to Saranda and Butrint in 1925. Ugolini was a young , ambitious qe një archaeologist, who undertook his expedition inspired by the "testimonies" of Aeneid, where Virgil describes how Aenea, when going away from Troy stopped in Butrint; but also from the data of Cicero who, while living times of disagreement with Caesar, wrote letters to his friend Atic I who lived near Butrint. In 1204 corps of the Fourth Crusade had rested there. Also Ciriaco from Ankone, the first great antiquary, passed one day inspecting the ruins of the city.

An archaeological Italian mission started in Albania under the management of Ugolini. In 1928 he managed to convince the Italian government to start digging in Butrint. Many pictures and a film of this period show for the Italian archaeologists in camps and white tents placed on the green slopes of acropolis. Ugolini and his mission developed a very ambitious program. He managed to define the extension of the city through the identification of the stone surroundings, by digging not only the main monuments, like the theatre, the gymnasium, the church, the cathedral, etc., but exploring and registering also the surrounding archaeological sites: Ugolini died suddenly in 1936, but the mission went on with its project till 1941. During these years Ugolini's book on Butrint was published and a small archaeological museum was opened in the restored castle of acropolis.

After the Second World War in Butrint continuous work was done by the specialists of the Archaeological Institute and the local office of Saranda. Dh. Budina, S. Islami, A. Meksi and K. Lako digged all the surrounding areas which belonged to the low part of the city. In 1990 the Institute started a new program, entering in agreement with Dr. Kati Hadjis of the Technical University of Athens and Prof. Richard Hodges of the Foundation "Butrint" to make respectively researches in the high and low areas of the city. Two years later Butrint was registered by UNESCO as the only centre of World Heritage of Albania.

The ruins testify the extension of the city. Butrint seems to have been founded in the bronze age. It has been enlarged in the VI century BC with the construction of the theatre. Caesar transformed it in a base of foodstuff with equipment, by realising further more the extension

of the surrounding walls of the city. In the late antiquity, a visitor might very well see the gigantic palace of this city, the church, in which there is perhaps one of the most beautiful floors with mosaic in all the Balkans, and the Cathedral close to it. They think that at that time the city was inhabited by 20 thousand inhabitants. In the Middle Ages the area was controlled by various rulers: the fortifications and the castles, constituent parts of the city testify for its strategic position in the crossing of the sea ways of Mediterranean. The castle of Ali Pasha, which was built to be defended by the British, comprises one of the last monuments of the complex.

But Butrint is more than this. Ali Pasha came there for hunting in 1810. Gerald Durrell collected fish eggs and various animals in 1930. In the space between the straits of Corfu and the Lake of Butrintit there is a strip of land extraordinarily rich in wild birds and fowl, being an area which preserves in a perfect way the features of the richest exoticism in Albania.

The crisis of 1997, with the looting and damages which followed, caused that UNESCO include Butrint in the list of the Sites of World Heritage in Danger and as a consequence, it proposed to the Ministry of Culture of that time that the management of the site be improved totally according to the international standards. Having in mind this proposal of UNESCO, in 1998 MCYS created the Office for the Management of Butrint, which would be managed by the director Ani Tare. In 1999, the surroundings of the untouched site since the time of Leake defined the peripheral borders of the National Park of Butrint, due to the intervention of the MCYS.

The historical battle for Butrint goes on. At the beginning of the years '90 the foreign investors, acquainted with the fame of the archaeological site of Butrint, tried to buy the virgin coast in the area close to the city with the purpose of the development of the masive tourism. They were attracted by the economic profit reachable in a very short time. It was not important if the foreseen plans were not based at all on realistic economic planning. Neither was it important that the magic of the site of Butrint would be destroyed forever and Albania would not possess this property of world first class. For this reason as well MCYS, supported also by the Foundation "Butrint", has propogandised always the idea that such a property must also be protected through the studied economic policies, a model of the tourism of the "new era" must be made for the third millennium.

The protection of Butrint starts with a directorate integrated in the MCYS: The Office of the Management of Butrint in Saranda. With the funds grant for development by the World Bank, since the beginning of the year 2000, MCYS will manage a squad of guards for the park, a program for the education of the inhabitants of the area, an action plan for the community, and above all, a plan for the development of Butrint with the purpose to attract there an average of 200.000 visitors per year. The plan for the development is of a basic importance. EU has promised 3 million Euro for the connection of Butrint with the new road Konispol-Saranda; to develop a centre for visitors in Butrint, for the application of the measures of the security of the centre by putting in use modern methods, and the restoration of the museum through which facilities will be created to inform the pupils of the schools about the centre.

One of the main elements of the project will be the archive (a virtual library) which will be placed near the visitors centre on a land deprived of the traditional libraries, and which will make tangible through the digital technology all the researches made since the time of Leake and including the unpublished manuscripts of Ugolini. The visitor will also be able to walk on

a Roman Reconstructed harbour, and watch the film of Ugolini of 1932 on the diggings made in Butrint. A separate part of the Office of the Management of Butrint will be the coordination of a new research project conceived by the Foundation "Butrint". Since 1994, Foundation "Butrint" has used modern technology to test that the ancient city is double the size of the surface claimed by Ugolini. Now the Foundation aims at sponsoring further digging, by using contemporary electronic equipment, through which the students of the University of Tirana will master information on the recent technology used in this field.

The purpose of all this work is simple. On the one hand to preserve the magic of Butrint; on the other, through a careful planning and adapting very rational ideas and technology, to attract a big number of tourists who will not damage the unrepeatable atmosphere of the centre. With the passing of the time, the wave of the tourists will bring prosperity for the region of Saranda and, if the vision above mentioned will be put in practice, Butrint will also function as a testimony of the national dignity of Albanians as a nation which had the luck (and wisdom) to preserve the magic pearl of Butrint and put it to the service of the cultural, educational and economic prosperity of its early inhabitants.

BOOKS

The book directorate was created in July of 1998 with the main purpose the protection of the universal and constitutional right of the citizens of the Republic of Albania for information and formation through the book, the development of the policies of the distribution and the education of the citizens with the feeling of the natural approach to the written culture of every kind.

The Directorate of Books

The book directorate:

1. Builds policies in the field of the publication, production, distribution, collection and reading of the Albanian and the foreign book in the Republic of Albania, through:
 - a. The creation of a suitable climate for the flourishing of the private initiatives in the field of editorship, production, distribution of the book;
 - b. The creation of a complete legislation in the field of publication and the library science.

2. Builds institutions in the field of management of the written culture values through:
 - a. the creation of a National Centre of the Book;
 - b. the creation the regional centres of the Book;
 - c. the enrichment of the public network of libraries.

3. Promotes the distribution of the book in Albanian abroad through:
 - a. The support of the participation of the Albanian publishers in the international fairs;

- b. Financing of the common projects in the field of publication and production of the Book.
4. Monitors and instigates the skills of reading of the Albanian population wherever it is.

The National Library of Albania

Though the library institutions of Albanians in their state are relatively new, the library tradition in Albania is old. Many testimonies verify that during the Middle Ages in the courts of the Albanian princes, and the other nobles, the earls, archcounts, etc., functioned chancelleries in the three learned languages of the continent, Latin, Greek, Slavonian and near them their respective libraries. The geo-historical position of Albanians in the transition zone from West to East and vice-versa made possible for them the book contacts with Constantinopolis and with the developments overseas. The Ottoman interruption violently cut these developments. In spite of that even from the five centuries rule, Albanians did not lose their library tradition. In the new conditions it continued with the libraries of the great families, of the pashas and the beys, but also of those of the religious institutions: Benedictine abbasies, Franciscan and Jesuit convents, orthodox monasteries, Moslem seminaries (medrese), the tekke of the Bektashis, etc.

The National Library results today to be the oldest institution of the Albanian state. As its nucleus served the Albanian-Balkanologic of the Albanian Literary Commission, a common Albanian-Austrian organisation, created in the city of Shkodra in the year 1917 in the known contingencies of the First World War. In 1920 this fund was transferred from Shkodra to Tirana, in an environment of the Ministry of Education. From that year started the efforts to enrich this fund, and to reorganise it in a national institution. The National Library of Albania (NLA), as the first state, public and laic institution holds as its year of foundation the year 1920, when the first calls were made to donate books, manuscripts, periodicals, etc. for the National Library of Albania. The 10th of December 1922 is held as its date of inauguration. In the moment of its inauguration the NLA had about 6000 volumes.

The end of the Second World War found the NLA with a collection of 15.000 volumes. It was placed in one of the best buildings of that time which serves as its Annex even today. The collections with an Albanologic character were increased mainly as a result of the confiscation of some private bookshops and libraries of the personalities of culture, a process often with a sad fame. At the end of the year 1947 its fund numbered about 100.000 volumes. An event of importance for the NLA, but also for the national culture, was the issuing on 31.05.1948 of the decree "On the compulsory sending of the publications to the National Library", according to which a number of exemplars of every publication of the country were send to it free of charge. This decree gave the possibility to NLA to perform the role of the archive centre of all publications of the country and to publish later the National Bibliography of the book in Albanian. The decree has been changed and completed some times; the last version is that of the year 1992, according to which the publishers are obliged to send to NLA 5 copies of each publication of theirs. From an institution on the dependence of the Sciences Institution, in the year 1959 NLA passed on the dependence of the Ministry of Education and Culture. In the year 1966 it moved to a part of the new building of the Palace of Culture, where it is still today.

The democratic changes in the 90-ies brought about the possibility of change also in the policy of NLA. From a library of the Eastern Europe model, with extreme limitations for

giving information and the exploitation of some categories of literature, it lifted the limiting barriers of this nature, going towards the complete freedom of informing the user.

NLA is currently the main library institution of the country and an important scientific study and research centre. Its duty is to collect and preserve all the cultural written heritage of the Albanian people. It has scientific and mass function the same time. It is:

- centre of depositing and preservation of the publications in Albanian;
- the main bibliographic centre of the country;
- centre of the studies in the field of the library science and bibliography;
- centre of the continuous professional preparation and qualification of the librarian and bibliographic personnel of the country;
- preservation centre of the publications with an Albano-Balkanologic character;
- agency of ISBN for the publications in Albanian.

NLA counts in its funds about 1 million volumes (books, periodicals, maps, atlases, microfilms and other materials).

The fund of the Archive (55.326 titles) includes publications with special values for the written property of Albanians, starting from the first publications in the Albanian language (XVI century) and continuing till our days.

The fund of the Antiquary (1986 volumes) constitutes a special fund, very important, not so much because of the number of volumes as for its content. Publications of the XV-XVIII centuries are preserved in this fund, as well as incunabula. The fund of Manuscripts has 719 manuscripts in the oriental languages, and a small number in the Western languages and in Albanian (49). These belong to the XV-XX century. Presently it comprises 340 works in Arabian, 140 in Turkish, 40 in Persian and 170 in two or three oriental languages at the same time. The manuscripts in the Oriental languages have religious, historical, linguistic, literary and scientific content. Assessed specially are the manuscripts with a historical theme, among which the munsheates or the documentary cestomathies (official documents and private exchange of letters), which treat events, describe places or speak about the persons of the history of Albania. In the series of the literary works prevail the divans with erotic, social and religious poetry of the foreign authors.

Special values presents that part of the manuscripts with miniatures and decorations.

In the fund of the Maps of the antiquary 52 printed maps are preserved (reproductions of incising on copper), old publications of value of distinguished European map makers, from the XV-XVIII centuries. It is a fund for historical, ethnographical, linguistic, geological, etc. studies of Albania and further, of Balkans.

In the fund of Albano-Balkanology (37.393 volumes) all the Albanian and foreign publications are preserved, which speak about Albania, Albanians and various peoples of Balkans, which treat their history, the language, the folklore and culture. Today the centre of the Albanological studies is concentrated on the Albanian state and the basic literature for these studies is in this library.

The collections of the library are enriched through the law of the compulsory exemplary, exchange, presents and purchases. The policy of the enrichment of NLA is mainly directed in

ensuring the completeness of the archive in Albanian. With the privatisation of the publishing activity at the beginning the years '90 difficulties have been created in ensuring the publications, because not all the publishers apply the obligation towards the NLA. Despite the improvements, the desired realisation of this obligation has not been achieved.

Another direction of the policy of enrichment is getting to know the publications with an Albanological character everywhere in the world and finding the possibility to acquire them. Due to the exchange relations with the libraries of various countries, NLA is enriched with materials of value for the Albanologic fund. Having in mind also the universal nature of the NLA, with the modest financial possibilities, it tries to ensure publications from all the branches of knowledge of the referring and informing character and which are of interest for a large number of users.

The budgetary fund for the realisation of purchases and borrowing has been and continues to be very limited, something which has influenced on the slow and unsatisfactory increase of the volumes of the National Library. Through the Sector of the International and Public Relations (created in 1958 as the Sector of External Affairs) NLA has and keeps relations with the Libraries and other counterpart institutions and it works for its membership in the organisational international activities.

After the democratic changes in Albania ('90), NLA has become member of IFLA, LIBER, CENL, CDNL, ABDOS, GABRIEL etc. Based on the bilateral and multilateral agreements, and the international memberships and the traditional relations with other institutions and libraries, NLA tries to have more and better co-operation and exchange with other countries. The direct contacts have been appreciated more and more, because they open and create new possibilities for all the sides.

Today NLA has a large alphabetical, systematic and subject index cards for all kinds of literature, and chronological and geographical for a part of them. All the index cards of the readers have been doubled with the purpose of repairing the damages that they have because of use. The readers get information also for the literature with Albanologic character which exists in the other libraries of the country through the summarising index of cards that it has. Such a card index is also for the foreign technical-scientific literature which exists in the public libraries of the country.

In the year 1994 in the NLA the program CDS/ISIS was installed, given gratis from UNESCO and the cataloguing of the new entries (books) in an automated system started. This year marks the beginnings of the creation of the electronic card index. Now the basis has been created for data of the Albanian publications, which has about 5.800 registrations. The processing of the Albano-Balkanologic fund has started recently and the basis has been created of the data with 350 registrations. The complete realisation of the project of automating was made possible due to the financial support of the foundation SOROS, UNDP and the Albanian Government. Presently NLA has connected in the network 43 computers, while the network is extended for 65 users. NLA has installed a new integrated library system, which is the system ADLiB, production of the Dutch company DATASIX INFORMATION SYSTEMS BV (DIS). Both data bases have been integrated in the new system.

The installation of the Internet, since 1998, has made possible the communication with the world by realising a quick, correct and variegated information. Soon, through the Internet NLA

will realise the exploitation of the rare values by making it thus usable for the Albanian and the foreign reader.

NLA publishes periodically, since 1959, The National Bibliography of the book which is published in the Republic of Albania and since 1961, that of the articles of the periodical in Albanian. The relatively late beginning of the organised bibliographical activity has dictated the need of the preparation of the retrospective bibliographies for the book and for the articles of the periodical. A part of these bibliographies have been published and some others are in process. Work is being done for the retrospective bibliography of the Albanian book of the years 1555-1958, which includes the publications from the first book in Albanian language up to the beginning of the publication of the National Bibliography of the Albanian book. An important bibliographic publication is that of the Albanian book published abroad, which started to be realised from 1981 and continues periodically. From 1969, NLA takes part in the bibliographic publication of UNESCO, Index Translation, where the translations published in Albania are also presented. As a centre of preservation and exploitation of the Albanologic literature, NLA publishes from 1971 The Informative Bulletin of the foreign literature with Albano-Balkanologic character which comes in NLA. With a particular specific is the series Albanica (Albanian-English), which acquaints the scholars with the Albanologic fund.

Its first volume includes books published in the XVI-XVIII centuries, while the second publications of the years 1800-1849. The following volumes are in the process of preparation. NLA has about 5000 members and circulates above 100.000 materials in a year. The readers may borrow materials or may use them in the reading halls.

There are two points of borrowing of the literature in the main building, one in the old Annex and five reading halls with 220 seats. All the halls have assisting fund with dictionaries, encyclopaedias and other reference materials according to their profile. The materials with a special value (archives, antiquaries, manuscripts, etc.) are served in their special hall, with a capacity of 80 seats.

The two reading halls of the political-social and technical-scientific periodical press are with open funds. The readers find in these halls also information in CD-ROM for various fields of sciences. To the help of the readers is the office of information, the employees of which orient them in all the informing apparatus (Card indexes, bibliographical publications, reference materials, INTERNET, electronic catalogues, etc.).

A special place in the activity of NLA, especially after the years '90, is occupied by the Public Relations. It organises scientific, national and international colloquiums, exhibitions, promotions of publications with national importance, conferences with Albano-Balkanologs invited from abroad, etc.

About the condition of the library materials, the selection of the damaged ones and their restoration responsible is one appointed sector. The materials being old and the unsuitable conditions of the microclimate in the environment of the funds require a continuous care in the treatment of these materials. Being the only restoring centre of such materials in the country, NLA carries out services also for materials with a special value which are found in the other libraries of the country. The activity of this sector is presently limited because of the lack of the restoring materials, which are very expensive for the financial conditions of NLA. NLA is the centre of the preparation of the employees of the libraries of the country and the studies in the field of library science and the library information. From 1969 it organises

regularly a two years course for the professional qualification, which is the only one in the country to give library science knowledge and the library information. The program of this course is revised now and then with the purpose to include in it the contemporary developments of the respective knowledge. The most recent discussion about it was organised in October 1999 and some completions have been made mainly in the field of the information technology.

NLA publishes, since 1963, the Libraries Bulletin and from 1983 Informative Bulletin of Library Science and many manuals to the help of the libraries of the country.

Though the course of the preparation of the librarians functions regularly since many years, for formal reasons it has not found support and it has not been helped by such teaching programs, like TEMPUS program, etc. On the other hand, having in mind the application of the information technology in nowadays libraries, and the general current developments of library science, in Albania the need has risen for a special branch of this discipline, integrated in the Albanian system of universities.

The continuous increase of the volumes of collections, and the enlargement of the activity of NLA have laid now in an urgent way the problem of the extension of its spaces up to taking measures for a new building, the idea is about need, which for the moment, has remained in the level of theoretical discussions, with no possibility of making it concrete.

