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THE GREEK MINORITY SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS
DURING THE ENVER HOXHA PERIOD*

INTRODUCTION

With the easing of political tensions after the collapse of the communist regime in Albania (1991), a more sober approach to the study of how the children of the country's Greek minority were educated has become possible. A careful examination of school textbooks yields fascinating clues about how the educational process was used to give the Greek children in Albania a unique national identity. Of course, a general discussion of the problem would have to include an assessment of the broader political and social climate in which the Greek community lived, the quality and training of its teachers and, finally, its possibility of communication with the "ethnic centre" — that is, Greece and the Greek people. Unquestionably, the communist regime's policy toward the Greek minority evolved through a number of different phases, bound up with its political choices at home and abroad.

This study is based exclusively on school textbooks used by the Greek community and written in Greek. These texts were selected from three politically distinct periods. The first group is composed of texts used in the mid 1950's, when Albania was a fully integrated satellite of the Soviet Union. The second group includes books published between 1970 and 1972, a period when Albania had disassociated itself from the Soviet Union and had been drawn into the Chinese orbit. Society and political life had fallen under Chinese influence and imitated the policies of the Chinese "cultural" revolution, while atheism had become the dogma of party and state. At that time relations between Greece and Albania had not yet been fully re-established. Although diplomatic relations were resumed in 1971, the 1972 textbooks bear the unmistakable imprint of the previous period. The last group of books, which is also the largest, were published in 1973-1975. This was the period when Albania gradually broke away from China, and the ice between Albania and Greece began to melt. Each state maintained a diplomatic mission in the other's capital, while the restoration of democracy in Greece (1974) facilitated the establishment of closer relations.

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THE FIRST PERIOD SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS FROM 1956-1957

It was impossible for the author to recover and study all the textbooks used in all three periods. From the first period three books were examined: a) *Modern Greek Grammar for Seven-Grade Schools*, Tirana 1957, b) *Grammar of the Greek Language for the Second Grade of Primary Schools*, Argyrocastro 1957, c) *Anthology for the Sixth Grade of Seven-Grade Schools*, Argyrocastro 1956. The first two were written originally in Greek, while the third contains many texts translated from Albanian originals. They all reflect the international situation and the domestic policy of the Albanian regime at that time. The predominant note is of praise for the Soviet Union and socialist solidarity, which, understandably, was not found to be true of later editions. On the other hand, such features as the exaltation of Albanian patriotism, adulation of the virtues personified by the Albanian leaders, isolationism and xenophobia were apparent even then, although in a milder form compared to later texts. The same is true of atheist propaganda, which at that early stage did not yet press for extirpation as it did after 1968.

In this climate, the authors of the schoolbooks published in the 1950's seem to have had more freedom to include in their books texts which provided the children of the Greek community with a degree of Greekness in their education — limited, certainly, but striking in comparison with subsequent periods. The attentive reader notes that the texts provide satisfactory instruction in the Greek language, that the Greek-speaking environment of the community is not significantly adulterated, and that the common struggles of the Greek community of Northern Epirus and the Albanian communists for the creation of a People's Democracy in Albania are extolled. Further, these books not only take note of the existence of Greece, but also accept, although indirectly, the relationship between the minority community and the Greek world in domains other than linguistic. Let us look at a few examples:

a) In History, instruction in the history of Greece is rudimentary. Nevertheless, the authors of the textbooks manage to insert many indicators of Greece's historical past in broader contexts. For example, one passage in the *7th Grade Grammar* says: "We communicate with each other in the Greek language. Greek has been spoken for *more than three thousand years...*" (page 3), "*mastering our mother tongue* makes it easier for us to learn foreign languages, including Albanian" (page 4, emphasis added).

The text of this Grammar contains allusions to many ancient Greek names, including the Parthenon, Marathon, Pericles and Athena, among others.

Guerrilla (Kleftic) songs in the Grammar commemorate the period of the Turkish occupation. An interesting comment reads: "...the guerrilla songs of the Greek people are *the richest of all*. Like the Albanians, the Greek nation endured four hundred years of slavery under the Turkish yoke, and sang of their thirst for liberty in a thousand different ways" (*Anthology for the Sixth Grade*, page 14).

The *Anthology* also includes a quotation from Lord Byron's "The Isles of Greece", in a translation by Eftaliotis. Ardently Greek in spirit, this poem makes specific reference to the Greek province of Epirus, These are the lines quoted in the book:

"On Suli's rock, and Parga's shore,
Exists the remnant of a line
Such as the Doric mothers bore".

But there is also mention of the modern, post-war period, of those things which link the Northern Epirotes not only with Enver Hoxha's Partisans but with Greek resistance groups like EAM as well as with the Greek Communist Party. Alexis Papas' tale of "Panayotis Papadopoulos" is an eloquent example of this. The story describes the activities of the hero, a member of "the minority", who seems to have fled to Greece in the inter-war period, joining the Communist Party and eventually the Resistance, before in the end being executed by the Italians. The author concludes: "At the altar of liberty and the brotherhood of nations the people of the minority honour the name of a glorious hero, and continue steadfastly to march down the road to freedom under the banner of the Party of Labour, side by side with the might of the Socialists, following our leader, the great Soviet Union..."

