

THE PROGRESS OF CULTURE AND THE GENERAL PROGRESS OF THE NATION

by **HAMIT BEQJA**

The socialist revolution, the socialist social order, which triumphed in Albania, released the latent energies of the people, the huge human, physical and intellectual potential of the working masses. They opened new paths for their irresistible and stormy outburst of an unexampled progress in all fields, social, cultural and artistic

IN THE REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE 8th CONGRESS OF THE PLA, COMRADE ENVER HOXHA, THE LEADER OF THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE, REFERRING TO THE ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROSPECTS OF OUR SOCIALIST CULTURE, POINTED OUT IN A SIGNIFICANT MANNER THAT «THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS OF CULTURE MEANS THE DEVELOPMENT AND PROGRESS OF THE NATION. THERE IS A CLOSE DIALECTICAL INTERCONNECTION BETWEEN THEM. ENGELS HAS SAID THAT HISTORY SHOWS THAT EVERY STEP FORWARD ON THE ROAD OF CULTURE HAS BEEN A STEP TOWARDS FREEDOM.»

From the earliest antiquity to our days, the rapid rates of the progress of culture have been conditioned by the favourable terrain created by advanced political, economic and social development, in a definite social background of freedom and democracy, against given historical conditions and

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bearing their own class character. In such periods of general historical progress and, especially of decisive changes and social revolutions, the progress of culture has imparted a powerful impulse to the progress of society in general.

On the other hand, the periods of political reaction and economic stagnation have, as a rule, hampered the

progress of culture. At the same time, the slow rates of cultural development, stagnation and, in given circumstances, retrogression, have exercised a negative influence on the course of development of different peoples and nations in their history.

Clear proof of this dialectical interconnection between the progress of culture and the general progress of a country is the history of the Albanian people and nation, of their culture.

1.

A brilliant cultural tradition stands out throughout the history of the Albanian people and nation.

tion, have hampered its development and consolidation by all manner and means. However, they have proved unable to wipe it out altogether.

This ability to survive has been one of the fundamental factors which have enabled the Albanian people to struggle successfully through all the storms of history and saved them from assimilation by the foreign occupiers, and which have assisted them to preserve their language and customs, to develop their culture.

In the conditions of successive invasions, situated in a key geographical position and closely linked with all the important events of history, the Albanian people, like the other peoples, could not fail to be exposed to influences from the cultures of other countries, peoples and nations, from the culture of the invaders and neighbours, those with whom history put them in active communication. But all this has not eliminated the autochthonous character of the Albanian culture. Just as the Albanian ethnos as a whole, it has put up a heroic resistance in the history. Moreover, despite all the unfavourable circumstances, despite their relatively small numbers, the Albanian people have also exercised a cultural influence on other peoples, first of all, on their neighbours, but also on other Balkan peoples and the European culture in general. This is eloquent proof of the universal truth that the outstanding and inalienable values of world culture are the product of all peoples, big and small.

As one of the most ancient stocks of the Balkans, who settled long ago on their territories, from the ancient times to this day, the Albanian people have created their autochthonous culture, which stands out as an original culture. Nevertheless, this process has developed in difficult historical circumstances, in permanent struggles against successive foreign incursions and invasions, from the Roman invasions in the antiquity to the Italian and German fascist occupation in the middle of our century. These invasions, and especially the longest and the most brutal of them — the five centuries long Ottoman occupation (from the 15th century to the beginning of the 20th century), have done much to maim this cultural tradi-

Being the victim to many invasions, throughout history the Albanian people have had recourse to their culture to counter the influence exercised by the culture of the foreign rulers, as a weapon in their struggle for freedom and independence. Hence, the progressive character, the freedom-loving, national and social spirit of the culture of our people. The influence of the retrogressive and obscurantist culture of the foreign occupiers and of the ruling classes, which made common cause with them, has been extremely weak.

Our culture went through a period of particular brilliance, especially during the Albanian National Renaissance, which has its beginnings in the 19th century and extends to the liberation from the long Ottoman rule and the achievement of national independence in 1912. In this great historic epoch of the formation of the Albanian nation, of its titanic efforts to shake off the foreign yoke, the three major directions of the struggle of the Albanian people, namely the armed uprising, the movement for political emancipation and the movement for the intensive development of the national culture, merged into one. The brilliant cultural traditions of the Albanian people, their patriotic and freedom-loving, progressive and democratic, illuminist and secular, liberation and revolutionary spirit crystallized precisely in this period.

In this process of the history of the Albanian people and nation, the Albanian culture has always been the twin of the rifle. Even when it was born, the Albanian enlightenment was not a variant of the European enlightenment. It smelled of gun-powder. And this gun-powder smell our culture keeps to this day.