The unsuitable conditions of the microclimate in the funds premises from times have started their (physical) damaging influence on the library materials, which requires an immediate intervention to make possible the creation of a climate stability in the funds of the NLA; the respective project for such an intervention, though presented in some levels, has found no financial support. Calculating that all the manuscripts and the cartographic fund has urgent needs of restoration, even in this field work is being done to ask help from foreign specialists of specialised organisations, but also material help. An urgent help, in the form of co-operation, is being asked also for the realisation of some cataloguing publications with particular specifics (oriental manuscripts, maps, etc.), for which the NLA is unable to realise alone with the proper contemporary demands and the quality.

The Library Training Centre

The Library Training Centre is a new structure created in the National Library of Albania. According to the legislation in force, NLA is the centre of the professional preparation of the country libraries employees and of the study in the field of library science and library information. From 1969 it has regularly organised the two year course about the professional qualification, which is the only one in the country for giving knowledge on library science and library information. The program of this course has been reviewed time after time with the purpose to include in it the contemporary developments of the respective knowledge. The last discussion about it was organise in October 1999 and some additions and changes were made in the technology of information. But in spite of the correct functioning of this course for some years, no support was given to it by such teaching programs, like TEMPUS program, etc.

On the other hand, having in mind the application of the technology of information in nowadays libraries, and the general current developments of library science, the need has

risen in Albania for a separate branch of this discipline, integrated in the Albanian university system. Meanwhile, not finding yet the relevant understanding for the realisation of this need, in 1999 NLA raised the Centre of Library Training, supported by MCYS and foundation SOROS.

Placed in one of the most comfortable environments of the National Library, the Centre occupies a surface of 50 m². It is made of two sections: auditorium with 30 seats and the computers classroom with 8 computer units and contemporary IT equipment. Besides the electronic equipment, like TV set with a big screen, recording camera and video, etc., it is furnished also with multifunctional projector. This technology creates possibility for the introduction of the qualitative audio-visual materials in the system of library training, like lectures, conferences, library data, etc.

The Centre offers possibility for qualification in the field of library science through the equipment with knowledge, information and contemporary technology. In the period October 1999 - June 2000 it will organise seminar and lecture courses in three levels: for the NLA employees, for those of the central libraries, and for the districts libraries. The approved program has topics which aim to add to the knowledge of the specialists of the county libraries, and to acquaint them with the technology and the IT equipment. In the meantime the Centre has undertaken also international teaching activity, like the seminar for the use of information technology for cataloguing the written cultural heritage, realised by the specialists of the Italian Ministry of Culture for the employees of the scientific libraries of Tirana and the central cultural institutions.

All the employees of the system of libraries who have the higher education and who have performed the two year school near NAL without being out of work may apply for registration in these courses.

The Central Agency of the Commerce of Artistic and Scientific Books

This agency was founded in the year 1993 and its duty is to distribute the artistic and scientific book in all the territory of the Republic of Albania, and abroad. It has a staff of 12 employees. It has 30 book sellers in all the country and it keeps under administration a number of 54 book shops, out of which 14 are placed in kiosks. This agency at the same time acts also like a publisher of the artistic and scientific books. A field of its activity is also the organisation of the import-export of the books and the periodic publications.

Naim Frashëri Publishing House

"Naim Frashëri" Publishing House is founded in 1950 as a state publishing enterprise. For some decades, being the only publishing house of the literature in Albania and because of the lack of the competition of the private activities, it has kept the monopoly of the publications, and for this reason, it has been the most known in the country. It has published from the most known national, tradition and new literature authors, and authors of the European and world literature, etc., by submitting to a strict state planning (and control) In the years '90, with the liberalisation of the process of publication, this monopoly fell, and "Naim Frashëri" Publishing House is obliged to face the powerful competition in this field, which has placed it today in totally unfavourable positions.

ARTS

The Directorate of Artistic Projects

The Directorate of Artistic Projects was created to fulfil these aims:

1. The application of the cultural practices conceived according to the ministerial vision integrated in the program approved by the Government through:
 - a. Following closely the co-ordination of the work concerning the artistic production of the national institutions under the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports;
 - b. The formulation of the proposals for the perfection of the statuses and the ways of the organisation of the above mentioned institutions, and their activity, having in the centre of attention the best fulfilment of the obligations of these institutions towards the Albanian taxpayers;
 - c. The promotion of the Albanian art in the international level through common projects of the Albanian cultural institutions with their international counterparts;
2. Examination, orientation and co-ordination of the artistic projects presented to it, and the proposal of major projects in the field of art given to the Ministry of Culture:

The above mentioned projects are divided in:

- a) Projects that are proposed by this directorate and, after being approved, are put to practice by individuals or groups of individuals, artistic or cultural NGO-s or culture native or international institutions always to the function of the enrichment and promotion of the Albanian cultural production;
- b) Projects which are presented in this directorate by individuals or groups of individuals, native or foreign, or both, the artistic and cultural NGO-s culture local, native or international institutions always to the function of the enrichment and promotion of the Albanian cultural production;

The decision to finance or not a project is taken after a discussion in the ad hoc group appointed by the Minister of Culture; during this exchange of opinions they have in mind also the opinion of the respective co-ordinator of the field to which the presented project belongs with the signature of the director who defends the project; after the decision of the ad hoc group for the examination of the artistic projects, the leader of the Ministry has the power to review the decision for the realisation or not of the presented project.

The National Arts Gallery

The National Arts Gallery -the most important institution for the preservation, exhibition and the study of the works of the visual art in Albania - started its life in 1952 in the form of a picture gallery. Its first fund was made of the paintings collected in institutions of the state before the War. The works were mainly from the foreign authors and a very small number of

Albanian authors, like Zef Kolombi, Kolë Idromeno, Simon Rrota etc. Its first seat was in a building at the beginning of Kavaja Street, which does not exist any longer.

In January 11.1954 the official inauguration of the Gallery of Arts was done with a fund of 100 works of about 40 authors. In 1956 its fund was transferred to a building in "Fortuzi" Street. The new building of the Arts Gallery which is situated in the Boulevard "Dëshmorët e Kombit" was inaugurated in 1974; at that time the fund of the gallery counted 340 works of 240 authors and a personnel of 19 persons. With a decision of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Albania, the Gallery of Arts in 1993 The National Arts Gallery (NAG). Today the NAG has a fund of 4132 works of 500 authors and soon its fund will be enriched with about 300 works of the most known contemporary authors of the international level, like Andy Warhol, Marina Abramovich, etc.

Its staff is making efforts to convert the NAG in a centre of artistic communication and education, by opening its doors for all the ages, not only to visit the exhibitions or the line with the works of its fund, but to know more closely the art, the artists themselves, and to exchange ideas and opinions. Conceived in this way the Hall of Video projectors and Conferences started its functioning, which is open every Wednesday and Friday and is visited regularly by the students of the Academy of the Fine Arts and amateurs. The Atelier of the Artistic Education receives about 65 "pupils" of the age 8 to 45 years.

Since 1998 NGA started to publish the magazine "Pamorart", which spreads the contemporary thought of the foreign and native critics on visual arts, it reflects the activities of the galleries in the country and in the world, etc. At the same time the sector of restoration is preparing the publication of a magazine to help the restorers of the country to know the recent news about restoration in the world and to debate about their projects and ideas.

One of the "victories" of the staff of the National Gallery is considered the realisation of the hall of the library, which now has 700 titles belonging to the publications in the field of the visual arts, donated or collected from friends and well-wishers in the country and in the world, among which we may mention the Association "Friends of Art" in Netherlands, Foundation Pro Helvetia, etc. The library will be a centre of information equipped also with contemporary digital technology.

One of the functional duties of NGA is the organisation of the exhibitions. Efforts have been made to renovate the former concepts on art, on relations of the artist with the others, on the role of the work of art on the life of man, by organising also exhibitions which have caused "reaction", accompanied with open debates, with conferences organised for this purpose or by offering also pages of the Gallery magazine to express their opinion pro and against. NGA is helping in the integration of the Albanian artists in the community of the contemporary authors beyond our national borders through the competition "Onufri", which is transformed in an international competition.

The foreign carers, arts critics of an international level invited in this competition have made possible later that in the Biennial of Venice of this year be "spoken" also in Albanian. "Marubi '99" is another international activity organised by NGA in which photographers of all the countries are invited to exhibit close to each other. The "bad luck" of the Albanian artists of visual art is known, which obliged to work in the conditions of a complete isolation from the rest of the world, submitted exclusively to the dictate of one marxist-leninist aesthetics and the principles of the so-called "socialist realism". The two exhibitions opened by NGA,

Socialist (Sur) Realism and Homo Socialism, were a way to exhibit these works of this period caring according to a contemporary concept.

Keeping contacts with world museums and galleries, NGA makes efforts to walk with the pace of the contemporaries to win the status of an important centre of information in the field of the visual arts.

Albanian National Theatre

In the centre of Tirana, crouched behind the building of the Ministry of Public order co-exists like a privilege and a continuous trouble the early building of the National Theatre. Built by the structures which governed Albania during the years of the Italian invasion in the Second World War like a cultural and sports recreation centre (*dopo lavoro*), this complex was exploited also by the later communist regime almost for the same purpose: as a cultural centre for the communist education of the working masses. Its main environment started to be exploited as a hall of the massive manifestations, "special trials" and later as people's cinema.

The creation of an ensemble, at the beginning multiartistic and later dramatic, made this building the permanent residence of that which received later the name "The People's Theatre".

The surpassing of the amateur level of this theatre is marked as realised by the assistance of the Soviet structures of education and theatre production, based on the known tradition of the Russian theatre school. With the break of the official relations between the respective governments, the professional levels of education remained (near the National Theatre was created the Higher School of Actors), as well as those of the theatre production (great authors like Shakespeare, Moliere, Ibsen, Gogol, Çehov, Show, etc., and Albanian authors Çajupi, Çomora, Levonja, Jakova etc.) were successfully staged. From this period the first directors, scenery designer and actors were inherited, formed with the Soviet or generally Eastern-Europe theatre method and aesthetics. On this foundation and with this considerable capital the People's Theatre developed its perhaps "most glorious" activity. This activity was accompanied with the struggle and efforts for existence under the communist regime, which with the centralised blow, given especially to the efforts of the Theatre to liberalise the art and society in 1973, caused considerable damages to the Theatre and the Albanian theatre community. In the conditions of a total "ideo-artistic" control and an almost complete isolation from the international theatre developments, the People's Theatre managed to survive towards the beginning of the years '90, when the democratic changes in the Albanian society and policy created conditions for a greater creating and realising freedom. In the efforts to find the model and the means for the realisation of the new ambitions, now named National Theatre (NT), it experienced, improvised, worried and protested, to come to year 1998, when the dynamics of the developments brought as a consequence the increase of the depreciation of the system in the limit of a crisis and it marked the beginning of the true process of reformation. The vividness of its quality seems to have returned to the National Theatre.

Its future now seems more safe with the partial reconstruction, the qualitative improvement of its services, the construction of a new hall with 130 seats and a contemporary technique, the revival of the central hall with 540 seats, the optimistic progress of the project of construction in co-operation with the Italian Government of a new theatre complex with 230 seats, the establishment of contemporary rules and norms for the production of the theatre work, the

creation of new dimensions for the new artists of the theatre, etc. Only in the period September-November 1999 NT realised three new productions: A Winter Night's Dream, (variation on the novelette of I. Kadare), Summer Days from S. Mrozek and Ancient Absurdity from K. Trebeshina; it contracted the "Oasis" company for the work of W. Shakespeare Twelfth Night, produced together with an Italian and a Swedish company and it is preparing to start the realisation of the work The leaf. At the same time NT is committed in the absorption, processing and announcing of the new works that will be realised in 2000.

The New Theatre Hall near the National Theatre

A new theatre hall has been foreseen to be erected over the swimming pool built before the Second World War on the inner yard of the National Theatre. It will have a capacity of 150 seats. The hall will exploit a part of the slope of the swimming pool and by filling the other part it will guarantee the curve of the watching of the spectators. The structure of the hall will be in the form of an amphitheatre which will be covered with a visible metal construction, on which the equipment of the technique will be fitted later. The project respects the environment in which it is constructed, by preserving, for example, the garden with the firs dedicated to the former stars of the National Theatre, actors and directors who made its history.

This new building, which will enrich the current complex of the National Theatre and it will create premises for the increase of the activity of this theatre in the years 2000, it is part of the files of the projects that the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports has proposed to the counterpart Ministry in Italy, in the framework of a packet of help that the Italian Government puts at the disposal of the Albanian Government for the good of the further development of the relations between the two countries.

Opera and Ballet Theatre

The conditions for the creation of a central and complex musical institution, like the Opera and Ballet Theatre (OBT) were created by the artistic traditions of the cultivated music among Albanians, at least since the end of XIX century. The best Albanian artists (a part of which had studied abroad), together with the artists of the other cities, on the basis of the modest activity of some years, founded in 1948 in Tirana The Albanian Philharmony (AF), made up by the State Choir, a symphonic orchestra, lyric singers, the ballet troupe, conductors, balletmasters, the director and a small administrative-technical nucleus. The creation of AF (in the building where today is the National Theatre), did not only serve as a nucleus to create OBT but it undertook also the organisation of a large various artistic, musical activity of a high level.

In 1953, the year of the creation of OBT, this institution was transferred from the building of the Philharmony to the building where today is the Academy of Fine Arts. OBT developed its activity in this building till November 1966, when the building of the big Palace of Culture was erected, a larger part of which was occupied by OBT. The development of art, culture and education in Albania brought as a necessity the creation of the State Conservatory, the first professional school which would furnish the biggest musical institution in the country.

From 1953 OBT has staged 117 Albanian and foreign works, operas and ballets, and thousands of vocal, instrumental and symphonic concerts, starting from the first Albanian opera *Mrika* of P. Jakova (1959), first foreign opera *Rusalka* of Dargomizhski (1953), the first Albanian ballet *Halili and Hajrija* of T. Daia (1963) and the first foreign ballet *The fountain of Bahçisarai* of Asafievi (1951) etc. The repertoire of OBT has represented it with dignity also in known world scenes. Among its successful realisations OBT registers the Albanian creations, like the operas *Mrika*, *The Memory Flower*, *Skënderbeu*, *Borana*, ballets like *Halili and Hajria*, *Delina*, *The 10th Wound of Gjergj Elez Alia*, the masterpieces of world tradition literature, like the operas: *Traviata*, *Boheme*, *Madam Butterfly*, *Rigoletto*, *Don Juan*, *Karmen*, *Norma* etc., or ballets like *Esmeralda*, *Sheherazade*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Lola*, *Zhizel*, *Don Quixote*, etc.

Presently OBT is made of the chorus, the soloists, the symphonic orchestra and the ballet troupe. Its complete personnel is made of 260 people, according to this division:

- 1) The choir troupe, 47 in the chorus, and 17 soloists;
- 2) The symphonic orchestra 48 instrumentalists;
- 3) The ballet troupe 36 ballet dancers.

To make this theatre not only a scene of the highest musical art, but also a school of this art, very soon this institution will initiate the creation of opera and ballet studios. The aim is that these studios be turned in centres where the new artists be specialised in the respective fields and on the other hand, be a primary source of furnishing this scene. An audio-visual studio will produce and market the productions of OBT.

Part of OBT is also the Ensemble of the Folk Songs and Dances. Its beginnings are in the AF since the year. The necessity to enhance the folk music to the level of a special Institution with genuine functions of development, processing and distribution of Albanian folklore, brought in 1957 the creation of this Ensemble. This Ensemble has managed to create a clear and complex picture of all Albanian folk culture. In 1970 it won the golden necklace in the festival of Dijon in France. The Ensemble of the Folk Songs and Dances has 18 dancers, 10 singers and 6 instrumentalists.

FILM

The National Centre of Cinematography

The National Centre of Cinematography (NCC) is a governmental institution which secures the financing of the production of the film in Albania. It was created in 1997, the year of the approval of the first Law "On cinematography". The law and the reform that followed were a result of the challenge created by the political and economic changes, which transformed the Albanian society of the years '90. The law was a challenge to the existing system of state-owner of the film industry and it opened a new prospect for this industry.

The true date of birth of the film in Albania is marked in 1952, when the so-called "New Albania" Film Studio was created. 1952 was also the year of the production of the first artistic film "Skënderbeu", a Soviet-Albanian co-production. With the lapse of the years the number of the artistic films increased from one to three in a year up to 14 in a year, 16 cartoons and 60 documentaries in a year. During the 45 years, the Albanian film industry produced over 300

artistic films, 700 documentaries and 150 cartoons projected for the TV viewers. The studio remained "an important tool of the ideo-political education of the working masses", Typical in a country now considered as the country with the fiercest communist regime in Europe. The films produced by this studio were, in the largest part, a simplified, unreal view of the "socialist epoch". Though the production was based on the ruling ideology, some films showed a good aesthetic level which was recognised also abroad.

The crisis of the beginning of the years '90 threatened seriously the survival of the Albanian cinematography. The new reforms, which were necessary, were not yet clear. The film studio "New Albania" was broken in 3 separate state companies: Alba Film Studio, Alba Film Animation dhe Alba Film Distribution. Despite this, the production continued to diminish up to 2 film per year because of the insufficient state financing. Alba Film Distribution went bankrupt, while it lost the control on the network of cinemas. Dhimitër Anagnosti, considered by many as the best Albanian director, appointed in 19992 Minister of Culture, Youth and Sports, appointed a working group for the compilation of the draft law "On cinematography". After a long consulting work with many film institutions abroad and a number of European industries and legal experts, the working group presented the draft in the Parliamentary commission for culture and media in 1995. Till 1996, when the law passed in the Parliament things did not change. The production of the film was based on a film studio owned by the state, like the rest of the other former communist countries. The artists and the other creative employees were not simple officials of the centralised structure of the studio.

The law "On cinematography" and the newly created NCC were the first efforts to transform the film production in a competitive system to adapt to the free market economy. NCC has entered in operation since 20 months. It is similar to the its sisters, the other film centres in Europe. Its main purpose is to support, through governmental financing, the creation of new Albanian films in the three genres: artistic, documentary and cartoons.