On page 19 of the same *Anthology* there is a popular song glorifying the EAM ("...and EAM will win, yes, lads, EAM will win, it will bring peace").

b) Greek *literature* texts contain works by a remarkable variety of Greek writers, both contemporary and from earlier periods. In fact, one would be justified in saying that the *Anthology*, produced for the schools of the Greek community in Albania in 1956, contains authors not found in similar textbooks used in schools in Greece. The *Anthology for the Sixth Grade*, for example, includes: K. Palamas (5), I. Polemis (2), Yannis Vilaras (2), Dionysios Solomos, Lorentzos Mavilis, A. Pallis, G. Vizyinos, Ger. Markoras, K. Krystallis (3), Ar. Provelengios, Zach. Papantoniou, Arg. Eftaliotis, G. Souris, Men. Loundemis, K. Varnalis (3), Th. Kornaros, Sofia Mavroidi-Papadaki (2), Rita Boumi-Papa (1).

What is really remarkable is that besides the poems and stories of manners and those which are social or historic in content, there are also works that are first and foremost patriotic, like L. Mavilis' poem "To My Native Land", as well as detailed biographical notes on the authors which could not fail to develop the cultural and sentimental bonds between Greece and the Greek community in Albania. The works are of course always given a Marxist interpretation, but given the situation in Albania at that time it would be naive to expect anything else. It is nonetheless remarkable that, relatively speaking, the climate of the 1950's was relaxed enough to permit the children of the Greek community in Albania to learn about and become aware of their Greek ancestry and identity.

c) As for *folklore*, there is no lack of references to Greek traditions. At that time, before the relentless persecution of the Church and of religion in general, the Greek traditions cited in the texts were frequently drawn from the life of the Church and Christian tradition. For example, the *Anthology* commemorates a priest who fought with partisan groups. (A popular poem tells how "Father Andreas of Alikos goes around the villages to meet the soldiers, to meet all the young men"). Nor were references to church festivals and traditions forbidden. For example, there is a passage from Loudemis' "White Chrysanthemums" which describes the lovely custom associated with Saint Basil. There is also a poem by Palamas ("The Months", pages 71-72) which refers to "the month of St Demetrios and the month of St Andreas", expressions which could not conceivably have been found in schoolbooks published at a later date. Finally, to conclude this section, these books also hand down Greek proverbs, which tend to cultivate the unity of Greek tradition. Such is the case of the Greek proverb, well known to children in Greece: "a lame man was running across the plain after a horseman, when a mute called out to him, where are you off to, then, young fellow" (page 18 in the *Grammar*), as well as guerrilla songs, which preserve the unity of national memory and the popular Muse: "When shall come the spring, and when shall come the summer, when we will take to the mountains, lads, to the mountaintops to fight" (*Anthology*, page 13).

THE SECOND PERIOD SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS FROM 1970-1972

Thirteen books of this period were studied, dealing with the Greek language and other subjects (Arithmetic, Natural Science, etc.). Of these, the

most important were *Readings in Literature for Eight Grade Schools* (Tirana 1970) and *Readings in Literature for the Seventh Grade of Eight-Grade Schools* (Tirana 1971).

Compared to the 1950's, these books are extremely depressing: the earlier editions, from 1956-57, could almost be called philellenic in comparison. Bearing in mind the political climate we described in the beginning, the principal characteristic of the school texts published in 1970-1972 is their total silence on Greece and the Greeks. There is no rent in the veil of obscurity. In the *Grammar*, the examples drawn from mythology and ancient history have disappeared, as have ancient Greek personal and place names. Not one Greek writer is mentioned, there is not a single Greek poem or story. The popular songs are local products whose main concern is to praise the regime and spur the workers of the Greek community to greater productivity. The accent is on exhortation to intensify the struggle against religion and the old "superstitions".

Another feature identified by the student of these texts is the frequency of specific barbs and criticisms against Greece. Although the author was not able to consult all the textbooks in use at that time, a number of sentences in the books at hand testify eloquently to the Albanian regime's attitude towards Greece and the Greek nation in general. Particular stress is laid on Greece's "machinations" against Northern Epirus. This appears clearly in two texts found in the *Seventh Grade Reader* (page 17): "Putting the Party line into practice like the fiery Communist he was, Lefteris (Tallios) poured himself into the rising of the people of Vourkos, to the Albanian people's struggle for national liberation and to *crushing the Greek counteraction in this province*".

"The people of Dropoli, however, do not forget that beyond our borders there stretches a vast darkness. And that this darkness hates the light, hates life, hates Dropoli and hates our land of Albania. Among its shades wolves in human form, their spawn ... howl with rage ... But in vain. Our land of Albania keeps its sword blade sharp, to smite off the head of any wolf that dares to approach with fangs bared...".