Precisely in these circumstances the Albanian culture with its national potentiality and vitality favoured the survival of the nation through its history, enabling it to cope with the denationalizing policy of all kinds of foreign invaders, especially the Ottoman invaders; it has opposed itself to the foreign enemies who attacked the nation. This is a historic lesson of great importance for the Albanian people today, for all the Albanians, wherever they happen to be, for all the small peoples, for all those who oppose foreign cultural aggression, imperialist or social-imperialist, and anti-national chauvinist policies. Have the Great-Serb chauvinists today not made the national culture of the Albanian population in Yugoslavia, where they constitute a compact population, as well as in Macedonia and Montenegro, the target of their furious attacks? Is it not that the imperialist states, and the superpowers in particular, employ the

slogan of the «internationalization of culture» for their own expansionist aims against the smaller peoples?

Therefore, the struggle for the mother tongue, for the defence and development of the national cultural consciousness, of the national character and psychology, is today, too, a weapon in the hands of the Albanians, wherever they happen to be, as well as of the peoples languishing under the twofold yoke — national and social, for the preservation of their national compactness and vitality, for countering any new assimilating pressure.

Despite this vivid and powerful cultural tradition, throughout their history the Albanian people have had extremely few possibilities to involve themselves in a rich and intensive cultural life. During the period of the National Renaissance, in particular, all the great and brilliant minds of the nation saw and were deeply aware of the dialectical contradiction between the people's aspirations to progress and culture and the impossible. That is why through Naim Frashëri, the outstanding Albanian poet of the 19th century, they issued the call: «And the light of knowledge/ Will lead us forward/ Forward to freedom!» And they could not imagine the transition of Albania from mediaeval backwardness on to the road of progress without knowledge, without an academy and a university, as Sami Frashëri, the brilliant thinker and encyclopaedist of the 19th century, called for in his program for the national movement. Moreover, sensing the danger of religious strife instigated by the foreigners, who had divided our small people into three different religious beliefs, they stood for a secular culture in the national spirit, free from religion and above religion. And with the pen of another outstanding patriot of our National Renaissance, Pashko Vasa, they launched the slogan: «Albania is the Albanians' religion!» They put the spirit of Albania at the foundation of the development of the national culture. Under this program, the Albanian language and culture were cultivated,

schools in the Albanian language were opened, Albanian books and journals were printed, the whole Albanian culture further developed.

This brief historical outline of the features of the Albanian culture clearly shows how great was its role in the defence and liberation of the Albanian nation from foreign yoke, and the paths it opened for progress.

However, after the proclamation of its independence, hard times were in store for Albania. With the establishment of the savage feudal-bourgeois regime of King Zog in 1925 up till 1939, the Albanian people continued to live in mediaeval obscurity. Oppression and poverty, exploitation and misery went hand in hand with profound ignorance and mass illiteracy. The great socio-economic backwardness was the basis of this ignorance and suppressed all aspirations to cultural progress. On its part, ignorance had an influence on this backwardness, as well as on the primitive outlook and way of life of the people, fostered and kept it alive. That is why in the passionate call: «A little light!» coming from the verses of the greatest revolutionary poet of the time, Migjeni, along with the demand for freedom and democracy, for all-round social progress, the permanent thirst of the Albanian for culture was also present.

2.

The socialist revolution, the socialist social order, which triumphed in Albania, released the latent energies of the people, the human, physical and intellectual potential of the working masses. They opened new paths for their irresistible and stormy outburst of an unexampled progress in all fields, social, cultural and artistic.

The example of socialist Albania proved and is proving more and more convincingly with each passing day Lenin's prediction that in the midst of the people there are innumerable slumbering talents; that the exploiting

feudal and bourgeois society creates no possibility for their outburst and development, on the contrary, it suppresses and curbs them; that socialism alone works miracles in universal science and technology, knowledge and culture, making them the property of the working people, that socialism alone creates the conditions for the all-round emancipation of man, for the complete development of the personality of the new man, **impelling him actively** in cultural life, in the true sense of the word.

Right after the liberation of Albania and with its embarkment on the road of the free and democratic and, at the same time, socialist development, the Communist Party of Albania (today the PLA) launched the profoundly revolutionary and significant slogan: «More bread, more culture for the people!» Placing culture on the same plane as bread, the PLA laid down the problem of the rapid cultural development of the country as a vital historic imperative for the nation, for its cultural progress, as an absolutely necessary condition for the construction of the new socialist society.

The new socialist Albanian culture developed and flourished on the soil of all-round revolutionary, democratic and socialist, political, socio-economic and ideological transformations. The establishment of the people's power and its further consolidation as a dictatorship of the proletariat, the socialization of the means of production accompanied with rapid progress in the elimination of the economic backwardness, and the beginning of the socialist construction, the revolution of a socialist character, which began in the whole spiritual life of society — these were the factors which served as an indispensable premise of this new democratic and socialist progress of the Albanian culture.

Precisely on this soil the road was gradually opened for an extremely dynamic cultural progress, both extensive and intensive, quantitative and qualitative, in depth and breadth, in the context of a comprehensive cultural

revolution of a profoundly democratic and socialist character.