The work of NCC relies on projects. The producers apply for their projects. The board of NCC through the competition for the projects in the three genres of the film and those for the festivals and projects of the new producers, selects the films which will receive a fund from it. Having in mind the financing for NCC, which for 1999 reached the sum of 72.600.000 leks, the co-production remains the only alternative for the Albanian cinematography. This is also the direction of the orientation of its strategy. NCC is conscious of the importance of the co-productions as the most possible way to enlarge the production and giving more chances to the Albanian distribution. The four artistic films realised these last years are co-productions with French, Russian, Hungarian and Polish companies, while the services offered to the foreign producers have been a few and not very profit making. The documentaries (7-8 films in a year) are mainly co-productions with the Albanian state TV. They have been shot in video, which means the same number of works for the artist creators.

However, the state of cinematography may be still called critical. The majority of film professionals are without work. The Albanian companies of film production are financially weak and fight to find partners for their projects. Film industry continues to suffer from the same problems: old production technology and a low standard distribution infrastructure: Film industry is influenced by the difficulties that the Albanian society faces.

This comes as a consequence of the lack of funds and exchange of information and connections with the rest of the community. Having in consideration the old production technology for the film studio, including the shooting equipment, the laboratories, the voice

and montage, as well as other accessories, it may be said that the Studio faces today the most difficult crisis. TVSH and about 30 private channels are unable to pay and for this reason, they are uninterested to use the studio facilities for the production of the shows, advertisements or serials. To it is added the difficult crisis of distribution. The conditions of the cinemas network is indescribable. The number of cinemas has fallen from 65 in 1991 to 25. Many of them have been rented and have lost their function. Those which have remained offer a poor projection quality and bad conditions of watching.

In 1999 in Tirana was built and inaugurated a cinema of European standards, Millennium, and there is hope to build two others of the same level: one in Elbasan and one in Shkodra. A new law of distribution, which is expected to pass in Albanian Parliament in the coming summer, will create limitations and punishments for the owners of the cinemas who change the function of their halls, and it will offer a packet of measures for the support of the distributors through the facilitation of the taxes and the customs obligations.

The establishment of stable connection with the other sister centres and various acting foundations in Europe is one of the ways in which work is being done to bring out of the crisis the sector of the production and distribution. During the second 6 months of 1999 efforts were made to contact with other organisations, like the French CNC, etc. There is need for more support in the exchange of information, in the education concerning the field of the film, etc.

Millennium Cinema

Millennium, the first cinema opened after the fall of communism in Albania and the only one with the contemporary parameters, is a private initiative supported by the Ministry of Culture and the Albanian Government. Millennium constitutes the first example of a co-operation of the private initiative with the state to the function of the creation of a modern culture infrastructure. MCYS supported this initiative with a grant of 9 million leks, a grant which was approved with a majority of votes in the Parliament of Albania. The films which are shown in cinema Millennium are licensed by United International Pictures, London, an administration of the studios in LA, Paramount, Universal, MGM, MCA.

Central State Archive of the Film

The Central State Archive of the Film (CSAF) was founded on the basis and the experience of some institutions, among which also the Albanian Film Agency of the year 1945. Two years later this agency was transformed in the State Enterprise of the Cinematography and in 1952 it takes the name the Film studio "New Albania".

Like the film makers of all the world, the Albanian film makers also have left a rich heritage and CSAF takes care exactly for the protection of the artistic and documentary values of the works which in a linear line comprise about one million of meters. CSAF is an infrastructure to the aid of all who like the film, its viewers or critics, film makers or creators of the image. Deposited in it are the first shootings for Albania and foreign films shown at the beginning of XX century. In the years '30, when the world created the first cinemas, in Albania a wide network of cinemas was spread, the film of which have been kept until today. To these productions were added the first Albanian film images, which came to be gathered, at the

beginning in a small building, while now they are preserved in the suburb of Tirana, in its East side.

At the beginning of the years '90, being part of the former Film Studio "Albania Today" (today "Albafilm Studio"), the Film Archive managed to preserve the films in the most optimal technical conditions, by restoring continuously their supports and making a detailed index. Today in CSAF you can find in some instants where is "hiding" Tirana of all the century, who have been its numerous visitors, you may get "acquainted" with Gandi, Lev Tolstoi or Mother Teresa, you may see the most frenetic applause of the European continent, the face of Aleksandër Moisiu, of Greta Garbo, you may take part in the celebration of the birthday of a great world fil maker, etc. The Albanian actors since the moments of the cinema tests up to the climax of their play occupy a central place, accompanied by the "army" of the film posters, the pictures and the cameras of the first shootings. It suffices to mention one name and this name is not just a word, but a photochemical world which is preserved in the hands of the employees of the Archive; which are ready to serve each visitor, every TV channel, every film maker. Every foreign cinemtographic school and every well-wisher of the film.

CSAF makes a complex work to preserve and use its rich fund , which is enlarged and renovated. It has tried to preserve in the best conditions the film material and it has converted tens of kilometres of film from the material nitrate produced since the years '50 to the material acetate of the second half of the century. The days of handing over of the films by Albanian authors are considered celebration days and undertaking a big responsibility.

The co-operation with other halls, the computerisation of the premises, the quick communication for every kind of information which is connected with the Archive, giving and taking of the reels are nevertheless an indication of the rhythms of the Albanian cultural life. The creation of the various companies of private or independent producers of the film has brought about also the stabilisation of CSAF as a special institution, in the way of the division of the "powers" of the film from one another starting from the production, distribution and up to the preservation of the film material.

CSAF preserves about 5600 titles of film works in 28.536 acts. From these:

Documentary films	1170
Artistic films	240
Chronicles	1006
Cartoons	171
Archive shooting	1476

THE NATIONAL CENTRE OF FOLKLORE ACTIVITIES

The National Centre of Folklore Activities (NCFA) is founded in 1994. It deals with regional and national activities in the field of folklore and keeps relations with cultural associations in Albania, Kosovo, Montenegro, Macedonia and Diaspora. Through the folklore activities it aims to preserve the original character of folklore. In the recent years, as a consequence of the economic-social changes, the traditional cultural-artistic activity has shown new tendencies in organisation, in form and content. These changes have been shown in the two main directions of the folk culture: in the culture of living and the spiritual one. By preserving and deepening

the national character, the organisation, management and the content itself of the activity of folk culture has adapted to the market laws and the spiritual and material needs of the time.

Some specifics of various ethno-cultural areas of the country, which NCFA distinguishes for distinct and specific features, and also for novelties that present an interest for their cultural-artistic life and the foreign visitors.

1. Tirana remains the chief centre of the cultural-artistic activities, especially for the modern art and culture, through the activity of the central-artistic institutions. For the folk culture the best achievements are shown in the concert activity of the Ensemble of Folk Songs and Dances, in the artistic activities of the folk groups of the associations and the private ones. For the material culture characteristic is the production by Tirana masters of the artistic works in copper and alabaster, production of pipes and fezes, etc.

2. Durrës has preserved and developed the tradition of the Artistic Folk Ensemble and that of the Bows Orchestra with a dense activity, in the country and abroad. The Folk Culture Exhibition has been enriched (loom, silk, embroidery, etc.) and it is opened every year for the Albanian public and that of the cities of the neighbour Italy.

3. Kruja occupies a special place in the ethno-cultural map with its characteristic bazaar, which has been renovated and enriched with works of folk masters, that are distinguished for the variety and the high utility and aesthetic level. By them, Kruja today has become a centre of the production of the objects of the material culture of the people.

4. Elbasan has created now the tradition of the celebration of the Summer Day, as a characteristic folk holiday and the annual organisation of the People's Citizen Song.

5. Vlora and Gjirokastra are distinguished for the folk private groups or the folk ensembles, like "Çipini", "The Nightingale", "The Youth Group", which operate in the recent years and through the concerts and tours in the country and abroad, they have enriched and developed the tradition of the polyphonic song of the South.

6. Dibra renovates its special tradition by organising every year, through the Culture House (of Peshkopia) "Dibra Room", an activity of the people's culture which includes groups from the Area of Dibra and the North-eastern region in Albania and Macedonia, Groups from Kosova and invited people from Diaspora or Balkans.

7. Korça carries out regular concert activities with the Bows Orchestra and the characteristic group of old people ("Lyre"); an activity organised in the recent years is the Festival of Korca serenade, which aims to return to the tradition.

8. Kukës and Berat, with their Culture Houses have continued the tradition of the people's small orchestras, of the virtuoso instrumentalists in the drum, çifteli e flute, whistle, leaf, etc., and the folk singers which represent the folk creation of these regions.

9. Librazhd is distinguished for the dense activity of the folk Ensemble of the city; the tradition of the folk dance, song, and old rites is preserved there, and they are presented in annual local and national activities.

10. Kolonja, Korça, Tepelena, Përmet and Delvina preserve and enrich the tradition of the folk bands and small orchestras organised in the activities of the culture Houses and folk

Groups. The concert creation of the very well known ensemble "Lela Family", evaluated in tens of concerts in various countries of Europe, is one of these examples.

11. Gjirokastra and Përmet continue the tradition of the works on wool by the folk craftsmen, especially carpets, rugs, runners, triangles, etc., which have arisen the interest and orders of the market of neighbour countries.

12. Puka preserves and develops a special folk tradition, that of the folk masters of working with the wood, especially in the production of the folk music instruments: sharki, çifteli, flutes, whistles, lahuta, etc.

Ten last years, as a general tendency in the cultural activities in the districts is to aim the traditional (spiritual and material) culture, whereas in Tirana the presence of the professional institutional gives priority to the cultivated art.

THE INTERNATIONAL CULTURE CENTRE

The International Culture Centre (ICC) is a cultural institution which develops its activity based on an annual calendar of artistic events. The activity of ICC is expanded in all the contemporary fields of art and culture (visual arts, theatre, music, etc.) but also those of tradition. For this purpose ICC initiates and realises common programs with state, private, national and foreign organisations.

For the realisation of its activities and projects, ICC uses mainly the environments and spaces that it has at its disposal, and the existing infrastructure which helps in their realisation. One of the main spaces is the round Odeon on the 0 meters quota, with a surface of 1.000 m² and a capacity 1.000 (seated) people, which serves for a number of activities, especially in the field of the contemporary, ethno, classical, folk, etc. music.

For the second half of 1999, when ICC started to work with calendar and projects, there was evaluated the concert with ethno music of the British group Joji Hirota & Friends, realised in co-operation with private agencies and MCYS. Tirana Autumn is another potent activity with an extension of time, which covers mainly the field of music, but also other fields, like those of the experimental film and the visual arts. In the space adopted round Odeoni, ICC has organises exhibitions of Albanian and foreign artists and art. In 1999 The 11th Exhibition of the young Albanian artists with the name Coming was opened, organised by ICC and supported by MCYS. The most important event of the year in the visual arts has been realised: the extension of the international competition Onufri 99 also in the environments of the "Pyramid".

A specific space is also the Cinema hall of ICC. After the repairing realised with ICC funds, this hall is turned in functional condition and it has compiled a calendar which responds directly to its specifics; the program has to do with the organisation of the Days or the Weeks of the Albanian or foreign film. Through the projects of co-operation, this hall started the show with Days of the Spanish film at the end of November 1999, to continue with the classical films from the archive of the Film studio, with the Days of the German film and the Week of the British film in January 2000. This hall serves also for the organisation of the activities with an artistic-educational character, and in the future, to promote the literary activity and the etudes of the non-conventional theatre.

Another space is the hall of the Discotheque on the quota - 4.00 m. This hall does not perform the ordinary function of a commercial discotheque, but it works based on the thematic parties and with Albanian DJs and foreign ones. The recent realisations in it are RAVE-PARTY 2, in co-operation with the private agency Delta Publicity and with French DJ; Party 3 with Austrian DJ, and the coming of five (5) DJs and Pit Shulz for the online transmission of the event in December 99, within the framework of the competition Onufri 99.

ICC offers the above mentioned spaces and other services against rent, for all the state or private subjects, NGO-s, etc. which like to organise meetings, conferences, seminars, concerts, parties or symposiums. The above mentioned spaces and the services that they offer would be listed as follows:

1. The Hall of Odeon with a surface 1.000m², capacity 1.000 (8Seated) people, voice system 3.000 watt, voice system 400 watt, video projector;
2. Cinema hall, capacity 300 people, voice system 400 watt, diaprojector, overhead projector, video projector, flip chart, monitor 37 + video recorder;
3. Discotheque hall with a surface of 1.000 m², capacity 1.000 (seated) people, 2.000 (not seated) people, voice system 4.000 watt, video projector, video-wall, Bar, dividing panels;
4. Receiving hall, capacity 25-30 people, diaprojector, flip chart, overhead projector, TV monitor + video recorder;
5. Computer service for typing/page making in the publication of the periodicals, newspapers or books;
6. Cocktail or coffee/snack service during the seminars.

In the future ICC will be transformed in the Contemporary Art Centre (CAC), Tiranë. The project is in the process of the collection of the necessary funds for the realisation of the adaptation of the existing spaces on the basis of the specific functions required by the particular artistic disciplines. This will turn the "Pyramid" in a demanded centre where not only culture will be consumed, but the creative energies of the mass of the Capital youth will be collected and stimulated.

THE PEACE BELL

The monument of the "Peace Bell" was designed by the architects Agim Myftiu and Marin Biçoku and it was realised by the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports in December 1999.

The genesis of the Peace Bell is in the dramatic days of the first half of 1997. These days with the heavy psychological burden for Albanians and with irreparable physical casualties for many of them, left indelible terror traces on the most unprotected and most innocent category of the society: the Children.

Gathered round the catholic clergyman Father Antonio Sharra, the children of the area of Zadrime undertook the initiative of the collection of a big quantity of cartridge shells, which at that time, one could find everywhere one walked by shortening continuously innocent lives, and melted them to form a bell, which would become, possibly, omen of stable peace in Albania. The Peace Bell, blessed in Rome by the Holy Father Pope John Paul II, which "ran" not only in the Albanian world to search a broad consensus for the Peace, is today placed in one of the passageways which connect the International Culture Centre with the Boulevard

"Nation's Martyrs" in Tirana. Conceived in this way so as to be passable by the citizens, through an ever mounting path, this monument does not claim to be something else than the testimony of the prayer of the children of Albania of the end of XX century to the "adults", for understanding which helps the Peace and the Harmonic Cohabitation among the people.

The Peace Bell let out its first sound of child's hope in the morning of the 1st of January 2000.

PART II

**REVIEW OF CULTURAL POLICY
IN ALBANIA**

Report prepared by Mr. Peter INKEI

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REVIEW OF CULTURAL POLICY IN ALBANIA

FOREWORD

The reviews of national cultural policies, done under the auspices of the Council of Europe, follow a proven pattern. First a national report is prepared for this purpose, which is discussed in the presence of international experts, who then write their own report and recommendations.

The Albanian case has been very different. In spite of several attempts we finally had to dispense with a national report. As to the experts and officers of the Council of Europe, three visits have been made to Albania. After a short preparatory mission in October 1999, in March this year a seminar was organised in Tirana for municipal cultural administrators on the issue of decentralisation. As a follow-up to this seminar, cultural officers at ten municipal authorities answered a questionnaire in writing. The author of the present report took part in both and finally, in May 2000, spent ten days in Tirana and several other towns¹. The stock of available documents (texts of laws, decrees, decisions and other measures, reports, statistics, tables etc.) is a fraction of those collected in other countries. Not a single one of these has been prepared for the purpose of the review.

Cultural policy is usually defined as a set of explicit and implicit objectives of the government, which are reflected in actions (in terms of facilities, programming or artistic creation), resources (financial, legal, administrative) and the planning of these². Due to the lack of systematic survey of the financial, legal and administrative resources, most of this review is based on the observations of a traveller, and the limited amount of interviews and documents produced during the third visit. Field findings have been complemented by an extensive subsequent inquiry over the Internet.

In the closing phase, on 7th July the - admittedly first version of the - English text of a Guide to the cultural policy of the Albanian state was produced by the Ministry. This document was originally used for the web-site of the Ministry and its English version may become a printed handout for visitors and abroad. Its text has been rearranged in order to fit the order of the review, omitting irrelevant sections. In its actual form the Guide fills the function of a national report: it is both a collection of facts and a set of statements, which on the one hand relieve the foreign reviewer from lengthy descriptions and which elicit comments and reactions on the other.

The review is largely about the Albanian Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports. Instead of dragging this long name all along the text or apply the acronym of MCYS, the words *Ministry* and *Minister* are used: it is clearly stated when another Ministry is meant. Similarly, the Guide to the Cultural Policy of the Albanian State will be referred to as the *Guide*.

The use of *communist*, *communism* in reference to the period between 1945 and 1991, often sounds as a political confession against communism in Eastern Europe. In neutral context the words *socialist*, *socialism* are still widely used, including in Albania. Still, the previous terms were chosen for the text.

¹ During the same period I paid two visits to Pristina in Kosovo, which also contributed to understanding the complexity of Albanian cultural policy.

² Based on Mario d'Angelo, Paul Vespérini: Cultural policies in Europe: a comparative approach, Council of Europe, 1998, p.19.

Towns will be named in the indefinite form: e.g. *Shkodër, Vlorë* (Shkodra, Vlora are definite: "the Shkodër, the Vlorë") etc. Exception is made for Tirana (instead of *Tiranë*).

The usual annex of the list of names is missing for several reasons. During the three visits in Albania several dozens of people were met. The longer a list, the less meaningful it becomes. Constructing a hierarchy is an impossible task. The length of time a person devoted to the subject is certainly an important factor, and so is his/her position. On the other hand, often a few sentences exchanged with a quasi outsider illuminated certain aspects enormously.

I tried to limit myself to a few acknowledgements. But the list repeatedly tended to grow into a meaningless register, always unfair to those just left out, so I gave up. Naturally particular thanks must be expressed to Stefan Çapaliku and Durim Taçi, director and officer of the Book Directorate, who have been in charge of the review and my field mission, my pilots both technically and intellectually³.

³ Other persons, in quest of the essence of Albanian cultural policy on behalf of the Council of Europe were Vera Boltho, Giuseppe Vitiello and Eduard Delgado (Interarts Observatori, Barcelona).

RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF ALBANIA

Communication

1. The Ministry should:

- (i) continue to develop a coherent policy of communication, which was begun with the construction of its Internet site and with composing the "Guide" for this purpose;
- (ii) create links with other ministries and identify areas of possible co-operation, especially in areas such as education, local government, environment, employment, tourism etc.;
- (iii) pay attention to the role of Albanian civic organisations (foundations, associations etc.) in the forming and implementation of cultural policy;
- (iv) make explicit the role of international cooperation in the implementation of the objectives of cultural policy;
- (v) define in a coherent way its role in relation to local (regional and municipal) cultural policies and areas of co-operation with these authorities should be expanded;
- (vi) build upon the attitude of openness (by giving names, telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of people at the Ministry) that has been shown so far and operate in a practical, public friendly manner;
- (vii) extend the endeavours towards transparency through to the provision of specific data such as details of the budget, available statistics etc.;
- (viii) establish a publication policy for the easy retrieval of valid laws, decrees, norms etc. through printed collections, periodical publications, Internet etc.;
- (ix) as far as possible, provide information on its activities in foreign languages as well as in Albanian.

Administration

1. The administrative system and procedures of the Ministry should be examined and formalised where necessary. In this context, written documentation of measures undertaken and of decisions should be strictly required on all actions of the Ministry.
2. Analyses and reports should be provided regularly on important issues or sectors and should include statistics where applicable.
3. Within the framework of the statistical policy of the government, efforts should be made to establish as reliable data as possible on culture.

4. The flow and depositing of documents in the entire system should be analysed in view of both long-term archiving and short-term retrieval.
5. The digitisation and computerisation of the Ministry's work should keep the previous goals in view with overall online integration as a future goal.

Decentralisation

1. The administrative structure of the Ministry should be strengthened with a view to creating permanent links with local authorities. This could take one or more of the following forms:
 - more emphasis to this issue in job descriptions of the Ministry's staff;
 - separate jobs created for this purpose, to be filled by individuals with special knowledge of laws, finances etc. of local governments
 - a standing working group of contracted experts etc.
2. The Ministry should produce and issue general guidelines concerning local cultural policies within the framework of the relevant legislation and governmental policy and should make reference to:
 - co-ordination of central and local goals;
 - prospects of devolution of competencies;
 - division of resources etc.
3. The issue of devolution and local culture must be investigated with regard to all sub-sectors, such as libraries, museums, theatres etc. Attention should be paid to areas that are significant in this context but have no or weak representation in the administrative structure of the Ministry, such as houses/centres of culture, symphonic orchestras etc.
4. The principle of pilot projects should be thoroughly followed and explored; next to model projects and institutions the key personal allies - individuals and bodies like local authorities - should be identified and mobilised to realise the strategic objectives of the Ministry in the field of local cultural policy-making.

Financing

1. The Ministry must have a view over all public financing of culture in the country - with special regard to the local governments. The necessary skills and the means should be developed to this end at the financial department of the Ministry.
2. The Ministry should continuously watch out for chances to achieve tax exemptions or reductions in the service of its cultural policy objectives.
3. With due respect of the autonomy of local governments, the Ministry should use its influence for the elaboration of the fiscal instruments of financing local culture. It should investigate, among others, the application of the method of matching funds.

4. With the growth of semi-independent funds (film, theatre etc.), with frequent additional transfers from the government and with the relative weight of bilateral and international contributions, a mechanism is needed to provide integrated information on all resources at the direct or indirect disposal of the Ministry.
5. It should be considered whether the financing of artistic projects could be administered with more regard to the arm's length principle, with more formalised frames, similar to those contained in the laws on film and theatre.
6. Based on early examples (Millennium Cinema, Tirana Film Festival, International Bookshop etc.) the possibilities in public-private finances should be continued and bravely explored.
7. More emphasis must be placed on the own revenues of the cultural institutions and projects, regardless of their relative weight (which is often negligible). Accounting regulations should be modified with a view to motivate such intake.
8. New ways of public administration and financing should be searched for at the level of national cultural institutions to enable a more effective and flexible activity.

Heritage

1. The search for resources in the service of the restoration and protection of built heritage should attempt at complexity. Besides pressing for bigger budgetary contributions, all other instruments should be used, such as tax relief, matching funds, special credit schemes.
2. The function and the very concept of the network of public libraries requires fundamental analysis; this should rely on the consequences and opportunities of digitisation.
3. Parallel with this, people should be made aware of the importance of ensuring a steady supply of books and periodicals in libraries.
4. More emphasis is needed on the continuous upgrading of museum activities such as management, public relations, training, academic prospects etc.

Creativity

1. The principles and criteria of supporting artistic projects should be made more specific.
2. The implementation of the theatre law should be followed with great care, with special regard to areas which are not clear in the law itself (e.g. salaries in the new formations).
3. The implementation of the section on municipal theatres of the law should be brought into accord with the strategic concept concerning the centres and palaces of culture.

4. A survey should be made of the economic position and social security of artists after the objectives of the Ministry are realised in all major fields; this should determine what additional measures are necessary or possible in this regard.
5. The Ministry should define the longer-term functions of artists' professional associations in cultural policy and should conduct a comprehensive inquiry of their actual conditions.

Cultural industries

1. The Ministry should continue to argue for 0% VAT on books and periodicals.
2. Albania should join the Florence Agreement.
3. Work on the updating of the author's right legislation should be speeded up.
4. Cultural policy should extend its attention to the field of recorded music. An exploratory survey and study should be followed by proposals where and how the Ministry should get involved.
5. The Ministry should consider a proposal to link 0% VAT with attempts at transparency of the industries: to the use of ISBN number and of impeccable attestations of copyright in case of compact discs and recorded tapes.
6. More attention should be paid to traditional and modern artistic crafts.

Diversity

1. The principle of cultural diversity should be more manifest in the cultural policy.
2. Endeavours should be made to ensure that cultural diversity should cover all aspects of life of minorities.
3. Also in the area of heritage, minority cultures of the past should be respected, the temptation of retrospective nation building should be resisted.

Internet

The Ministry should have its own strategy for the place of Internet in cultural policy.

INTRODUCTION

The review of a national cultural policy by the Council of Europe is not directed at cultural values. The subject is *public cultural policy*, and not *culture*, past or present artistic or intellectual achievement of the country. Most generally the aim is to evaluate the integrity of policy goals and tools, based on international experiences and examined in the context of overall national policy. There is no intention to make judgements about the *contents* - whether the government follows the right goals.

However, the most appropriate way to analyse policy (any policy, not only cultural) is to approach from its goals. Is there a clear hierarchy of objectives? Is there a consensus about priorities? How do they relate to the overall objectives of the government and to other areas of national policy?

What is the recognition of these objectives among the population, within the sector, among artists, cultural administrators - these latter especially in the local authorities? Which is the relative weight of cultural policy in the activities of the government and of the parliament?

Do the actions of the Ministry duly reflect the hierarchy of objectives? If not, what is the explanation of the asymmetry? Is there a hidden agenda, too?

The examination of the objectives should also tell about the *function*, that cultural policy (and culture) fulfils in a country. In this respect culture is rather different from all other sectors. The other areas (ministries) have more clear-cut roles, with little doubt about their primary destination and minor weight is left for secondary functions. In any country a poll with a question like "Why is it important to have a Ministry of education?" (health, labour, defence, agriculture, foreign affairs etc.) would produce fairly homogeneous answers. But not on culture: they will vary from country to country and again every ten years. And even greater is the divergence if the question goes on like "What does the actual administration use cultural policy for?" Beyond the obvious responses of "contribute to national cohesion, raise the international prestige of the nation, enhance creativity, protect heritage, create jobs etc." one will hear emphatically divergent answers which are hard to imagine in the other sectors.

This review, in spite of all limitations, is trying to answer questions relating to the goals and the perceived functions of culture and its policy in present day Albania.

Analysts of cultural policies in the countries in transition are faced with the dilemma of frequent changes in their subject. This should be cultural policy *hic et nunc*; a snapshot picture which reflects the essence as truly as possible. It often happens that by the time the picture gets processed its subject has undergone considerable changes.

This situation has repeated itself at several occasions. In almost every country from the Baltic down to the Adriatic Sea, a change in government often brought about a change in ideology and value system, leading to an almost reverse order of priorities in cultural policy.

Surely, a great part of culture is resistant to changes in politics. The most autonomous creative talents disregard Ministerial guidelines. National characteristics show a strong continuity, they managed to survive and develop even during communism, what is more, often with state and party support. Besides, there is some level of common sense understanding in each society about possibly separating culture from day-to-day politicking.

Our goal, however is not to examine how culture can distance itself from policy, but the contrary: how effective is cultural policy? And are its effects likely to survive an eventual change in government? If yes, why, if not, why not? In other words, borrowed from another area of human engineering: how *sustainable* is Albanian cultural policy?

Attempts were made to cover all broad areas which were identified as major components of European cultural policies⁴: identity, diversity, creativity and participation. Concerning implementation, the widely known typology of facilitator, patron, architect and engineer models of state policy⁵ are the obvious terms of reference.

No matter from which point of view we approach cultural policy issues, we almost inevitable arrive at the same point: *lack of money*. Even in the most affluent countries, the term “cultural policy” is for many ears a euphemism for “money”, why should it be different in Albania? It is a challenge for both the policy-maker and the observer to be able to think of other things than money - even if one hardly hears anything else.

PAST AND PRESENT

Albania came out of 500 years of Turkish occupation at the beginning of the 20th century. The assessment of the rule of Zog (1928-1939) is ambiguous; much more unequivocal is the refusal of the communist regime. The ideals present in the ideology, as well as in the goals followed by Enver Hoxha are in no way commensurate with the historical harm and suffering which the lengthy social experiment caused to the nation as a whole, and to most of its members individually. In the mirror of economic misery and the grievous record of personal liberties, the cultural achievements of communist countries used to redress the balance a little bit. Indeed, its schooling and literacy rate clearly distinguished Albania from third world countries. But while elsewhere in Eastern Europe the 1960s brought about improvement in the conditions for cultural creation, in 1965 Hoxha launched his own cultural revolution with purges and harsh anti-religious campaign; in fact a warfare against a hardly existing middle class. The proverbial obstinacy of the Albanian communist leaders conserved the country in retarded isolation up to the early 1990s.

No wonder that coming out from all that darkness Albanians felt dizzy, and behaved like drunken from freedom most of the past ten years. The nearly complete national suicide of 1997, connected to the outrageous frauds of the pyramid schemes, should not wipe out of memory, that the euphoria of the preceding years was accompanied by massive disintegration, disillusion and emigration. *Permanent instability* - this appropriate title was given to the representative art exhibition in Tirana at the end of 1998.

It would be (and is) a grave mistake to fully identify the rivalling trends in Albania with ideologies or political parties. Also the revolt of 1997 was directed against the establishment without specific ideological loading. The real dividing line is along the attitudes towards values like honesty, transparency, real achievement, respect of the other; indeed, the main struggle going on in Albania now is cultural, more than anything else.

⁴ In from the margins, Council of Europe, 1997, p.45.

⁵ E.g. Béla Rásky: Cultural policy/policies in Europe, the general nation-state conditions, in Ratzenböck (ed.): Cultural policy in Europe - European cultural policy? Österreichisches Kulturdokumentation, 1998, pp. 17-20.

With a GDP per capita of about \$1000, Albania is the poorest country of Europe, with a disastrous infrastructure. Having surmounting the 1997 spring chaos with international help, the country was affected hard by the Kosovo crisis. The general mood is very pessimistic. Litter, dust, decay and other signs of decomposed social tissue are obnoxious. Everyone has considered leaving the country or sending the young ones abroad. Confidence in politicians - the elected leaders - is minimal.

Yet the country is almost inevitably deemed to success in the next decade. The European Community cannot tolerate instability and poverty in its immediate neighbourhood. Macro-figures of growth are promising. Technical and economic aid is of decisive importance: but the most important contribution should be to help Albanians restore confidence in themselves.

CULTURAL POLICY

If the conclusion of the preceding section is right, strengthening Albanian self-respect should be a timely political goal. Enhancing national self-confidence is indeed a major function of any cultural policy. And the greatest trap, too.

Ideally national cultural policies should care about the common cultural good of mankind as much as looking after their own national interests. There are cases, however, and today's Albania is certainly such, when the primary task of the cultural Minister is to contribute to his own nation's self-esteem.

In an over-simplified way we can draw two opposing models as to how cultural policy can boost national self-confidence. The first one concentrates on the national cultural heritage. For the second, the top achievements of contemporary world culture are the main points of reference. The first one wants to raise national pride by treasuring past achievements. The second, by attaining acknowledgement in the cultural arenas of today's world.

The main risks with the first are:

- instead of future achievements it capitalises from those of the ancestors;
- it increases introversion, may lead to loosening contact with the outer world;
- if the heritage is not sufficiently acknowledged by the world, this may lead to inferiority feeling coupled with intolerance;

The main hazard with the second cultural policy model is:

- that a gap develops - in the society at large and inside the cultural community - between those able to follow, understand and appreciate world trends and those who cannot.

A first glance at the Guide tells that the second option is deliberately followed in Albania. The terms of European standards and models at the very beginning of the Ministry's mission statement are clear proofs. The Minister's foreword leaves no doubt about being a fervent reformer and moderniser, who wants this to be the basic tone of the Ministry's actions. These goals are consequently observed in the entire scope of cultural policy.

On the other hand, the same Guide testifies about a balanced attention for national heritage. The Ministry's homepage satisfies the need for ethnic allegiance through totemistic images: you enter by clicking your way past an Illyric horse, an Albanian eagle, the goat's head on

Skanderbeg's helmet... We shall see that efforts to enhance patrimony go further than symbolic pledges.

Examination of the statements of the Ministry one can conclude that this administration assigns to culture a vital role in the overall modernisation of Albanian society. The main objectives are to bring down the remaining walls that isolated Albanians from the rest of the world, especially the West. Culture, and especially arts are considered areas where integration into world trends should be enhanced, the success of which will be beneficial for Albanian society as a whole. Conquering over the civilisatoric deficits, like the struggle for an aesthetically attractive environment, is an integral part of this pursue.

These objectives are stated clearly and pursued consequently in the activities of the Ministry. This is a major strength of this cultural policy, and also the source of conflicts and not independent form several of its weaknesses.

There is little evidence about the degree of integration of cultural policy in general, and the objectives summarised above in particular, in the general policy of the government or the ruling coalition at Parliament. Basic documents like programmes or reports of the government, detailed national budget were not accessible and information collected in the press or during talks may lead to unreliable conclusions. (We shall come back to this problem when discussing decentralisation.)

The instruments by which the Ministry wishes to put these ideals into practice, will be dealt with in discussing various fields of culture. In anticipation a few general observations are made.

The first observation links to the unyielding efforts of the reviewer to receive written documents and information. In spite of doubtless attempts at improving the legislative and fiscal machinery, much of cultural policy is done manually, by way of direct actions and projects: therefore the practice of the Ministry is basically between the "architect" and "engineer" models. Although this policy propagates and indeed tries to realise principles of openness and western professionalism, in certain fundamental senses has not been able to get rid of some "eastern" traditions. Such as the less than desirable respect for legal regulations, low prestige of written documents.

There is no recent publication of the legislation in force in the cultural field in Albania. The latest such vademecum, the last release of the Yearbook of the Ministry dates from before 1997. It contains the actualities of that year, for a more complete orientation the previous editions are also needed. Administrators certainly recognise the significance of acts and decrees; but tend to see them as political tools for reaching goals, rather than day-to-day operative instruments of governance.

Even more difficult is to collect evidence about financing. During the evaluation process several instances were met of mutually contradicting official statements or of documents with internal logical errors. These symptoms are even more conspicuous at the municipal level. Not that the officials lack arithmetic skills or that no figures are serious. What is needed is the inner urge for keeping accurate record, driven by an outer demand for accountability; the command of detailed information of the public, driven by the principle of transparency.

Surely, there are exceptions. The theatre law testifies about thorough preparation - yet the greater part of its stipulations is still ahead of us. But the law on cinematography has been in effect for several years, following the preparations of another several years. It seems to properly regulate processes of both the administration and the field, including the capacities to provide information.

The Ministry has a small staff. Yet an increased demand on bureaucratic perfection would contribute to stability of the achievements, especially at longer term. It is a prerequisite of smooth co-operation- with outsiders, especially with foreign agencies. Also the large-scale operations of changing the existing system of institutions and of decentralisation is doomed to failure without high level administrative skills.

The preference of oral policy making to meticulous legislation may root in the historic legacy of the Ottoman governance, much reinforced during the communist regime. It should be brought home that breaking from the past has consequences in this respect also. Constitutional democracy on the one hand and co-operation with international organisations on the other, both require increased skill in, and patience for high level bureaucracy.

There are other reasons which work against bureaucratic pedantry. In Eastern Europe the depth of changes is such, which at other times is achieved by revolutions only. Indeed, hints of revolutionary atmosphere are discerned here and there. Albanian cultural policy, too, bears signs of an emergency policy. People - not only in key positions - glow with the feeling of exceptional times. They see chances for a successful new beginning, which must be grabbed now for the benefit of Albania of the future. They are full of devotion and haste, as if this period of mercy would not last long. (Curiously the opposite could be justified as well: the country is tired of hoping for rebirth in the past ten years. Apathy and cynicism are widespread.)

This emergency-like phenomenon is characteristic of Eastern Europe as a whole, for yet another reason. Parliamentary elections usually bring in the opposing parties, winners therefore tend to face a one-term chance only. Besides, ideology permeates East European politics more than in the west. Administrations are eager that their values should get operationalised as soon as possible, often consciously replacing the ideals, goals and achievements of the preceding government.

These factors result in an inclination for light cavalry actions rather than logistically more demanding and lengthy operations. In other words: a preference for great projects rather than professional bureaucracy.

Yet another reason for this approach may lie in the following. Typologies of cultural policies derive their models from the underlying socio-economic set-up. In their positivistic approach (similarly to Marxism), they often neglect the role of individuals. Another aspect, we believe, deserves attention: there are policies (not only cultural) which are the emanation of a charismatic personality, and there are others, which are not. One is not superior over the other, except that in the former the number-one person bears more responsibility for the success and failure of the policy than in the latter model.

We would be hiding our heads in the sand by concealing that Albanian cultural policy has been a rather clear specimen of the first kind since 1998. This remark closely relates to the

question raised above: is the cultural policy attached to a strong personality sustainable enough to survive him?

In fact, Albania is indeed living exceptional times, coming out of real emergency state, in the middle of transition, when policy choices, both successes and failures, have lasting effects. Clearly positive is the selectivity and the emotional dynamism of cultural policy. Instead of being lost in an excessive range of issues, the Ministry concentrates on a few selected points. A strong and effective rhetoric helps to achieve the necessary political, social and financial backing, both in Albania and among foreign supporters as well.