Just how far they went in their attempts to Albanize these schoolbooks, even in the popular songs, is illustrated by the treatment of "To Theodore Mastoras", a poem written by a member of the minority community. It is accompanied by an explanatory note which says that "this song was composed by warriors in Tallios' battalion and later translated *from Albanian*; it is sung in this version in the village of this popular hero". The name of the language into which it was translated is suppressed. The 1975 edition of the book

however, has a note which says that the song was *translated into Greek*, in which form it is sung in the birthplace of the popular hero.

THE THIRD PERIOD SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS FROM 1973-1975

For this period the author had at his disposal all the books used in the minority schools in Northern Epirus during those years. They fall into two categories: a) general instruction, including *Arithmetic*, *Natural Sciences*, *History of Albania*, *Geography of Albania*, *Moral and Political Instruction* (all for Grade 4), and b) Greek language, such as the *Grammar of the Greek Language for Grades 4 to 7*, the *Reader for Grades 4 to 7*, and the *Greek Syntax for Grade 8*. It should be noted that while the general instruction books are translations from the Albanian originals, the language books were written in Greek, although they do contain a number of Albanian texts in translation.

They are written in a fairly smooth demotic, with no extremes, although they do contain a number of local neologisms.

It should be noted that the general education books in Greek were destined for the lower primary classes, grades 1 to 4, where all lessons were taught in Greek, except for one hour a day of instruction in the Albanian tongue. At the second level, grades 5 to 8, the situation was reversed: all subjects were taught in Albanian except for Greek language classes. Finally, by the third level, grades 9 to 12, no Greek was taught at all. The Teachers' Training Secondary School in Argyrocastro, however, did have a Greek department to train teachers for the Greek community's schools.

To provide a clearer picture of the educational process and of the ideology emanating from the schoolbooks used during those years, an attempt will be made to analyse both the general orientation of Albanian primary education (eight years) and the specific tendencies of Albanian policy towards the Greek minority, as they appear in these schoolbooks. It is of course the Greek language books, like the *Grammar* and the *Reader*, which furnish the most evidence of the Albanian regime's lengthy persecution of the Greek minority, although a lot of information can be culled from the books on other subjects as well.

1. Let us look, then, at the *general orientation* of basic education in Albania in the mid 1970's.

a) As one would expect, the primary concern of these schoolbooks was *to cultivate faith in and devotion to the leader of the country, Enver Hoxha*.

Where older Greek schoolbooks—in Greece—had a prayer, the new ones—in Albania—had two “hymns”, one to the Party and one to Comrade Enver. With regard to Hoxha in particular, the panegyrics were inspired by the older paeans of praise to Stalin and Mao which had characterized Albanian schoolbooks of an earlier period.

b) Second in importance was *stressing the 1941-1944 people's liberation struggle*. Both the *History* and the *Reader*, and even the *Grammar* in a number of examples, devote more than half their space to praises of the Partisans who fought against the Italians, the Germans and the “Albanian Fascists”. The contribution of the Northern Epirotes (“meionotikoi”) to this struggle is similarly stressed.

c) Equally striking is the *nationalistic presentation of Albanian history from ancient times until the Second World War*. For form's sake the dialectic is that of historic materialism; but the intent is to instil in the schoolchildren a particularly fierce patriotic pride in Albania's historic past, accompanied by disgust, even hatred, for Albania's various “enemies”.

It is worth taking a look at the general presentation of Albanian history, in four periods:

(i) *Ancient History*. The Albanians are presented as descendants of the Illyrians, who developed an important civilization and an important state. The Romans, however—the “ancestors of the Italians”, it is stressed—“impelled by their great greed for wealth”, swallowed up this country.

(ii) *The Turkish occupation*. A thousand years later we find the descendants of the Illyrians fighting against the Turks, initially in defence of their freedom and later to recover it. What is striking here is the violence of the texts stigmatizing the tyranny and the brutality of the Turks, in phrases like “the Turkish barbarians” and “Turkish hordes”. There are, of course, many chapters devoted to Skanderbeg, the national hero of the Albanian people.

(iii) *The struggle for Independence 1878-1912*. These chapters attempt to highlight the awakening and growth of Albanian nationalism, with sentiments like those expressed in this verse:

“We are not Bulgarians, nor Greeks,
Here in our land we are neither Turks nor
Serbs,
We are Albanians and nothing else,
And we are proud of our name”.

This is paralleled by vehement criticism of the attitude of Turkey (and all other neighbouring states) which conspired against the country's indepen-

dence and territorial integrity. A typical passage from the *History* book (page 54) illustrates this: "The Turkish conquerors and the lackeys of the Greek government in Albania were furious. Up till then the Turkish priests had been teaching the Albanian children that the Albanians were Turks, while the Greek priests taught them that the Christians were Greeks ... The Greeks, on their side, started murdering people. They poisoned Petro Nini Liourasi, the teacher in Kolonia, and they butchered the patriot Papa-Kristo Negovani" (pp. 55-56).

(iv) *The founding of the Albanian state.* This chapter is an attempt to exalt the struggles of the Albanians to preserve the independence of their country in the teeth of both their neighbours and the Great Powers. Of course, the reign of King Zog is presented as a period of anti-popular tyranny.

In conclusion, it is fair to say that while the presentation of Albanian history up until the advent of Communism is designed to cultivate a spirit of nationalism among the young, it also succeeds in breeding a kind of xenophobia, since not only all the neighbouring states but all the European powers appear as enemies of the Albanian people.

d) *The cultivation of a sense of isolation* is also evident in the general instruction textbooks. An Albanian primary school pupil could learn practically nothing about the outside world, not even about Maoist China. Everything focused on Albania and the Albanian Communist Party. The only information about China was found in the *Reader*, which had one text, translated from Chinese, and a poem (page 98) about China ("China, shining like a star in Asia/ lights the pathway to felicity"). Equally little is to be found about the Soviet Union and Russian literature. Only Stalin finds favourable mention. ("The Red Army, under the leadership of Stalin, crushed the Nazi monster", *Grade 4 History*, page 138). Lenin is similarly approved. Khrushchev and Tito, however, win only criticism (*Grade 4 History* and *Grade 5 Reader*):

"Who is defending Marxism?
and who is burning out revisionism,
Khrushchev, Tito and Trotskyism?
Who is the unmasker of traitors?
Tis the grandson of Kastriotis" (Enver Hoxha).

e) *With regard to relations between Albanians and Greeks*, what is striking is the significant improvement seen in schoolbooks from this period, compared to earlier ones. We found no abusive or even particularly unfavourable texts, with the exception, of course, of those referring to the Greek position with respect to Albanian independence. On contemporary history, the *Grade 4*

History book says (on pp. 138-139) that “the English and American imperialists and their lackeys launched a succession of conspiracies against our country; they sent spies and dynamiters”.

It is not stated who these “lackeys” were, nor are the neighbours named who plotted against Albania’s borders; but the children were taught that these borders were “defended by a people and a party who would pour lead down the throats of any who tried to violate them” (page 139).

f) Taken together, these textbooks proclaim with great clarity *the children’s general duty*. First and foremost, their every action must demonstrate faithfulness to the Party and love for its leader, Enver Hoxha. They must be proud of their country and proud to be Albanians. They must defend their country’s independence and guard its borders against violation. They must take an active part in the battle against religious worship and “reactionary traditions”. They must practice equality between boys and girls, men and women (*Moral and Political Education*, Grade 4). They must both feel and display love for their family and respect for their parents and the elderly (from the same book).

2. We come now to an *analysis of Albanian policy towards the Greek minority and the education of its children*, as it emerges from the study of the schoolbooks published in 1973-1975.

Let us look at how the general lines of this policy are developed in these schoolbooks. First of all, in the *Geography of Albania for Grade 4* (page 50) the fact that the Northern Epirotes are members of the Greek minority is acknowledged in a rather odd fashion: “The population of the People’s Republic of Albania exceeds 2,000,000... Besides Albanians, our country is also inhabited by a tiny handful of Greek and Macedonian ethnics. This minority constitutes a mere 3% of the country’s population”.

Given that in the Albanian border region to the west of lakes Prespa and Ochrid there are a few Slav-speaking villages —those described as “Macedonian” in the *Geography* book— and that the book states that 3% of the population, or 60,000 people, belong to minority groups, we must conclude that the Albanians considered that the Greek community numbered a total of 50,000-55,000 souls. Of course, a careful study of the texts confirms the standard Albanian practice throughout the entire Communist period: that of considering the Greek minority as constituted solely by those living in the areas of Argyrocastro and Aghioi Saranta. Even within these districts there were exceptions, cases where Greeks were considered as Albanians rather than as belonging to the Greek community; and of course no mention at all

was made of there being Greeks in the provinces of Chimara, Korytza and elsewhere.

It is clear from both the eight year primary school programme and the textbooks used that linguistic assimilation was not the Albanian regime's objective. The result, nevertheless, was a peculiar local form of speech, with a host of hellenized Albanian words and expressions. On the contrary, by employing appropriate party and social training, while leaving the language relatively untouched, the regime pursued other, apparently more important, goals: the severing of all contacts the minority might have with Greece. The rejection of religion and of all traditions associated with religion. The forging of links between the Greek community and the Albanian people. The cultivation within the community of a sense of indigenous self-existence.

Let us consider these goals one by one, first noting, however, that no attempt was made to use the school books to adulterate the Greek atmosphere in which the community lived (of course, reference is made to the so-called "minority areas"). This is evidenced by the fact that all place names, even the microtoponymes, are given in their traditional Greek form: for example, Avlona, Argyrocastro, Delvino, etc. The only exceptions are those names which have religious associations: for example, Aghioi Saranta becomes Saranti.