IDENTITY OF ALBANIAN NATIONAL CULTURE

In the preceding chapters words like east and west, Ottoman or communist legacy have been used. Besides impressionistic answers, Albanians themselves need to analyse themselves thoroughly: who are we? Contrary to consolidated societies, Albania is in dynamic motion, at the edge of imbalance, with forms unsettled, its future, even present being shaped. Any departure the country takes now is likely to have lasting consequences. Self-definition is therefore more decisive here than in more established countries.

While searching for their future faces, Albanians will have to give, at least implicit answers to questions like the following. (The alphabetic order is used on purpose in each list.)

1) What is the relative weight in Albanian identity of the fact that the country is:

- Balkanic,
- European,
- Illyric⁶,
- Mediterranean,
- post-communist,
- post-ottoman etc?
-

2) Which regional (geographic and/or political) proximities or gravitation have any influence on shaping Albanian cultural identity and how:

- the European Union,
- Greece,
- the Islamic world,
- Italy,
- the Slavic nations
- South-East Europe etc?

3) In what way is it reflected in the Albanian self-definition that the community of *shqip* speakers is almost double the population of Albania?

4) Finally, do internal diversities find a way into culture and cultural policy, such as diversity along

- linguistic and folkloric dialect,
- region and landscape (mountains, seaside etc.),
- religion etc?

⁶ It is generally accepted that the nation directly descends from ancient Illyrians. There are some academic views which represent partly or entirely alternative opinions on Albanian ethnogenesis.

BUDGET

One of the central instruments of any public policy is its budget. In Albania, however, approved budgets do not seem to have occupied the sacred position they play in other cultures. Identifying and interpreting numbers is usually a process full of communication problems⁷. Comprehending one document lasts until one comes across another, similarly reliable document, which is certain to differ in at least one vital figure.

In the absence of substantial information in English one must rely on the tables and papers in the vernacular, collected at the economic department of the Ministry. From these the following might give an approximate picture about the financial side of the cultural policy.

Table 1

Million Leks

	wages ⁸	%	expenses	%	investment	%	other	total	%
Monuments	60,4	10,0	16,5	5,0	46,7	26,9	0,0	124,0	10,3
Museums	17,4	2,9	15,4	4,7	10,3	5,9	0,2	43,5	3,6
Libraries	27,8	4,6	8,4	2,5	12,0	6,9	0,2	48,5	4,0
Artistic Projects	6,4	1,1	58,6	17,8	0,0	0,0	11,5	76,7	6,4
National Arts Gallery	6,4	1,1	5,8	1,8	1,5	0,9	0,0	13,8	1,1
Theatres	67,0	11,1	6,9	2,1	10,5	6,1	0,9	85,5	7,1
Opera	65,1	10,8	15,0	4,6	20,0	11,5	1,7	102,1	8,5
Folklore	1,6	0,3	0,5	0,2	0,0	0,0	0,0	2,1	0,2
Film	4,3	0,7	4,1	1,2	1,0	0,6	0,1	9,5	0,8
Centres of culture	3,0	0,5	1,4	0,4	8,0	4,6	0,3	15,2	1,3
Other culture ⁹	33,2	5,5	2,2	0,7	0,0	0,0	0,0	33,1	2,7
Ministry	144,1	23,9	10,6	3,2	17,5	10,1	0,0	172,6	14,3
Sports	166,4	27,6	184,2	55,9	46,0	26,5	78,9	476,6	39,6
Total	603,0	100,0	329,6	100,0	173,5	100,0	93,7	1 202,9	100,0
%	50,1		27,4%		14,4		7,8	100,0	

In *Table 1* the budget for 2000 has been arranged in the order of sequence of this review. In both of these tables figures are rounded to a million Lek or percentage, with one decimal; this why the sub-totals sometimes do not add up to the exact grand-total.

The table must be observed with caution. For example the film line apparently contains the running costs of the administration only; from the Guide we read that in 1999 the funds of the film centre amounted to 72,6 million Leks. The line "Opera" includes the budget of the folkloric ensemble also, which rather belong to the next line (but we do not know the sum) etc. The total of 1 202,9 million Leks corresponds to about 9,25 million euros¹⁰. Extra-budgetary sources are significant in the financing of culture in Albania. Financial aid coming from intergovernmental organisations like UNDP, the European Union etc, in bilateral channels like USAID or assistance from the Italian cultural Ministry, also non-governmental

⁷ One of these is linked to old and new Lek. The currency was devalued by 10 several years ago but everyone always uses the old figures, the new ones are reserved for printing and to talking with foreigners.

⁸ Including social insurance, which is about 24% of these amounts.

⁹ The "other culture" line includes puppet theatres, circus and three more smaller items which probably should be treated together with cultural centres.

¹⁰ The rate of 130Leks to a euro is applied everywhere in the text.

agencies like the Soros Foundation¹¹ etc. is sporadically referred to in both written and oral communication but no documentary evidence has been produced on them, either separately or collectively. It is not clear, which is the degree and way of integration or co-ordination between these and the budget of the Ministry.

Still, one can have a picture of the internal structure and the general dimensions of the public cultural budget. The high proportion of wages is explained by the fact that at present salaries and social insurance of the municipal cultural institutions are planned in, and paid from the budget of the Ministry of Culture.

So is investment, for which the detailed list of each item from 1992 onwards enabled us to compose *Table 2*. (The year 2000 being a plan.) When comparing actual figures with those of the earlier years one must take inflation into account; its rate, however was low.

Table 2

Million Leks

	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	Total
Monuments	0,0	1,0	0,7	0,5	2,6	0,0	64,4	24,3	46,7	140,2
Museums	0,1	0,0	10,0	0,4	4,7	3,5	11,1	26,1	10,3	66,2
Memorials	0,0	0,5	0,0	7,0	1,9	3,0	2,9	0,0	0	15,3
Libraries	0,4 ¹²	0,8	0,8	7,0	6,8	6,8	4,3	13,0	12	51,9
National Arts Gallery	0,8	0,8	0,3	0,9	0,3	0,0	1,1	4,5	1,5	10,2
Theatres	1,9	3,2	7,4	13,0	3,2	3,0	1,7	18,7	30,5	82,6
Folklore	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,0	0,3	0,0	1,1	0,1	0	1,5
Film	0,3	0,0	0,0	2,0	2,0	2,0	9,0	1,5	1	17,8
Centres of culture	0,9	6,1	2,1	30,0	33,6	52,4	35,7	22,9	8	191,7
Ministry	0,0	1,5	0,8	1,0	1,3	2,0	15,5	22,5	17,5	62,1
Sports	0,1	2,8	1,8	32,7	0,0	25,3	24,5	71,1	46	204,3
Total	4,5	16,7	23,9	94,5	56,7	98,0	171,3	204,7	173,5	843,8
Municipal culture	2,3	9,2	19,0	54,5	49,1	64,6	59,1	65,3	26	349,1

The sharpest increase after 1998 is recorded in the monument sector and the Ministry itself. The effects of the latter are visible in the building: the refurbishing aimed at its cultural atmosphere, rather than at a high tech office centre. Still, the greater amount of the money goes on computers and cars. The "Memorials" row stands for nine statues erected to historical personalities on public spaces; having completed the ninth such item in 1998 the Ministry (temporarily?) discontinued this action. We shall make a few concrete remarks concerning the two tables in the respective chapters.

NATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

Those national institutions, which are the flagships of one or other cultural sector, will be treated in their chapters (monuments, museums, cinematography etc). They are under the Minister's supervision but their leaders receive their appointment from the Prime Minister after processes of open tender.

¹¹ The official name is Open Society Foundation Albania. Conforming to local usage, the colloquial name will be used in the text.

¹² This was a subsidy paid to the Encyclopedia Publisher, which was put here to avoid a separate line.

There are 8 museums in various towns which also have the status of a national institution and thus belong to the Ministry. Altogether 27 institutions figure in the budget of the Ministry (23 on the salary list, while 4 earn for their own wages). For more, see the Guide.

One institution, the International Culture Centre will be discussed here, because it does not belong to any sector and because of its particular role.

INTERNATIONAL CULTURAL CENTRE

This is the name which is hardly ever used. People call this institution by the name of the building it occupies: *the Pyramid*. It is in the societal centre of Tirana, consequently of the country. Each evening, and all day on holidays, the boulevard and the square outside the Pyramid turns into a promenade, full of people. The edifice really has the shape of a pyramid and was constructed to give home to the Enver Hoxha memorial collection and his huge statue. These were gotten rid of in the form of a popular fiesta in 1991; the International Cultural Centre took over the building in 1999. The Peace Bell (see Guide), too, is hanging just outside the Pyramid.

The Centre follows the models of the contemporary art centres in the cultural capitals of the world. Represents an open, optimistic, uncompromising, cosmopolitan, youthful air. As such, is eminently instrumental in bringing home the most important points of the prevailing cultural policy.

The Centre has a peculiar financing model. It is in charge of the whole building, about 40% of which is on long term rent, which covers most of the expenses of the Centre¹³.

At the Pyramid

Successful German movies every Monday and Thursday, 8 p.m., with English subtitles, on outdoor screen. Until early September.

Summer Evenings – Shows, movies, cartoons and music shown on a 54 square metre screen. Draught beer and hot dogs served in huge outdoor cafe. Every day from 6 p.m. to midnight.

International Centre of Culture Tel: 285 28

Art and crafts fair with the works of the Professional Association of Business Women. Works in wood, ceramics, copper, alabaster, lace and embroidery, as well as regional folk costumes displayed. July 4. Addr: Sheshi ‘Deshmoret e Kombit’.

Source: <http://www.albaniannews.com> 22 July, 2000

PROTECTION OF MONUMENTS

The corresponding unit in the Ministry bears the name of cultural heritage but is dominated by the issue of monuments. They supervise the Institute of Monuments of Culture, which has also eight regional departments and workshops all over the country. The chapter on cultural heritage in the Guide is an excellent illustration of the strengths and weaknesses of Albanian cultural policy. The fundamental objectives are in perfect correspondence to the overall ambitions of the Ministry to gear cultural policy to the modernisation and development of the country. The logic of the hierarchy of goals of this sub-sector is exemplary, also the lucidity of the diagnosis contained therein.

¹³ A court case has been dragging on with the first private, foreign owned television station in Tirana, which has failed to pay its rent to the Centre; the station lost and tax police sequestered the equipment in July 2000.

Concerning the concrete tools and measures, however, the Guide gives little help. E.g. little is known about the exact status and nature of pilot projects, mentioned as one of the instruments. We must confess limited successes in abridging this obscurity of the mechanisms of cultural policy.

With the advent of democracy and the considerable weakening of state influence and of state resources, most public buildings suffered from neglect. At the same time tens of thousands of unauthorised buildings rose up, hiding and endangering some of the most precious monuments. Then the turbulent weeks early in 1997 dealt with fatal blows to much of the built heritage in Albania.

Strong resoluteness and persistence are needed to combat this situation. The actual cultural administration shows these traits and has clearly put a special emphasis on stopping suicidal tendencies and to save built heritage.

The workers of the central and regional agencies have in the last two years intensified their efforts in collecting evidence about the state of the protected buildings. Thousands of photos, drawings and maps accompany their reports, submitted to the government or other instances.

The cultural sector has an important ally in the *policia ndërtimore*, the construction police of the Ministry of public works. In the course of the past months thousands of illegal constructions have been pulled down, ranging from small booths to fully serviced restaurants¹⁴. Determination is needed along the road of redressing the balance between central will and civilian disobedience in shaping the physical look of the country. The crusade is expected to take a fresh impetus after the local government elections next autumn. This is known well enough, which leads to a real race between forces. The Ministry is particularly concerned about Gjirokastra, the 'museum town' in the South with distinct Ottoman hill-side town architecture, where hundreds of licences have been issued in a disputed manner.

Albanians associate the name of Vlorë with independence. The wider world learned the name of this harbour city in the spring of 1997 because the anti-government rebellion started here. During the turmoil Vlorë suffered serious damages. Owing to its historical merits and its central position, the town received special attention in reconstruction. Lately, in July 2000, the government gave 30 million Leks (ca. 230,000 euros) for the restoration of the building where independence was proclaimed in 1912.

Gjirokastër may have suffered slightly less in 1997 but urban restoration is further down the road. At some parts it is a ghost town where nothing indicates that the European Union is just at 30 kilometres by road... The phenomenon is incomprehensible if one studies the map somewhere at a thousand kilometres away.

Public order was the slowest to restore in the north-western mountainous region, but it has the smallest density of protected monuments. Indeed, it is in the big cities where wild constructions cause the biggest headache to the guardians of cultural heritage.

Mapping the country, preventing further damages is the first stage, the second being reconstruction, positive protection. *Table 2* proves the huge increase the amounts spent on this

¹⁴ Where in winter the foreign visitor had coffee next to the beautiful mosque and the clock tower at the Skanderbeg Square in Tirana, by spring a heap of bulldozed debris was found.

purposes after 1998 and the Ministry keeps bombarding the government for urgent measures and financial support¹⁵.

The Law on the Protection of Cultural Goods, dated from 1994, is considered to be too general, although at that time it represented a step forward from the brief, declarative law inherited from the communist past. Hopes are pinned to the adoption of a new law, for which drafts were made with close examination of the similar Italian legislation.

The Institute of the Monuments of Culture is entitled to submit proposals to the Minister. In case of larger complexes, the government decides about the measures of protection. There seems to be an intensive co-operation between the Institute and the Department of Cultural heritage at the Ministry, and they are commissioned plenty of work to do but the exact distribution of labour and competencies is not clear.

Although openness is one of the declared objectives of cultural policy, one of the most daring projects of the Ministry is not mentioned in the Guide or other relevant documents. It is the reconstruction and completion of the administrative district in the centre of Tirana, which was initially planned and designed by Italian architects in the 1930s. The discrete treatment may be due to the chilly relationship between the Ministry and the City Hall of Tirana which is also reflected in the dispute over this issue in the press. The government established the legal grounds for this ambitious project by declaring the main avenue of the Martyrs of the Nation national cultural monument, entitling the Institute for Cultural Monuments to start renovation on its own. However, no complex plan has been disclosed as yet.

The other grand project of the Ministry is covered at length in the Guide: the Butrint archeological site in the middle of a natural park is the only Albanian item on the World Heritage catalogue. Little has been found out about the status and competencies of the management office and surprisingly the name is not found in any version of the budget. Consequently we cannot comment on the nature of technical, professional and financial assistance given by Unesco, the European Union, the World Bank or the Butrint Foundation, a private charity organisation registered in London. From the scant information, however, Butrint seems to be one of the rare cases where national, intergovernmental and non-governmental actions are co-ordinated and also a pilot project of the World Bank in a culture-related field.

The fact that the site is next to natural reserve areas is compelling for inter-sectorial co-operation, although the environmental administration and lobby are considered to be ineffective and weak. E.g. the ecological project on the Ohrid & Prespa Lakes are reported to be included in the Albanian pavilion at Hanover at the specific request of the German organisers.

¹⁵ As a latest proof, in July 2000 the government decided on 30 million Leks (ca. 230,000 euros) for the restoration of the museum of Independence in Vlorë, the building where Albania was proclaimed independent in 1912 and run down in 1997.

Expo 2000, Hanover

Butrint dominates the Albanian pavilion, of which the Ministry is in charge.

The pavilion has three components:

- a large bunker represents the more than 700,000 concrete igloos which the paranoid Enver Hoxha built in the 60s and 70s, with compositions shown inside from films of the communist times;
- a miniature model of the Greek theatre of Butrint, displaying wax busts of some Albanians and foreigners who shaped the history or the image of the nation;
- charts and posters on the two international co-operation projects on Ohrid & Prespa Lakes as well as the Butrint complex, modelling a link between the preservation of natural wealth and the future economic and tourist development of the country.

The expenses of about 1,5 million DM are shared roughly equally by the Albanian and the German governments.¹⁶

The alliance with tourism industry has not been very rewarding. Heritage people deplore the 4 km² taken away by the national tourism board from the 29 km² of the Butrint National Park. Yet the chapter on Butrint in the Guide is adamant about the ambitions linking ancient cultural heritage to the economic development of the region through tourism.

Relationship between the two sectors has so far rather manifested the inherent contrariety of interests, although the issues have been of relatively minor scale. Except for an isolated investor from Kuwait, foreign (or multinational) investment projects are still not there to capitalise on Albania's outstanding scenic beauties. Much expected by those, who are eager to see infrastructural development, increased employment chances and growth in fiscal intake, large scale foreign investments are feared by the heritage community, who have drawn bitter lessons from their struggles with local investors.

On the other hand, Albanian officials of cultural heritage greeted the campaign of the Council of Europe aimed at sensibilisation about *Europe, our Common Heritage*. Highlighting the inheritance which links Albania to other European cultural traditions pleases those, who feel discomfort about the isolationist tendencies which over-emphasise the Illyric legacy. There are intentions to give local governments greater influence and responsibility on research, protection and valorisation of the monuments in the future, but the exact plans and measures are not clear. (There are no clues in the Guide, either.)

Apart from Butrint, foreign contribution is said to be negligible. The religious denominations get aid help from their international communities for the reconstruction of mosques and churches but religious buildings have a smaller relative share in the Albanian built heritage than in most other European states.

Butrint seems to steal the show from Apollonia, another magnificent antique site, with a small 14th century orthodox church and monastery by its side. Certainly Butrint is at 10 kilometres as the crow flies from Corfu, one of the busiest tourist paradises of Europe, while Apollonia is in the centre, linked to the town of Fier with a road which is horrible even with Albanian standards. The archeological treasures in Durrës are more accessible but the urban environment lacks the attraction of the two other sites.

¹⁶ This frame is based on the case study by Rudina Hoxha, prepared for the Best Practices project of Unesco, Cultural Policies for Development Unit.

Ironically, many people in the monument sector recall the conditions of the previous regime with objective nostalgia. There were more people and more money in the system. In each of the six regional centres in charge of protection of built heritage more than 100 people were employed. The Guide, too, acknowledges the professional level achieved in the past 35 years. Most of the monuments look much worse than in the 1980s, especially owing to the 1997 rampage. Although Albania was poor and the population led a miserable life, the available limited resources of the country were accumulated in the system of the state (and party). The care for monuments belonged to the priorities of Hoxha, who was trained to be a teacher and indeed felt like one as a dictator, too. There are controversial points also in his attitude to built heritage: the bazaar quarter of Shkodër, the most important of the region, was demolished at his order; but the Krujë bazaar was reconstructed in the 1960s as it used to be in the 18th century.