The *Grammar for Grades 4 to 7* makes extensive use of Greek names for children; these in fact far outnumber Albanian names in the book. Commonly used are names like Anthoula, Thanasis, Nikos, Margarita, Yannis, etc., while ancient Greek names are almost non-existent. The absence of such names is probably attributable to government intervention, for it is well known that subject and emigrant Greek populations were wont to make widespread use of ancient Greek names for their children, as a show of their ethnic identity. The question which arises is whether at some period the Greeks of Albania were prohibited from giving their children historic Greek names or whether the education officials did not approve the use of such names in school books.

Besides place names and children's names, we noted that the heavenly bodies, cited in the *4th Grade Natural Science* book, for instance, are listed under their Greek rather than under their Latin names; and, finally, the Greek or Greek-speaking identity of districts and villages in Southern Albania is not concealed, although it is not particularly emphasized either. These are some examples:

— the Albanian popular song "To Theodore Mastora", from Tsiatista Pogoni, "was translated into Greek and is sung in this form in the popular

hero's village" (*Grade 7 Reader*, page 7).

— Greek popular songs exalt the struggles of the people of Panodropoli. The following lines speak of the fallen hero Grigoris Barkas, from Zervati:

"The guns were falling like rain, and the shells like
hailstones,
But nothing dismays *the children of the minority*.
They just kept charging ahead, *shouting their slogan*,
"*Aera!*"
And all in an instant the battlecry was heard
everywhere".

— A hamlet near Vourko, in the Aghioi Saranta district, formerly known as Handiraga (from the Turkish title "aga") was re-named "Lefteris Tallios" (indicating that it was Greek) in honour of the leader of a band of guerilla fighters from the Greek community, who was killed by the Germans (*Grade 6 Reader*, page 13).

3. The ethnic and cultural orientation of the educational process reveals the long term targets set out by the Enver Hoxha regime vis-à-vis the future of the minority itself.

a) The attempt to sever all links with Greece

With the exception of the Greek language, which is taught in a rudimentary fashion, the school books contain nothing which might indicate to the pupils in the Greek schools that Greece actually exists. The only exception, in the entire collection of textbooks of this period, is furnished by three texts in each of three *Readers* (for Grades 5, 6 and 7), by a total of 8 Greek writers: Drosinis, Krystallis, Palamas, Polemis, Elli Alexiou, Kostas Varnalis and Yannis Ritsos. These texts, 3 out of 40-45 in each Reader, are in each case grouped with texts by foreign writers at the end of the book. Brief footnotes give a little information of the type: "K. Palamas: important progressive Greek writer" (*Gr. 5 Reader*, page 143). "Ioannis Polemis: Poet. Wrote in the demotic tongue" (*Gr. 5 Reader*, page 149). "K. Varnalis: important progressive Greek writer" (*Gr. 7 Reader*, page 113).

It is interesting to note that, of the selections included, those by older Greek writers have nothing to do with Greece, while those in the *Grade 7 Reader* (1975 edition) by modern left-wing writers are specifically chosen to present conditions in Greece and its social situation in an unfavourable light, as will be shown later.

The history of Greece receives similar treatment. A kind of black-out is applied, for even the history of ancient Greece, which is taught the world over, is a closed book to the pupils of the minority schools in Albania. Of 208 "literary texts" chosen for Grades 4 to 7, only two mention Greek mythology ("The story of Prometheus, from Greek mythology", on page 138 of the *Grade 6 Reader*, and "Hercules and Antaios", page 49 of the *Grade 5 Reader*); there is also a brief description of the battle of Marathon accompanying Fan Noli's poem "Run, warrior of Marathon" (pp. 32-33, *Grade 7 Reader*).

In accounts of Albania's national struggles, the Greeks usually appear in an unfavourable light. They, just as much as the Turks, are pictured as implacable enemies of Albanian independence (*Grade 4 Reader*, page 162): "Turkey, and Greek propaganda, did their utmost to keep Albania in darkness and slavery for five long centuries. When threats and imprisonments produced no effect, they turned to other vile schemes to annihilate the standard-bearers of liberty. Such was the treatment reserved for Petro Nini Liourasi, the teacher of Albanian".

When modern Greece is mentioned, it is always disparagingly. There is an evident intent to cultivate among the members of the Greek community a sentiment of aversion towards the nation which logically speaking should be considered their mother country. For a specific illustration of this, one has only to consider the Greek texts selected for inclusion in the *Grade 7 Reader*. Three texts were chosen, by authors Elli Alexiou, K. Varnalis and G. Ritsos, all of which either deplore the disgraceful state of education in Greece ("bitter is the life of the children of the poor in capitalist countries", "they have no chance to go to school"), or harp on collaboration with the Germans ("it was the Germans and the Greeks who fired at her—a school child—and dropped her like a bird") without a positive reference to the role of the Greek Resistance, of course, to restore the balance, or describe the poverty of Greek villages ("beautiful, but poor and wretched and forsaken") or, finally, describe the life of the prisoners on the island of Makronisos, to complete a picture of a life of wretchedness and tyranny throughout Greece.

b) Campaign to extirpate religion and the popular traditions associated with it

Stamping out religious practices and associated traditions was one of the principal aims of the school books destined for use in the minority schools. This is readily understandable, of course, for it was a good way of dissolving the bonds of religion and tradition uniting the minority community with Greece and, even more important, of severing those links permanently, so

that mixed marriages between Greeks and Albanians (Christian and Moslem) would no longer be impossible. Indisputably, the anti-religion campaign was part of the attempt to gild the image of the regime and neutralize the negative features of Albanian society in the pre-war years.