MUSEUMS

In the Guide and in the administrative structure of the Ministry little attention is paid to museums, their development, professional upgrading, methodological standards etc. The prominent position in the investment allocations in *Table 2* are largely due to their buildings, which understandably tend to be cultural monuments.

The description of the National Centre of the Cultural Property Inventorying in the Guide testifies about a respectable effort to take stock of the treasures kept in museums. The dimensions of the early phases of the project - the cataloguing of over ten thousand items form more than a dozen collections - are very impressive: also the ambition of including private and religious collections. It is to be regretted that one cannot take a look on-line.

Apart from the description of the national inventorying, we have no information about other policy goals and tools in the area of museums. They should be elaborated with the view of the decentralisation of cultural policy. Even if it will not affect the actual network of national museums, the great number of municipal collections need clear guidelines.

Hoxha was a great friend of museums and ordered every settlement to establish its own museum (most of which have been eliminated since). Museum people are not at all happy about this privileged treatment in the past. Instead of raising interests towards museology, these collections are blamed to have brought standards down, which is felt up to day.

Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu National Museum, Krujë

One is inclined to feel worries by learning that a tower was built in the early 1980s at one corner of the citadel, at the order of Enver Hoxha, in order to house the exhibition dedicated to the memory of Skanderbeg, this great historical figure of the 15th century. Memorials of the Communist age tend to display bad taste, hollow pathos, in poor quality execution. Particularly those conceived in the age of rising ethno-communism. And on learning that the edifice was designed by Enver's daughter and her husband, one is prepared for the worse.

Against this background the museum is a pleasant surprise. A building of imposing size but with proper proportions, made of raw stones in decent masonry work; also most part of the exhibit remains beyond the limits of good taste.

The greater part of the representative permanent exhibition of the National Museum has changed little since 1990, antiquity and the struggles for independence being the main pillars.

Two significant extensions have been added: an exhibition on the Albanian gulag and a showroom of icons. (The latter is attributed personally to the Minister, see the Guide.)

LIBRARIES

The official (Library Association) figure of public libraries is 366. Other sources put the actual number at about half of this. The 1997 unrest took a heavy toll, most of the libraries have not recovered yet. It is sadly symptomatic that the Guide contains indirect reference only to the system of public libraries (when writing about the Library Training Centre). Disregard for cultural institutions and activities outside of the direct scope of the Ministry is a general feature of the Guide, but it is especially conspicuous here because for the proper functioning of the public library system central co-ordination is more essential than in case of other cultural institutions. The Ministry has several hundred librarians on its pay-roll! Also there are supposed to be over 2000 school libraries. It is not clear if they are entirely at the discretion of the educational administration or there are some shared competencies with the cultural sector.

The National Library of Albania, presented at length in the Guide, is making huge efforts to correspond to its double role of an eminent depository of the nation's cultural heritage and as the methodological and training centre of the public library system. The latter has been divided off to form the Library Training Centre.

The law (7491/1992) obliges publishers to provide 5 legal deposit copies but its effect is poor. The National Library houses the ISBN agency since 1998; the estimated rate of books using the international standard number is 50-75%, but bar codes are still not used.

Vlorë showed an early example of sizable civilian charity for culture: an honourable citizen, Eqerem Bej founded and supported an important library before 1930. Unfortunately most of it fell victim to the 1997 looting. Concerted efforts were needed in order to the reopen the city library: the Soros Foundation took the lead, the city contributed and so did the Ministry (its 5,5 million has been its biggest library investment ever), foreign books came from Italy, the inhabitants of Vlorë donated copies of their own.

The library of Krujë, 17 000 inhabitants, has 42 000 copies and 2000 registered members. In 1999 it grew with 100 copies, at the value of 15 000 Leks (an average of 150 per new book). The gallery was recently rebuilt, here, too, the Soros Foundation and the Ministry joined forces.

ARTISTIC PROJECTS

Financing of artistic projects is an important feature of the current cultural policy. Like everywhere else, in Albania too, changes in the institutional system counters too much inertia, too many interests are hurt and would cost too much. Available resources promise better effects by spending them to finance selected projects.

As early as in 1993 a decree of government (Nr. 150) established the procedures of granting financial assistance to civilian cultural initiatives. In July 1998 a separate unit was set up in the Ministry.

In 1999 altogether 125 projects received 72,7 million Leks, making an average of nearly 600 thousand Leks per project. The figure includes sports projects, too, but the number of cultural projects is not less than a hundred and not less than 60 million; the plan for 2000 promises nearly 70.

In the budget for the year 2000 somewhat less than 70 million Leks are planned for art projects (of which 11,5 million are earmarked for personal fees).

The homepage of the Ministry is said to be the most practical way of learning about conditions to acquire a grant from this fund. Application can be done online for free, however, most applicants keep to the traditional routine of picking the form up at the Ministry which costs them 200 Leks.

Applications keep flowing in all through the year and evaluation is continuous, too. The arts committee of the Ministry, headed by the Minister, at its weekly meetings decides on those projects which have successfully passed the two-step evaluation process. The first judgement is done by three experts in the Ministry which is followed by an assessment by outside consultants.

Some of the projects are recurrent, like the summer nights outside of the Pyramid. There are complex events, like the Butrint festival planned for September, including music, dance, exhibits, involving international participation. Often the Department of Art Projects takes an active part in the organisation of the project, as in the case of a Demis Roussos concert or the touring of the Italian theatrical performance "Fly Butterfly".

The Ministry supports popular events on purpose. In May 2000, they were among the main sponsors of the Miss Albania contest, televised from the Butrint archeological site. The aim was to highlight the attractions of the antique ruins surrounded by lavish greenery. Also, the Ministry seeks opportunities to entertain youth and to create a bond with the wider public.

Initiatives often come from the administration, the Minister himself being a source of ideas. The internal projects, however, are put on the same form and their evaluation follows the same route as the outsiders do.

FINE ARTS

Apart from the obvious folk art, the most remarkable antecedents of 20th century Albanian painting are the icon painters of the past, with Onufri from the 16th century as the leading personality, and the painters of genre and portraits of the Albania represented best perhaps by Idromeno, who began painting at the end of the 19th century.

The Hoxha regime favoured the plastic arts: sculptures and paintings in the socialist realist style were ordered in large numbers. Each town had to maintain an "art gallery", a local exhibition hall with a permanent collection (but no sales), usually attached to the cultural centre. These collections fortunately survived the iconoclastic fervour of the early 90s. Contrary to the practice of other communist countries, pictures and statues had not been lent to decorate party or state offices (in those countries the collapse of the ruling parties required a heavy toll from these objects). Most of the city art galleries kept closed anyway during most of the last decade. (For example the art gallery of Shkodër holds about 700 paintings, 90% of

which dates from the communist period, the rest is older, including several from Idromeno as well as his students. This gallery is out of function, too, but occasionally they organise exhibitions.)

The heavy heritage waited for its fate in closed storerooms: are their values, if any, artistic or merely historical? The National Arts Gallery addressed this issue by setting up two exhibits. One, entitled *Homo Socialismi* consists of the busts and heads of heroes of the communist mythology (facing a row of caricatured sculpture of the "enemies of the people"). The other exhibit, under the name *Socialist (sur)Realism*, presented the rise and decline of agit-prop painting. It needed certain courage to display these works in the national art gallery. The second of these exhibits was also put on show abroad (Bari, Italy) together with the latest Albanian works of art.

It is in the field of fine arts, more specifically at the National Gallery, where present day Albanian cultural policy leaves the least doubt about its priorities. It is especially significant that they were put down in the conceptual paper by which the actual director of the National Gallery, Gezim Qendro won his post in an open contest under the previous Minister. Which may be a proof that the actual policy is not the exclusive obsession of a group of "young Turks", led by a strong willed Minister (incidentally himself a painter, too).

Without any sign of compromises for middle of the road art and taste, projects under the charge of the National Gallery promote those artists who have best chances of integrating into the latest trends endorsed by the most influential critics of world art. In the selection for representative appearances abroad one feels the conscious effort to avoid the pathetic, the self pitying, the anecdotal, the folkloric, the commercially mystical - all those traps for the artists from the peripheries.

By this attitude, of course, a large number, if not the majority of living artists are excluded, since they are best at expressing themselves in the categories enlisted. Categories, which incidentally are likely to meet the expectation of the greater part of the public. This must have all been taken into consideration when the yearly national "salon", the *Onufri* exhibition broke with its tradition. Instead of the previous "democratic" mass event of 350 items, from 1998 international curators have been involved, bringing down the number of works to 65, including pieces from abroad. Similarly, the yearly *Marubi* photographic shows, held also in the National Gallery, have opened up to foreign participants.

This art policy paradoxically shares one thing with its communist predecessors: namely the belief in the social mission of art. Today, the message is not contained in the narrative of the individual artefacts - at least, not necessarily. The main objective is to break out of the centuries-long isolation, to communicate with the outer world. Also to help the outer world communicate its values to the Albanian public. The motto is openness, especially to the most timely global trends of the world. Albania was for centuries at hopeless distance from the trend-setting centres. After antiquity it was in the Byzantine age that local artists last kept pace with the world. Present day Albanian cultural policy wants to re-establish real-time synchronicity with contemporary international art. In true post-modern fashion, there is no visible canon as to the style or subject of the pieces of art.

An art policy whose point of reference is the international elite, has to face great difficulties. The local public was hardly ever exposed to this kind of art. Nor did they have any education in the history of art, as this has been absent in the curriculum of Albanian schools.

Furthermore, the population here lacks most of the visual stimuli, while people in the west are constantly faced with up-to-date forms of design. The typical Albanian urban environment is drab, where cunning forms and colours appeared only recently with the advent of eager commercialism¹⁷.

Similarly to the greater part of the previous paragraphs, the issue of national characteristics, *couleur local* is treated here on the basis of Mr Qendro's views. National specificity has no special emphasis in this policy: the important is the successful reaction to world tendencies in art. The secret of success and relevance may stem from the national roots of the artist; but not necessarily so. Proponents of the actual Albanian cultural policy clearly refrain from actualising or "albanising" the topics and rendering of art. They are conscious that the models for such attempts are usually superficial constructs, rigid abstractions long torn from everyday local realities, as is seen elsewhere in the world, too. The clichés which were created by the communist regime were readily accepted by the world as authentic models of the true Albanian - although they had little to do with the man in the street of the time. Such false myths were secularised by post-modernism. It tells people (peoples as well), that basically you are like anyone else, part of the world. And, like everyone else, you are different from all the rest. Now either some of the artists manage to create things which others identify being typical of an Albanian, or there is no such identity at all.

In the spirit of this relentless *fuite-en-avant* is the first Tirana Biennale planned by the Ministry for October 2000, with internationally renowned curators¹⁸. The concept of the art show, however, is carefully and fittingly chosen, around topics like emigration, nomadisation, hybridisation; 150 artists are expected from the peripheries of the world - Asia, Africa, America Latina.

Marubi Collection

The Marubi collection in Shkodër is a unique source of artistic and historic heritage. It has about half a million negatives. The bulk of this assortment is the inheritance of the Marubi family, photographs of people and scenes from Shkodër and other parts of Albania, from the middle of the 19th century onwards. A selection was displayed in Italy and it will certainly be followed by other exhibitions abroad.

The stairway of the Ministry is decorated with large photos made by the Marubis a hundred years ago. Testimonies of the encounters of the two worlds, East and West, Ottoman Empire and Europe, traditionalism and modernism; Albanian gunmen posing in the studio, peasant families boarding the large steamship bound for Italy (or America?), early industrialists boasting their manufacture workshops and the like.

THEATRE

One of the most important achievements of the actual Albanian cultural policy was the adoption of *Act 8578 On The Theatre* of February 2000. Its preparation was accompanied by unusual political tension and became a real test for the whole cultural policy. The law aimed at abolishing the entrenched privileges of the actors, including singers and dancers of the Opera, and instead wants to introduce the necessary conditions for rotation, dynamism indispensable for any change and development. Although resistance was foreseen, its

¹⁷ Apart from television, the most intrusive visual effects are nowadays offered by the dozens of colourful beach towels hung for sale at street markets

¹⁸ Giancarlo Politi, editor of Flash Art, Harald Szemann, Okwui Enwezor, Hans Ulrich Obrist etc

vehemence went beyond expectations. The media and some politicians (not only from the ranks of the opposition!) picked up the topic. Demonstrations, graffiti, hunger strike went along in a crescendo which seemed to lead to the withdrawal of the draft law and an eventual fall of the Minister. The general public followed the issue with keen interest but without massive and clear manifestation of its views. A larger part of sympathy, however, seemed to go for the protesting artists, as their cause seemed to support the classical antagonism of the despotic bureaucracy and the defenceless artist (the media capitalised on this theme) and few saw it as a clash between old and new, past and future. Besides, the familiar faces of some actors nourished nostalgic feelings.

The observer cannot tell the reason how the law finally went through with minor modifications only. In fact the tension cooled down, the interest of the public waned at a surprising speed.

The law provides a fairly transparent system for the administration and financing of the public theatres. It divides in a daring and radical manner the basic infrastructure, i.e. the buildings and their management and staff from the "troupes", the artistic communities. The division does not stop at financing: in the future they become separate legal entities. The existing public "theatre centres" or "art centres" are owned by the Ministry or the municipalities, while the companies can have various status. The traditional representative ensembles will turn into national companies (theatre, opera, folklore etc.), where the employment contracts with the actors are defined in a loose and flexible way - this was the hottest issue.

A National Board of Theatre is established, which will act as a kind of arm's length theatre agency of the Ministry. It will be responsible for the distribution of state subsidies for theatre performances, in which the Board will rely on the deliberations of a Selective Forum of theatre projects. (See the analogy with the film sector below.) The law defines the mandates and competencies of the members of the Selective Forum as well as of the director of the Board, and also the ways of their selection and delegation.

The new legislation represents a few significant endeavours of cultural policy:

- By separating the institution which runs the infrastructure it is manifested that the state has direct responsibility for their maintenance;
- On the other hand, by separating the artistic company into a less rigid entity, the state declares that in artistic matters its competencies are indirect;
- The same principle is served by the creation of the National Board, and especially the selective forum, which will dispose of public subsidies in a transparent way;
- By changing the status of actors and other artistic personnel from civil servants into contracted artists, dynamism and the spirit of quality and competition are introduced, which are indispensable for artistic achievement and progress.

Although actual implementation only began and is spread over a year, the law is likely to have repercussions on other types of cultural institutions, both centrally and especially linked to the process of decentralisation.

The new spring presentations of the National Theatre were important steps on the way of consolidation: a historical parabola of a local author and *The People's Enemy* by Ibsen. Curiously the latter seemed more to revoke times when the stage was a distinguished forum for social criticism, the audience reacted vividly to references to political tricks and evils.

These performances were already made in the spirit of project financing like a rivalling production in town, shown on the stage of the Academy (College) of the Arts, an educational institution, refurbished and technically upgraded with the help of the Soros Foundation. In all fields, not only in theatre, can one sense a sectoral segregation: this important new achievement is mentioned nowhere in the policy guide of the Ministry.

The absence of interval astonishes the foreign observer. By this the theatre can imperfectly fulfil its societal function. Elsewhere in Europe a considerable part of the theatre's appeal is the opportunity it offers for socialising, showing off, flirting etc. Among the explanations are the absence of heating and cooling of the hall and also the fear of losing some of the viewers during break.

Although theatres in the countryside have experienced an even deeper crisis than in Tirana, they still represent an important part in the cultural capital. As will be seen later, among the 130 public cultural employees in Shkodër 46 belong to the local theatre. There are however very few performances. In the greater part variety-shows - the term, like elsewhere in Eastern Europe, is *estradë* or *estrada*. A typical *estradë* show would last about one and a half hours, with say 8 musical pieces or dances and 7 humorous sketches by turns. Of course, there are higher brow ambitions, too. Plans for the latest theatrical season in Vlorë included Havel, Ionesco and Strindberg: the final selection lies with the project assessment at the Ministry, in the future with the Selective Forum.

MUSIC

Judging by the number of cassettes and compact discs on sale and considering unit price which in the case of tapes is about the same, in cd-s about double of books, the sales figures of recorded music must be well over 7 million dollars a year (see Books, below). The market is dominated by real and quasi folk music. The remaining room on the shelves of music shops and sidewalk stalls, is occupied by western popular music - with doubts about royalties and import licences, but no reliable data are known about the proportion of pirating.

The offer of Albanian music is impressive. The decisive majority belongs to the kind of nostalgic pseudo-national genre, which has played an extraordinary career in the Balkans. In the ex-Yugoslav countries this is called *turbofolk*; the Albanian near equivalent is the *muzik qytetare*, literally city music. (We come back to this issue in the next chapter, too.) Most of it is commercial trash, but some even among them certainly represent quality, in the music, the lyric, the rendering or all of these. Besides, there is also pure folklore or folk-based compositions, applying effects of jazz, modern song or symphony music etc. (Among others, songs of a singer who served political prison sentence before 1990, are selling well.) Quite a few of these performers are well publicised in various Internet sites, edited in Albania or elsewhere. The outside observer could not sense any relationship between this recording business and the cultural policy.

Astonishingly, no place is left on those shelves for classical music. It seems that no classical cd-s are sold anywhere outside of Tirana. The interest is there, prominent place is given to such concerts in the media, on city posters, towns have their (amateur) symphony orchestras but apparently people do not buy symphonic recordings for their homes.

FOLKLORE

Folk dance and folk song were the pets of communist cultural policies. It is surprising therefore that the National Centre of Folklore Activities was founded as late as 1994. Apparently the Ensemble of the Folk Songs and Dances, established as an offshoot of the Opera in 1957, was considered the national institution of folklore. The spectacular stage folk-shows (exemplified once by the Soviet Alexandrov Ensemble and recently reincarnated in the Celtic super-shows) caused some embarrassment to "modern" cultural policy, and generally to urbanised people in the whole of Eastern Europe. The genre was losing momentum, in all aspects, as a tourist attraction, an identity engine, a civilian pastime etc. In Albania, too, folk art was neglected after the fall of communism (it may have been too closely attached to "socialist culture"), but is getting stronger again. Practically each town, each house of culture has its group of folk dance, song and music, which practices and performs the local folkloric dialect. Very few professionals, even fewer paid staff are running this living movement of thousands of amateurs.