This passage, from the *Grade 6 Reader* (page 65), is typical: "The Christian priests and bishops and the Turkish imams used to threaten the people with non-existing gods and demons ... in order to keep them in a state of subjugation ... They did not hesitate to rob and steal, to dishonour and ridicule, etc. ... One of their dirty swindles was the "talismans" of the Turkish imams and the "exorcisms" of the Christians, which they used to cheat the unsophisticated, telling them these would save them, when all they were doing was fleecing them".

Another text in the same book tells the story of "Wicked Vasio", who is like a wicked witch in a fairy tale. She pricks the shape of a cross into the hand of a little girl to save her from the evil eye; but the hand swells, the whole thing is discussed with great ridicule at the school, and Wicked Vasio never goes back to the child's house again (page 57).

Shaking off the yoke of religion and reactionary beliefs is presented as freeing the young people for the new life which is dawning, a life which will also lead to the ethnic transformation of the population of Southern Albania through mixed marriages. The passage which follows, from "The crumbling walls", by Panos Tsoukos, is typical (*Grade 7 Reader*, pp. 79-89): "A young Christian woman from Dropoli married a Moslem. The priest excommunicated her and the villagers cast her out. Years later she returned to the village with her husband, and everyone welcomed them with open arms, cursing the old customs. And her old mother says "Don't you go thinking that I haven't changed. Oh, no! I've realized that it isn't religion that makes people happy, but reason, love, and above all the Party. We have 15 girls here who have married Moslems, as we call them here in our Albania ... *And the first [ex-Moslem] brides have come to the village too ... Fine good girls, pretty and educated, too ... There aren't many yet, of course, but they'll come, you mark my words, they'll come. They're like the swallows, two-three at a time at first, then whole flocks of them ... I've figured it all out, you can be sure I have...*".

These school books do not confine themselves to the mere presentation of a lesson. They use "questions" and "homework" to try to mobilize the children to put the lesson into practice, not only to renounce the old customs but to spy on their parents and relatives. Here are a few of these extremely revealing passages:

— “Describe what happened in your village after Comrade Enver’s historic February 6th speech on rooting out religious ideology” (*Grade 7 Reader*, page 83).

— “How did the Pioneers unmask the Turkish imam and why must we fight against superstition and delusion” (*Grade 6 Reader*, page 66).

— “Describe how your village combats reactionary ideas, evil customs, religion and how it goes about unmasking deceivers” (*Grade 6 Reader*, page 69).

— “Recount incidents which reveal the deceitfulness of the priests and the imams (Ask your elders)”.

c) Forging close links between the Greek minority on the one hand and the Albanian state and the Albanian people on the other

All the basic texts repeat the central idea that both the Greek minority community and the Albanian people as a whole lived in wretched but *common* conditions under the pre-war regime, and that during the occupation they waged a *common* battle against the invader while working *together* to build socialism in a “new Albania”. It is interesting that, of the bulk of the texts in the Readers and the examples in the Grammar, approximately half are devoted to praising the communist regime and the other half to forging links between the people of the Greek community and the Albanians. The few examples which follow are quite illustrative.

A popular song from Vourko entitled “To the agricultural co-operative of Finiki” says: “before their liberation, the farmers of Finiki were harassed and heartlessly exploited by the beys and the agas; but now they are free, and they labour in joy and brotherhood, like all the farmers in our country, to build the new life” (*Grade 6 Reader*, page 19).

On pages 57-58 of the *Grade 4 Reader* there is a story in two parts. The first part describes the injustices suffered by one Vasilis of Dropiani at the hands of the local Aga, while the second presents Vasilis as a old man, free now, proclaiming that “land reform gave me these three fields, which used to belong to the Aga. All of us here will work hard, and we’ll do whatever the Party and the government tell us”.

The *Grade 6 Reader* (pp. 116-118) contains an extract from the September 18, 1937 issue of Korytza’s newspaper, describing the wretchedness of the province of Vourko in the blackest of colours. It is followed by this comment: “Before the liberation the farmers of Vourko, like all the farmers in our country, were the slaves of the beys and agas, and buffered by poverty,

ignorance and illness. Compare their former condition with their lives today, and say what is responsible for the difference”.

The common struggle of the Greek community and the Albanian people against the former regime is stressed in countless examples. The central image which emerges is of the Northern Epirotes fighting in independent units or in mixed partisan groups against the Italians and the Germans as well as against the local, Albanian fascists. Special praise is reserved for the youngsters —known as *Pioneers*. This extract is a typical:

— “The *Pioneers* of Pano Dropoli, like the *Pioneers* all over Albania, also fought heroically for the liberation of the country” (*Grade 4 Reader*, page 40).

An obvious complement to guidance in building the new socialist society is the establishment of bonds of brotherhood between the minority and the Albanian people. It is significant that the various texts refer to specific activities of, and are directed towards, specific groups within the minority community. In the fields, in the co-operatives, in the factories, Greeks and Albanians (as the names of the examples indicate) work as brothers for the common cause, for their common homeland. There is also an appeal to emigrant Albanians to return to their newly revived country (*Grade 6 Reader*, page 13):

“Come back, dear father, from foreign soil,
Albania is no longer as it once was.
No longer are there agas, and big bosses, merchants
But the country is governed by our people in
freedom”.

It seems that some time around 1967 the “lowlands”, that is, the minority areas, “donated” flocks and herds to the underdeveloped northern districts. These “donations”, which undoubtedly were requisitions, are considered one more proof of the brotherhood between North and South, i.e. between Greek and Albanian. The minority’s “popular Muse” commemorated the fact as follows:

“Long live Enver and the Party
who strengthened even more
the bonds of brotherhood between North and South
to fill our lives with joy”.

The refrain is familiar. Albania is the home to all. Poems, illustrations and stories cultivate faith in this common homeland. The texts are usually translations from Albanian originals. The *Grade 6 Reader* (pp.106-107) in-

cludes an ardent pre-war poem by Naim Frazieri —“Grieving for the fatherland”— with lines like “An Albanian am I - Oh Albania!”, and “Oh Albania! my mother”. However, by some strange chance the poem concludes with the following line in parenthesis:

“Oh! my homeland! nowhere else
does the sun shine as it shines on you!”.

This of course is the famous line from Lorentzo Mavilis’ hymn to another homeland-Greece; but who could explain this to the 12 year old Greek children in Albania and how could they understand what this unknown (to them) writer was talking about?

d) Efforts to cultivate within the minority community a sense of indigenous self-existence

We have so far considered the basic goals of Albania’s education policy with respect to breaking the Greek children’s attachment to Greece, severing the bonds of ethnic and religious tradition and, of course, creating a sense of community with the Albanian people. One final, though somewhat less evident, aim was to instil in the Greek children a sense that the minority community is indigenous and self-existent, with no connection to any other nation beyond the borders of Albania. This is revealed by attentive study of the texts included in the Grammars and Readers for all classes, and colours the presentation of history, popular tradition, literature and local mores and customs. Let us take a look at how this objective is pursued in each of these various fields.

— *History*. As has already been mentioned, the only history taught in Albanian schools was that of the Albanian fatherland. The children were taught that they were the descendants of the Illyrians, the mediaeval Albanians, of the national hero Skanderbeg and of the forefathers of Albanian independence 1878-1912. The question quite naturally arises, however, as to why they speak Greek and how they came to be in Albania, amputated from the Hellenic trunk. These questions, of course, remain unanswered. Suddenly, however, in the history of the Second World War, we find the Greeks of Northern Epirus, fighting heroically against the invader for the liberation of Albania and the creation of a new social order. This raises an issue which, of course, is not pursued, except insofar as it constitutes a link between the minority community and the Albanian people. Thus the history of the Greeks in Northern Epirus is recorded as beginning in 1941, and from that point on is enriched with heroes, feats and collective insurrections, ever by the side

of the people of Albania. Here are some typical examples:

Lefteris Tallios was killed fighting the Germans in March 1944. After his death he was awarded the title of "Hero of the People" and his birth-place, the village of Hadiraga in the district of Aghioi Saranta, was re-named in his honour. A popular song about him ("To Lefteris Tallios") is found on page 34 of the *Grade 4 Reader*.

Thanasis Zikos, a fighter in the service of liberty and democracy, fell in January 1941. A partisan battalion was named for him (*Grade 4 Reader*, page 33).

Anonymous heroes, great and small people, appear in the works of the community's writers by the dozen. Thus, although the Greeks of Northern Epirus may not be familiar with Kolokotronis and Papaflessas and others of their ilk, they do, however, have Tallios and Zikos and countless others to be proud of and to follow.

— *Folk Tradition*. This is a field which has been the object of particular attention on the part of the authors of these school textbooks. The popular muse and all traditions having any connection whatsoever with religion or with Greece have been completely excised from all school books. Anything referring to native, local popular tradition, on the other hand, especially concerning the current life of the minority community, receives special emphasis and pride of place. All the textbooks are brimming with popular songs. But these, despite their "popular" appellation, are for the most part the product of pen and paper rather than field and fold. The following, described as a popular song from Vourko, is a typical example (*Grade 6 Reader*, page 18):

"Our tractors seed the fields/ And our combines reap
The rich harvest/ which fills our barns.
Glory be to the Party/ which is beloved by all
And which has paved the way/ for a happy future".

An explanatory note includes the information that, at an ethnic folklore festival held in Argyrocastro in 1968, Greek choirs from the villages of Politsani, Diaioi (and possibly other places as well) performed "new" popular songs (published on pages 20, 21 of the *Grade 6 Reader*).