The professionals of the Centre are pleased to see the renewed interest but are worried by the commercialisation of folk art. They observe with anxiety the increase of oriental decorations, of the exaggeration of exotic motives; they find Kosovar performers particularly prone to such effects.

There have been several directions all over the world to renew the art and to preserve or raise its status. The most important trend puts increased emphasis on authenticity. Field research intensifies, traditional bands and performers are put on stage and young artists try to reproduce original peasant dances and songs. In Albania the National Centre of Folklore Activities co-ordinates this movement, scientific collection and recording is done at the Academy of Sciences.

Much less interest is manifested towards material folklore. Here, too, specialists are abhorred by the low quality of pseudo-national stuff sold to foreigners and are little consoled that the level of souvenirs is not inferior to the offer in Venice or London. The Centre cares for authentic folk craft. They lack the money for exhibitions, even for a basic collection: they hope for one in 2001. They do not intend to compete with the ethnographic museums but want to create a reference assortment for popular masters.

In 2000 the Centre is faced with the enormous task of preparing the 6th national folklore festival in October. The previous such event was held in Berat in 1995. Several towns applied for this year's opportunity but the preparatory committee decided to take it back to where these festivals were organised earlier, in the open air theatre in the citadel of Gjirokastër.

The mayor of Gjirokastër expects this festival to be a turning point in the life of the town. The festival is indeed a blessing for Gjirokastër, it might become the first step outwards from its physical and social depression. However, the festival may bring boom not in the sense as in Salzburg, Prague or Bayreuth, since conditions are so very different. At those fortunate places the festivals attract masses of viewers who pay a fortune for their tickets and spend several times more during their stay as tourists. In Gjirokastër the logistical task of hosting

approximately 1200 participants - the winners of each district: singers, dancers, musicians and organisers - is an extraordinary challenge for a town with barely 200 hotel beds¹⁹.

Although in its present state Gjirokastër could swallow billions of Leks, the millions which the Ministry and the town can spend on the festival are its financial revenue. The other benefit is indirect: the media will cover the programmes, the folklore festival attracts attention to Gjirokastër. Months before the opening, preparations were going on in the citadel.

The selection process takes months which affects all folk-groups in the country. There are qualifying rounds in each region administrative: that these do not coincide with the ethnographic zones is a headache for the specialists of the Centre.

The basic dividing line roughly corresponds with the linguistic dialects. In vocal folk music the Gegs, who live north of the Shkumbin River, have a tradition of monophonic singing while the southern Tosks have preserved the probably archaic patrimony of vocal poliphony.

The National Centre of Folklore Activities is a state institution whose main activities are co-ordination, promotion and organisation in the fields of popular art. The Centre does not have a budget for the support of stage performances or other projects: they must apply to the funds for artistic projects at the Ministry. In 1999 they won grants, among others, for the organisation of several folklore programmes for refugees from Kosovo.

CULTURAL INDUSTRIES

People socialised in the communist countries, feel - or used to feel - uncomfortable about the term of cultural industries. This compound combines notions which in the bolshevik ideology were, if not opposed, but rather different and distant. Although culture was democratised, simplified, secularised, schematised, yet the concept still belonged to a different dimension, culture and work were clearly separated, culture served to encourage for work and struggle, after which again culture served for reward, rest and regeneration.

This is why when in the later stages market elements were tolerated, still later encouraged in communist societies, ideology insisted on keeping culture intact from market. Although it was clear that the birth and distribution of all kinds of culture needed skills and sometimes logistics akin to those applied in industry and commerce, this was largely concealed. Paying too much attention to these would have felt like discussing the physiology of love, or analysing the economic aspects of religion. This resistance partly stemmed from the perennial claim of the artists and intellectuals for a separate (indeed superior) status and from sheer concern for existential privileges, but these aspirations met with the concept of culture in bolshevik ideology.

Even today many West Europeans find this expression an Americanism, no wonder that it takes more for East Europeans to warm up to it. In Albania, for example, the term "cultural industry" hardly ever occurs in any text. Neither do its connotations often appear: culture is rarely conceived in the context of employment, of direct source of revenue and taxes, as an export commodity etc. (The Butrint project is an exception.) The relationship between culture

¹⁹ When in last May a distinguished guest (Ismail Kadare) was in town, no room with a shower or bath was left for any other visitor.

and material advance of the country is underlined in the Guide, but without specifying it more.²⁰

The production and sale of recorded music is an important cultural industry. This, however, shall not be treated here as it was covered in the chapter on music.

BOOKS

Publishing in less developed societies is symptomatically identified with the creation of books of belles lettres; within this, poetry is considered to be the representative cultural attainment. The offices of book departments of the respective ministries therefore are more often visited by poets than local counterparts of CEO-s of Bertelsmann, Mondadori or Hachette. Albania is no exception. However, people at the Ministry are perfectly aware that striving for better fiscal conditions for the book sector is a means for the promotion of Albanian literature.

An expert of the Council of Europe recently prepared a thorough analysis on the state of publishing and bookselling in Albania²¹: this state is neither worse, nor better than what can be expected among the given circumstances. Each year some 800 titles appear, including some 100 school textbooks, in a total of about 4,5 million copies; approximately 1,5 copy per citizen, well below the European average. The yearly turnover is estimated at \$ 6,4 million. The average book price is 400 Leks, roughly equalling a day's pay, instead of the common 1% of a monthly income elsewhere.

In spite of the instabilities of the past decade, a dozen or so publishers seem to have established firm positions. The national book fair, opened in the presence of the best known living Albanian in the world, Ismail Kadare, in the sports hall of Gjirokastër last May showed signs of consolidation. (The mayor of the town hopes to repeat the event each year.)

It is rather difficult to follow the routes of books from the printer to the customer. Wholesalers, in the proper sense of the word, are absent, the state distribution enterprise is under constant criticism; publishers claim to do most of the delivery themselves, in small vans and cars. Postal services are practically non-existent (letters or cards are collected at the few offices in the absence of street post boxes).

Some shops of the old state chain are still there and manage to keep books on less than half of the shelf-space, the rest taken up by stationery etc. More books seem to be bought from the sidewalk kiosks. The new international bookshop, opened in the centre of Tirana last year exemplifies public-private co-operation: the premises have been selected and rented by the Ministry and the shop is stocked and run by an joint Albanian-Greek, which has been the main importer of books and periodicals. As another feature of the project, it came about by the initiative and technical assistance of the Council of Europe. The shop is important also from the point of view of setting standard to book-selling, although the prices are beyond reach for ordinary Albanians.

Unfortunately Albania is one of the few European states which has not yet signed the Florence Agreement on the imports of cultural goods.

²⁰ In Kosovo, where the tasks of social reconstruction are not entirely different from those in Albania, but where local cultural policy is being formed under decisive western influence, the cultural department of UNMIK set the renewal of the traditional crafts among the most urgent cultural priorities.

²¹ Laura Novati The book sector in Albania DECS/CULT/POL/book (99) 8.

In Shkodër 5 or 6 bookshops are active. Asking about sales in a small private bookshop, about 150,000 Leks were reported a month. Of this roughly 20% is books, 2-3 cheap paperbacks a day, at an average price of 100 Leks. The retail discount being 20%, the net revenue of the shop on books is a mere 6000 per month, which provides for the bookseller's earnings after expenses have been deducted.

Also in Shkodër a small literary publisher told about his latest release, writings of an Albanian author who died in Italy. From a print-run of 1000 about 2/3 will be sold in the first year. The distribution is mainly pre-industrial, booksellers collecting copies at the publisher's place and literature teachers being the local salespeople for another part. From the unit price of 350 Lek about half goes to the printer (including paper), bookseller's discount is 20%. The owner of the copyright, the author's family, renounced from a fee.

In both examples the 20% value added sales tax should be deducted, it is however officially admitted to be regularly collected from the biggest entrepreneurs only as yet. In the book sector 5 or 6 publishers are known to be regular payers²².

Of course, cultural policy cares for literature and writers not only indirectly, by trying to boost publishing. The distribution of the yearly literary prizes is an important event; writers get grants (they participated in the literary train of the Council of Europe as well); October 2000 is dedicated to the centenary of the death of Naim Frashëri, an intellectual precursor of independent Albania²³.

Besides other functions, publishing and literature are important factors in the language standard. The case of Albanian is not unlike many other nations where a choice has had to be made between dialects. The debate has been going on for over a hundred years, with several points of settlement. From the two basic dialects, the northern Geg (Gheg) and the southern Tosk the latter was favoured as the basis of a national standard, which incorporates some elements from the north, too. After the most authoritative congress, held in 1972 in Tirana, publishing in Geg discontinued. In the atmosphere of the early 1990s there were serious attempts to revive it as an expression of the newly-established pluralism but national consensus was later re-established about the Tosk-based standard.

Kosovar intellectuals traditionally played an important reconciliatory role in the issue. Though speakers of Geg, they supported unifying efforts. Now, when the majority sentiment is for an independent Kosovo entity, striving for a relatively separate identity might collect impetus; however, the overwhelming majority of Albanian speakers considers the issue as closed²⁴.

FILM

The Guide contains a very succinct chapter on film. The basis of this sector is the 1996 *Act on Cinematography (No. 8096)*, the fruit of five years' work, orchestrated by the then Minister of Culture, himself a prominent film director. The Council of Europe is said to have praised the outcome, especially for its open character.

²² The Novati report, p.3.

²³ Curiously, another member of the government chairs the commemorative committee, not the cultural Minister.

²⁴ Except maybe for eventual minor rectifications: e.g. the archaic mute 'ë' is a nuisance in spelling, especially in the Geg north, including Kosovo.

The National Centre of Cinematography has a similar status to the other national institutions, except that it reports directly to the Minister of Culture, having no department in the Ministry for the audio-visual arts. The main source of income of the Centre is the central budget, but it has revenue from the industry in two channels. First, the Centre collects its shares from the revenue generated by films financed by the state. The actual producers of films return some part (usually 20%) of what they receive for the sales of their films in cinemas or television. The income after films which had been made from state money before the law was adopted, must be equally shared between the Centre and the respective Albafilm Studio. Until recently it was a theoretical agreement only, private commercial tv-channels bought the first "old" documentaries not long ago - for very little. Another source of income is 1% of the price of all cinema tickets. (The branch hoped for more, but this is what the IMF approved.)

The Approval Commission is the panel which selects and approves film projects in three categories: feature, documentary and animation. The Commission has two sessions a year, in spring and autumn. The latest (spring 2000) selections were as follows:

Table 3

Category	Submitted	Approved
Feature	9	3
Documentary	14	5
Animation	12	4

In its decisions the Approval Commission observes the remarks of the Financial Commission. This latter scrutinises the projects from the financing point of view. Among other, they check that from the state contribution the financial plan should earmark money to be paid to Albanians only, for the actual shooting expenses; equipment and laboratory work must be financed from other sources. The winners do not get actual money but a promise for a certain amount which is valid for 18 months. During this time they must find the remaining sum or else the grant is lost.

The system seems to work. Since the law was passed three feature films have been finished and four more are being shot, which is nearly a Balkans record. A documentary film was selected for the Venice Festival and a short film won a medal at Montpellier, both in the autumn of 1999.

No investor has shown interest in Albafilm Studio so far, which can be privatised up to 49%. Until recently a staff of 50 were paid from the budget but now they have to earn their salaries. The law helps them by obliging the winners at the of tenders of the Centre to spend their money at Albafilm.

The first Albanian cinema was opened as late as 1940 in Vlorë. Ten years ago that city used to boast three cinemas, two halls and an open-air one but at present they are all in ruins. The national average is not much better.

The cinema network of the country fell into pieces in three waves. After 1990, with the collapse of the previous regime the old functioning got paralysed and the nobody new about the new ways; in 1992 a hasty privatisation decimated the ranks of cinemas; then came the next shock in 1997, destroying a few more remaining halls. The sad state of cinemas has been the main reason why the country could not join the Eurimage network.

The branch keeps deploring the effects of the first privatisation frenzy. In 1992 cinemas were put to tender with a two-year obligation to keep the original function. The new owners, however, apparently put their money (or rather, their bank credit) into the building and not the cultural service. After two years almost all switched to something more lucrative than showing films.

In the town of Elbasan the staff of the cinema had the means and the courage in 1992 to bid for the bar in the lobby; by running it they also blocked the main door to the hall, which then could not be used for any other purpose - this is how it survived as a cinema. The ground of the old cinema was the contribution of the city to the one-hall new one, the second Millennium cinema after Tirana.

Albanian municipalities have limited sources of their own. On the other hand, the city councils have a relative freedom over their tiny revenue: this explains how Elbasan could spend half of its budget on culture in 1998, the year of opening the Millennium.

The scheme of the creation of the Millennium cinema network aims at reproducing good-quality halls in Albania. From the limited information we have (no texts of decrees, contracts etc.) this appears to be a good example of public-private co-operation. The Ministry gave money: the 9 million in the film line in Table 2 for 1998, was labelled as Millennium; as seen in Elbasan, towns contribute, too; the private partner's share is not known. With the opening of Millennium Tirana, new releases make it to Albania a few weeks after their original first run. Tickets cost 200 during the day and 300 in the evening - including 20% value added tax. Cinema owners and distributors usually divide the revenue by 50-50. Interestingly, none of the new cinemas have multiple halls as yet.

The pace of reconstructing old cinemas or opening new halls is all too slow. From the international assistance that of a French cinema foundation can be singled out. The Centre now would like to achieve that each town should be obliged by law to arrange for a cinema. The law on cinematography stipulates two concrete measures concerning distribution and cinemas. First, it obliges all cinemas to show new Albanian films for at least five consecutive days. Second, it forbids to change the functions of state cinemas after privatisation or rent. The text does not allow for exceptions or time-limit.

As elsewhere, and increasingly so, television is becoming a decisive source for financing film-making. Consequently, what is contained in the media laws, may matter more than the sector's own legislation. The Albanian law on media stipulates such obligation but until recently only the state television complied. From the many commercial channels the first one has just ventured into a consortium to make a film.

Another tv-channel (but related to the previous one, and both of them to Canal+) took a decisive share in the organisation of the national film show last spring. Tirana Millennium cinema offered its premises for this festival free for four days, which is also part of its obligation in return for the financial contribution of the Ministry.

The cinematography act contains an important limitation for all tv channels, state or private: they must not show a film financed by the Centre in the first 12 months after the original performance.

MUNICIPAL CULTURE

References have so far been made to museums, theatres, cinemas etc. in towns. But the par excellence municipal cultural institution is the house of culture. This institution is one of the embarrassing legacies of the communist past, not only in Albania, but in the entire "transition" area. The name may vary from country to country, also inside countries; in Albania they are called *shtëpi kulture*, *qendër kultorore* or *pallat kulture*. In spite of national specificities and historic traditions, houses of culture in the communist world used to share the same main features. The term "house of culture" denotes both the building and the institution. Of the two, the building was the more important. Its size ranged from practically one-room houses in small settlements to real "palaces of culture" in large towns. The essence was the auditorium. Notwithstanding its cultural name and function, the most idiosyncratic usage of the cultural house was meetings at official holidays, with a table (a counter, rather) on the stage, covered with red cloth, dignitaries sitting behind it (the presidium of the meeting), facing the audience, which fills the rows dressed in Sunday best. Besides speeches and handing over decorations, meetings would have cultural ingredients, too, either intermittent recitals or taking the second half of the event, the presidium having occupied their seats in the first row.

In spite of all the internal development and modification, most cultural houses in Eastern Europe followed this basic pattern. Especially in Albania, where the civil society was not in a position to use and shape the houses of culture to their own needs and images up to the very end of communism, unlike in other countries from the 1960s onwards. Consequently the houses of culture here still radiate the thinly disguised political messages of the past:

- their function was to take in as many inhabitants as possible for political rallies;
- the facilities were less than adequate for theatrical or cinema performances, usually due to the very design of the building;
- the house imperfectly lent itself for real community activity, whether cultural or social, besides the events of the auditorium.

Although houses of culture were meant to attract people away from the mosque or church, from the pub and above all from any other civilian gathering, they rarely had the comfort or the aesthetic appeal one would expect for the success of such a goal. The regime used another method instead, by suppressing the rivalling institutions, at various degrees of tolerance. Notwithstanding their political role, houses of culture were central in policy. Local cultural policy meant running several institutions: theatre, museum, library and house of culture. In small towns or large villages only the last two. (There are separate houses of culture for children, too, run and supervised jointly with the educational sector.)

The institution is not mentioned in the Guide, and the amounts spent on the (re)construction of palaces of culture indicate a sharp decline: between 1995-1997 they represented 60,7% of the entire cultural investment, which went down to 44,3 in the next three years of 1998-2000, standing at 6,3 only % in the last year of 2000. The new theatre law may offer a new perspective by establishing the status of "art centres". It is not clear, however, if this is meant for the municipal theatres or the authors of the law had in mind the cultural houses, too.

To help overcome the destruction in Vlorë, the government spent 13 million Leks (the second biggest single cultural investment of the Ministry in the 1990s) on the reconstruction of the palace of culture as early as 1997. In the palace there were 6 theatrical programmes in 1999, with two performances each, mostly *estradë*. Concerts of popular music are held at the sports hall, too; these exemplify the declared intention of the city leadership to use (light) culture to raise the spirit of the population.

The cultural houses are (or should be) the natural communal bases for the newly born civilian associations. Indeed, this is often the case, especially when these organisations are in fact an artistic group. The buildings rarely lend themselves for other purposes, e.g. club-like activities.

There are other impediments to the flowering of civilian organisations. The events in the spring of 1997 caused much harm to the social tissue of Albania. The renewed commencements afterwards usually lacked the optimism of the previous years, also many people left the country. Civilian movements have the feeling that the actual political leadership does not give them the necessary support, and on the whole, the parliamentary parties dominate the social scene to an exaggerated degree.

Municipal cultural policy in Albania reflects the communist legacy. It struggles with a tradition, which is characterised by running institutions (houses of culture, libraries, theatres etc.) which at the time of their creation used to be:

- only relatively better equipped than the miserable population itself
- overstaffed
- and immanently unfriendly towards all cultural initiatives outside their walls and frames.

This struggle has been waged in a period of shrinking public resources and dramatic upsurge of alternative attractions. No wonder that a typical cultural administrator in the cities is full of frustration and despair.

Some artists and cultural activists grabbed the opportunity to begin from scratch and build up totally new institutions. It is also a viable and valid choice for a national cultural policy to put the main emphasis on such alternatives. Yet the issue of the inherited institutions must be dealt with seriously, for at least two reasons:

- they do represent values which are hard to substitute, if only for the walls of the buildings;
- they still incarnate the greater part of culture in the eyes of the majority of the population.

The Ministry is trying to combat the attitude which equates culture with running institutions: this is a very clear and positive feature of Albanian cultural policy. Yet it will take a long time before in the mind of a mayor the word 'culture' evokes something else than an *estradë* first - which he or she would attend from the centre seat of the first row in the dilapidated house of culture.

According to different estimates nearly 50% of Albanian workforce is employed in the agriculture, and similar is the quota of that sector in the national GDP. This implies a

considerable proportion of village-dwellers. They, however, are present in Albanian cultural policy - probably not indifferently from other sectors - in an implicit way only. The task of stopping the cultural infrastructure from further deterioration in the 36 district centres, or else, to revitalise them, absorbs most of the energy of the government. In principle, there may exist libraries, houses of culture or local museums in smaller settlements with a few thousand inhabitants or less, but no mention whatsoever is made about them in the documents. On the whole, nothing has been found out about the cultural mandates of the districts (regions).

Municipal cultural institutions have a double affiliation. Their salaries depend on the central budget (it is not clear whether the law allows for the local authority to contribute to those salaries). Investment, too, is largely a matter of the Ministry. The mission and programmes are also determined centrally, directly, by way of laws, indirectly, by way of financing projects and probably informally as well.

From the 3230 people employed by the Ministry of Culture in 1999, 2152 worked in local communities. 15-25% are said to represent sports, thus approximately 1700 people are employed in the cultural institutions of the municipalities. When asked about the greatest difficulty in his work, the cultural chief of a city pointed at the unclear, intermediate status of the cultural institutions. His main complaint was not about the degree of his competence, he would find both ministerial or municipal domination justified: either - or, he deplored the ambiguous interpretation of the law, which results in neither - nor.

The set-up of a progressive Ministry and a narrow-minded local government is a stereotype for most parts of the world - with of course lots of individual instances for the opposite, too. The Albanian case seems to exemplify the majority rule. In those cases where the central government proves to be more open-minded, forward-looking than a local authority, the double dependence of a cultural institution is an important and positive condition. Obvious are, however, the advantages of local affiliation. It is easier to develop strong mutual bonds with the local authorities and the inhabitants if the institution is financed from local resources. In a democratic society the natural or normal way is if a local community (most typically a town) has the right, the obligation as well as the means to maintain its cultural institutions. This should be the perspective goal in Albania, too.

All over in East Europe the decentralisation of cultural policy has taken place in an ambiguous mood. In a period of rapidly shrinking public resources most institutions hoped that the central government would be more determined to maintain the dimensions of the past than what can be expected from local authorities. Also the professional (sectoral) bonds of the leaders of these institutions tend to be stronger than the feeling of local or regional allegiance. Partly because the feeling of local loyalty had been deliberately played down for decades for the benefit of centralised cohesion.

As we can see, cultural administration and financing is still overly centralised in Albania. Continued decentralisation is therefore inevitable. However, the strategy of decentralising cultural policy can be effective only if it is integrated into larger national processes. The decisive measures are contained in the legislation on the competencies of the local authorities, on rules of fiscal redistribution, on local taxes and revenues etc. Unfortunately the signs of a clear governmental strategy are not visible. We cannot tell the progress of decentralisation in other sectors, whether culture is lagging behind or cutting edge. The first political steps have been accomplished: Albanian towns and districts are governed by democratically elected bodies and officials (mayors in towns). Although their budgets are limited, they have a large

degree of autonomy in finances (see next chapter); also there are cultural commissions attached to local assemblies.

At the time of writing, very general outlines were known about the degree and directions of the government's determination for further decentralisation. It was not sure whether there will be any changes before the elections for local government, scheduled for October, 2000. This uncertainty may be one of the reasons why there are no explicit guidelines for the decentralisation of cultural policy in general, or in respect of the various sub-sectors (libraries, museums etc.). Theatres may represent a breakthrough, as the new law declares the responsibility of the local authority for the local "art centres" and theatre companies, including the appointment of directors; yet it is not clear, if and how local budgets will take over the charge of financing wages and investments.

Explicit guidelines, coherent strategies are called for to reply questions like: What to do with the cultural institutions in the towns? How to change the inherited, obsolete concepts of local culture? Which are the models to put before mayors and local governments? How to make stronger bonds between culture and business at the local level? How to use culture more consciously to increase employment and citizen participation? Which are the adequate legal and fiscal measures in the devolution of cultural competencies?

Besides these general issues, the types of institutions deserve special attention, one by one: the house of culture, the library, the local museum, the theatre. If you have a vision of Albanian local society in the future, it should be analysed, how these institutions fit best to that vision. What makes them best serve the advent of such future?

Especially the cultural centre and the library lend themselves to becoming community centres, cultural agoras. (Internet is a good means of attracting the public, especially youth, and of conveying the best achievements in real time, involving more interaction than television; and international donors have proved to be easier to convince about Internet projects²⁵.)

Guidelines, principles, practical models found elsewhere in the world or developed locally, matter almost as much as money. Indeed, before such models are there, feeding those institutions with money is a waste.

With the adoption of a law the rules change overnight: in this sense the devolution of the various components goes ahead in distinct steps. The whole process is however a long continuous haul, in which the growth of local cohesion and pride, the increase of local economic resources, the changes of fiscal and other legal regulations will together help the reality of Albanian cultural geography to approach the rest of Europe.

Overall stability and consolidation is needed to revitalise Albanian towns from their paralysed state. During visits to about a dozen municipal institutions I bumped into two instances of spontaneous cultural activity only: in the cultural house of Berat the musical director was practising with a young boy at the piano and in Vlorë another visitor came to the museum while I was there. Often we found closed doors, with sometimes finding the key, sometimes not.

²⁵ In a number of ex-soviet countries, but also in Pristina, unreliable electric supply is where any desire about Internet are halted: in Albania it does not seem to be the case. Also the telephone network meets the basic requirements.

It is commonplace in Albania to complain about party politics and on the short-sightedness of their politicians. Municipal politics is not different, nevertheless it does not seem to excessively distort local politics, or the relationship between the government and towns, especially ruled by the opposition. The choices and priorities of the Ministry, e.g. in the distribution of funds, does not seem to follow a pattern of party allegiance. (Tirana is a different case. The absence of the capital city from, or the opposition to any initiative of the Ministry is conspicuous.)

THE CASE OF BERAT

Thanks to *Transparencë*, the news bulletin of the Town Hall, we can construct an overview of municipal financing in Albania on the sample of the town of Berat. An article in Nr.2 presents a full financial review over the year 1999 with detailed figures. Nr.4 brings Decree Nr.11 of 2000 of the Berat local government (*këshilli bashkiak*) over the budget for the year 2000.

Table 4 In thousand Leks

		From the central budget	From local sources	Budget of Berat
1	Salaries	211,706	0	211,706
1a	<i>On culture</i>	<i>9,900 (4,7%)</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>9,900 (4,7%)</i>
2	Expenses	60,950	23,790	84,740
2a	<i>On culture</i>	<i>5,240 (8,6%)</i>	<i>2,012 (8,5%)</i>	<i>7,252 (8,6%)</i>
3	Investment	32,400	18,060	50,460
3a	<i>On culture</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>3,800 (21,0%)</i>	<i>3,800 (7,5%)</i>
4	Total	305,056	41,850	346,906
4a	<i>On culture</i>	<i>15,140 (5,0%)</i>	<i>5,812 (13,9%)</i>	<i>20,952 (6,0%)</i>

In order to grasp the dimension, the *Table 5* gives the main figures in thousand euros:

Table 5 Thousand euros

		From the central budget	From local sources	Budget of Berat
1	Salaries	1628,5	0	1628,5
2	Expenses	468,8	183,0	651,2
3	Investment	249,2	138,9	388,2
4	Total	2346,6	321,9	2668,5

With full honesty must be confessed that even with these ample sources of information arduous analysis, similar to archeological reconstruction work, is needed to overcome the cryptic character as well as evident errors of the tables. The total sum of Lek 349 906 for example is not put down, it is the result of multiple cross calculations. The need to receive and the intention to provide transparency over the finances of the town is clearly there, but it appears to be satisfied formally, otherwise those figures would be explained and presented to the interested citizen (or the outside expert, for that matter) in a more user-friendly manner.

The total of 20,952,000 Leks on culture is a sum of the following nine items.

Table 6		Lek	euro
From the central budget:			
1	Salaries (and insurance) at cultural centres	9,900,000	76.154
2	Other expenses of the cultural centres	5,000,000	38.462
3	Concert for honorary citizen Ceken	200,000	1539
4	Cocktail for the symphony orchestra	40,000	308
From the local budget:			
5	Expenses of the town band	812,000	6246
6	Expenses of the symphony orchestra	750,000	5769
7	Recital of the Dushi brothers	300,000	2308
8	Publishing book on local songs	150,000	1154
9	Reconstruction of the library	3,800,000	29.231

Remarks about the items of *Table 6*:

- 1 Salaries, as we saw, are paid from the budget of the Ministry of culture. In Berat there are 24 people employed at the cultural institutions (not including the Onufri museum). Considering that about 23% of the amount goes on social security, one can estimate the average monthly gross salary of these people around 25 000 Leks (a little less than 200 euros). As one point for comparison, we have got the data from the "City Profile" (*Profili i qytetit*), an information booklet on Elbasan. There, in 1999 the monthly average salary in the entire budgetary sector was 12 077 Leks.
- 2 When judging the size of the 5 million Leks from which the cultural institutions must be run, we must also keep in mind that the revenues of these institutions do not complement the budget. According to the regulations, these must be paid in to the municipal budget. At present, they do not constitute important amounts. Usually they sell tickets for the *estrade* shows only, for the events of more artistic character the public is invited free.
- 3 The 1st decree of 2000 of the town assembly awarded honorary citizenship to a popular humorous actor, original from Berat: "Ceken" is his stage-name. The accompanying documents were handed over at a special concert.
- 4 The members of the symphony orchestra are all amateur, only the ambitious leader and conductor receives salary. The concert of Johann Strauss was sponsored by the Austrian Embassy and was attended by five ambassadors. The cocktail was given at this occasion.
- 5-6 The two orchestras get exactly 25% more each, than in the previous year. The increase is real, as it is higher than the low Albanian inflation rate.
- 7-8 There is no additional information about these items.
- 9 The detailed tables received from the Ministry of culture on the investments between 1992 and 2000 contain 1,610,000 Leks for 1998-1999 and nil for 2000. These figures imply that the reconstruction of the library was in the major part financed from local resources. (For sake of comparison: the Ministry spent over 17 million Leks in the same two years on a monument building in the castle of Berat.)

As we could see, almost 90% of the budget of the town will be covered by the central state budget. In 1999 the local government of Berat collected 27,890,000 Leks as revenue. In order

to get a picture about the composition of the sources of the town's own income the following table shows the eight largest single titles of income in 1999 (thousand Leks):

Table 7

Business licences (for trades and professions)	7203
Market levies	6654
Income from lands	3951
Tax on property	2215
Sanitation levies	1572
Transport levies	758
Income from grants (?)	712
Income of the kindergartens	590

We can complement the case of Berat with a few other data on the financing of culture, taken from other towns.

Table 8 shows the composition of the 130 civil employees in the field of culture in Shkodër, the most important town of the north (80 000 inhabitants).

Table 8

Theatre	46
Institute for protection of monuments	43
Library	11
Cultural centre	9
Children's cultural centre	9 ²⁶
Marubi collection	4
Cinema	3
Museum	2
Art gallery	2
Cultural section of the town hall	1

In Elbasan (a city of 120 000 according to the Town Hall, 85 000 at Siteatlas.com, 70 000 at Albanian.com) has 58 people on the payroll of 6 cultural institutions (roughly 1 per 2000 inhabitants). The theatre, with 20 actors, has a staff of 34; the other end of the scale is represented by the 1-person art gallery.

MINORITIES

Albania is ethnically fairly homogenous, its cultural minorities are estimated at 4-12 %. The great variance is attached to the divergent views about the size of the Greek population, because the remaining groups (Vlachs or Aromanians, Bulgarians, Macedonians, Montenegrins, Serbs and Gypsies or Roma) together account for less than 2%.

There are no signs of discrimination towards them in the statements and activities of the Ministry. On the other hand, no clear evidence is found that cultural policy values ethnic, linguistic and cultural diversity and would pledge to preserve it instead of a cultural

²⁶ The children's cultural centre has five permanent employees, the remaining posts are divided between contracted part-time workers.

homogenisation. When asked about it, the active participation of cultural minorities was affirmed in the folklore movement. This is the usual and obvious minimum manifestation of minority identity: and often it remains the maximum as well. Communities accept to be closed into a colourful folkloric ghetto two hours a week, and for the rest they give up their language, distinctive customs, daily habits, ways of life, that is culture off the stage.

In a certain sense religious division also constitutes cultural differences. The usual estimate is 70 - 20 - 10 % between Muslim, Orthodox and Catholic, with a distinct Bektashi minority inside the first group. In this case it is a healthy thing that cultural policy appears to be "denomination-blind", with no preference or dis-preference by religion.

CULTURAL GREATER ALBANIA

Albanians are conscious that the area where speakers of *shqip* were in compact majority in the last phase of the Ottoman empire is larger than the actual state: the so-called ethnic maps (showing all Albanian-populated settlements in- and outside of the country), sold everywhere, are an evidence of this. But the vast majority is by no means obsessed about this fact. The natural cultural gravitation centre of the Albanian speaking community is Tirana. But it is almost never manifested in an assertive way and it is astonishing, how little the issue is reflected in the Guide.

For Albanians the Kosovo crisis began in 1989, the year of abolition of the autonomous republic and reached its climax with the massive influx of refugees before the NATO intervention. This, of course, left its mark on the cultural life. Artists from Kosovo have been present at every festival, exhibition, book fair and Albanian groups went to entertain refugees. As private individuals and families cherish memories of solidarity, personal records of the crisis, these will certainly be a central theme in arts and literature for long. However, voices for unification or cultural homogenisation are absent or hardly audible.

National History Museum, Tirana

"The Kosovo Tragedy and Albanian Hospitality" - Photograph exhibition by Eqerem Luraku. Sixty photos displayed.

"Kosovo Drama on the Anniversary of Liberation" - Exhibition by the painter, Dritan Nasi. Some 30 paintings in pastel and acrylic describing the spiritual and psychological world of the Kosovo people during the Kosovo drama.

Source: <http://www.albaniannews.com> 22 July, 2000

Since the end of the bombing in Kosovo Albania's artists and cultural products have access to an additional public of at least half the size of its own population. However, due to the many uncertainties in Kosovo, and to the difficulties of traffic, the two communities have failed to unite into one cultural entity, what is more, few signs are there for cultural convergence. With the remaining neighbouring countries, Macedonia (the former Yugoslav republic), Montenegro (the actual Yugoslav republic) and Greece, conditions are not favourable for the cultural policy to assume the care for the cultural needs of their Albanian speaking populations.

The Italo-Albanian (Arbëresh) community is now surpassed in number by the recent wave of emigrants. These both may contribute to Italy being the closest partner and point of reference for Albanian cultural policy. The emigrés of the 1990s all around the world are a hidden

resource for culture; pilgrimages to European cultural centres are made possible for many people by helpful relatives and friends living having moved there a few years earlier.

SUMMARY

Albanian cultural policy must be credited with having a clear character. Its main objectives are easy to identify and are consequently pursued. Those objectives intend to put culture in the service of national recovery and development. The following priorities can be discerned in the Albanian cultural policy:

- the protection and rehabilitation of built cultural heritage;
- cultural action and innovation emphasised more than the vested interests of the institutions;
- search for projects which reach wide public in Albania and among the trend-makers of the world.

This strategy appears to be adequate to the situation in the country, to its difficult past and its depressed, unstable present. Albanian cultural policy has limited resources: human, technical and financial. It is therefore a necessity and a merit that it concentrates to a few areas. This feature should be preserved in the future, too. And yet, secondary stresses must be put on a number of hereto unattended issues, or else the success of the main priorities will be threatened, too. Of these, the following can be singled out:

- lack of a coherent strategy towards the decentralisation of cultural policy;
- less than desirable attention for administrative skills and discipline;
- lack of apparent strategy or tactical measures for areas and people which remain outside of the main priorities.

Of these, the last item needs additional clarification. First of all it expresses the call for more conscious efforts at *cultural diversity*. Also it words concerns about the *sustainability* of this cultural policy. The success of the actual cultural policy can be measured by the degree of integration of the Albanian cultural elite into world processes (without leaving the country). The more they succeed, the greater the risk of getting distanced from "the masses", from those who produce and consume culture with sales potential for the local markets only. Certainly, the strong emphasis on the protection of monuments is one good way to bridge this gap: regenerating built heritage affects every citizen, including those who never go to an exhibition. Also, the popular projects of the Ministry are consciously meant to reach out to broad layers of the young.

In spite of these signs of openness, empathy and solidarity, the *pur et dur* attitude of the Ministry carries risks. It is a very conscious choice not to woo the nation indiscriminately: not to praise things Albanian for themselves, but only the incontestable achievements. Instead of multiplying memorials, the highest achievements should be highlighted: see the pavilion of icons. Treat Albanian traditions critically, using European measures: see the hard treatment of the surviving bastions of socialist culture. A meritocratic policy logically means, however, that the number of those, who feel neglected and under-valued is high. It is hard to judge whether the Minister, his team and the cultural elite which supports him, possess the necessary tactical skills to handle this situation, to appease those circles: artists, employees of cultural institutions, the public with barely disguised nostalgia for the tastes of their youth etc. This is where the outsider cannot give any advice.

With these closing remarks the sympathetic observer feels inclined to echo the closing word of the Minister's introduction to his Guide: *Përpara!* Forward!