— *Literature*. Up until the early 1970's the minority community boasted a handful of practitioners of Greek literature. They all appeared, of course, as "obedient servants" of a regime, the praises of which they undertook to sing in a tongue familiar to the minority community. Their books and their stories became the basic subject matter taught in the community's schools, which made it easier to eliminate texts by writers from Greece. Their numbers in-

cluded both wellknown names and anonymous authors whose poems and songs were subsequently published as "popular" songs. Some of the most-cited song-writers and folk poets were Panos Tsoukas, Spyros Tzias and Fotos Kyriazanis.

— *Local customs and traditions.* All over the world, wherever there are Greeks, their customs and traditions are virtually exclusively connected with the Christian religion and with ancient Greek tenets and traditions. In Albania, however, after the banning of religion in 1968, it was inevitable that energies should then be turned to suppressing all traces of religious practices and Greek popular traditions, both of which were condemned as reactionary. What then was left in this field to teach to the children? Once again the answer is found in the Readers.

Of the authentic old popular muse of the Greeks of Northern Epirus, the only examples retained were the laments of the emigrants, which were always explained as referring to the former regime. This was accompanied by mass production of new "folk" songs praising the people's struggle for liberation, while holidays celebrated the anniversaries of Second World War battles or the deaths of fallen war heroes. The process comes full circle with the fabrication of new traditions connected generally with tractors, factories and the struggle for increased productivity.

CONCLUSIONS

A sizable number of school books were used by the Greek minority community during the twenty years —one generation— between 1955 and 1975; and the study of these texts permits the drawing of certain general conclusions about the way in which the educational process was used to shape the consciousness of the youthful Greek population of Northern Epirus.

The general principles behind it, it should be remarked, were the same for both Greeks and Albanians. The system was designed to nurture faith in and devotion to the Party and the Leader, as well as to create a new "socialist man". There is a general sense that a feeling of isolationism was cultivated, and the national liberation movement was exalted, in order to create a basis on which to build the new society and the new political system.

To be more specific, the Greek language continued to be taught in the minority's schools, albeit in a rudimentary fashion, only just enough to keep it alive in the "minority zone" districts. There appears to have been no attempt

to turn the community's children into young Albanians by force, nor, since Greek names and place names were retained, to adulterate the Greekness of the local environment in which the minority community lived. To counter-balance these concessions, the Albanian regime implemented a policy of severing all bonds linking the Greek community to metropolitan Greece, by suppressing Greek education and culture and blotting out all references to modern Greece, while at the same time sweeping away any customs and traditions linking the minority with the Hellenic world in general. The common interests and ties binding the Greek minority and the Albanian people were made much of. This, however, does not seem to have proven entirely satisfactory. Given that the language still flourished, and that for political and ideological reasons the path of Albanization was not pursued, another method was adopted, a method which, in the best of circumstances, should bear fruit in the long term: a campaign to cultivate the sense that the minority community in Albania was an indigenous and self-existing entity. The texts in the schoolbooks used reveal a systematic attempt to create an Albanian population which, while still speaking Greek, would be completely foreign to and cut off from the remainder of the Hellenic world, a population somewhat similar to the Greek-speaking Italians of Southern Italy. A significant contribution to this effort was made by the proscription of the Greek Orthodox religion and Christian worship, along with the customs and traditions associated with it.

Comparing school books from different periods reveals the various phases through which Albania's policy on the education of the children of the minority passed. In the second half of the 1950's (a period of international socialist solidarity under the aegis of the Soviet Union), as we have seen, the books used by the minority schools contained a substantial number of texts by Greek authors and did not hesitate to provide some information about Greece and about the culture and the history of the Greek people. This was the period when the idea of cultivating an indigenous consciousness in the minority community was still in its infancy.

On the other hand, the books dating from the late 1960's and early 1970's—those published, that is, before the resumption of relations between Greece and Albania—were introduced at a period when Albania practised strict isolationism and ferocious atheism and contain nothing Greek whatever. On the contrary, they are clearly and actively hostile to Greece.

By contrast, the new books published in the mid 1970's, following the resumption of diplomatic relations between Greece and Albania, are considerably improved, to the extent at least that they no longer express an overt

hostility towards Greece. Nevertheless, despite this relative improvement, the books from this period are still far removed from the norm of the 1950's.

In conclusion, the study of more than 30 school books, from three historically distinct periods, has revealed one positive and one negative signpost for the future of the Greek minority. The positive element is that the danger of linguistic assimilation, at least in areas where the minority was recognized and where its children had the right to primary education within their own community, was neither great nor immediate. The negative element is that implementation of the theory of a distinct, self-existent ethnic group, using the Greek language but with no connection with Greece and the Greek world, could eventually, especially in conjunction with the proscription of religion, render problematical the survival of the Greek minority in Albania.

It is fortunate that political developments since 1990 have halted the decline of the minority before it could vanish communist. With the overthrow of the regime, the Greek community was offered a renewed and dynamic lease of life in the land where their forefathers have dwelt for centuries.