A unified education system comprising all categories of schools, based on democratic socialist principles, was set up almost from scratch. Education became compulsory, secular and admission was free of charge. This created the premises not only to quickly wipe out illiteracy, but also to ceaselessly raise the educational, cultural and professional level both of the new generations and the working masses as a whole, to train the new skilled labour power — specialists and cadres for all fields of activity, the new people's intelligentsia.

The setting up of a network of cultural institutions and mass media, as well as the development of literature and theatres, the creation of all kinds and genres of artistic and cultural activity, drama theatres and operas, the national cinematography, libraries and museums, homes and hearths of culture as centres of a very broad and massive activity for the dissemination of socialist culture, also proceeded on this road.

The scientific activity in the centre and at the base, especially a nucleus of specialized institutions and high schools, the University of Tirana and, later, in the system of the Academy of Sciences, was organized from scratch.

All these measures democratized Albanian culture and imparted it a more massive character, making it a weapon for the construction of the socialist society, for the increase of production, for raising productivity of labour, for the general economic and social progress of the country.

This extremely rapid and unprecedented cultural progress has a deep significance. The whole of Albania has been turned into a great permanent school, a hearth of culture constantly ablaze. All the Albanians are engaged in a three-front struggle and wield three weapons — the pick-axe, the rifle and the book. On the third front, that of knowledge, education and book, the whole people are soldiers, too. Two out of every seven inhabitants of social-

ist Albania sit at school desks regularly every day. That is one of the highest indices of mass involvement of the population in educational activities that can be imagined in modern society. In a country where only 40 years ago about 85 per cent of the population was illiterate, today more than 67 per cent of the workers have 8-year and middle schooling and 32 per cent of them have medium and high professional training, whereas 52.3 per cent of the cooperativists have 8-year and medium schooling. A country which a few decades before had only 380 specialists of higher training, today has 47,500 of them and 131,500 specialists of higher training. Eight-year education has been applied long since all over Albania and now more than two-thirds of the pupils who graduate the 8-year school goes on to the middle school. The number of girl students is equal to that of boy students, not only in the middle schools, but also in the higher schools, which speaks of the high degree of the general, but also cultural, emancipation of the Albanian woman. Even now, in regard to the number of political, scientific and artistic books published by professional artistic institutions, their places per capita of population, without mentioning the institutions of mass culture and the broad participation of the masses in cultural and artistic activities, Albania is well in advance of many countries which boast ancient cultural traditions. Moreover, all this cultural revolution has developed and continues to develop in close connection with the related technical-scientific revolution. A distinctive feature of it is the broad participation of the working people in scientific experimentation, its simultaneous development both in specialized scientific institutions and at the base — in factories and workshops, agricultural cooperatives, schools and health institutions, etc. Modern science and technology have penetrated all fields of Albanian socialist life, all its cells and pores.

However, the greatest achievement of modern Albanian culture is the creation

of its socialist content based on the Marxist-Leninist ideology, as well as the efforts for the uninterrupted strengthening and development of this content as a sign of the irresistible march of the socialist revolution in the field of ideology and culture.

This unexampled revolutionary progress does not sever the connections with the past. The whole treasury of the national cultural legacy is organically and, at the same time, critically integrated into modern socialist Albanian culture. On the basis of the Marxist-Leninist concept of the role of the whole process of cultural development of mankind, it also assimilates the most outstanding universal values created by mankind.

However, this culture has always developed as a qualitatively new culture. The Albanian socialist school and pedagogy develop on the basis of the consistent defence, as well as creative implementation and development of the Marxist-Leninist educational principles and pedagogical thinking. Present-day Albanian literature and art flourish because they are based on the method of socialist realism. Science, too, has the socialist ideology as its theoretical and methodological basis.

The whole of this new socialist culture distinguishes itself not only for its popular spirit and national originality imbued with a socialist spirit, but first of all, for its revolutionary militancy and proletarian partisanship. Both the aristocratic tendency of an élite culture for the privileged minority of the ruling classes, as well as the benumbing opium of the modern mass art and culture are alien to it, just as the aberrations of the «Left» surrogates which allegedly contest official conventional bourgeois culture.

In Albania constant efforts are made every day towards enrichment of the national socialist culture on the basis of Marxism-Leninism, protecting it both against mouldy and anachronistic rubbish and the poisonous drugs of the modern bourgeois and revisionist world, waging the struggle on two

fronts — both against conservatism and against liberalism.

This whole many-sided process of the uninterrupted revolutionization of Albanian socialist culture in quality and quantity is reflected not only on the ceaseless raising of the educational, cultural and professional level of the whole working people, of our new man, but also on his rich and, at the same time, new spiritual world, on his communist consciousness, in general, on the new socialist social psychology, on the tastes of people, on their moral physiognomy, outlook and way of life, all of which fit into the general pattern of the new socialist society.

The communist personality of this new man, on a whole, is really one of the greatest achievements of the socialist order in Albania. And here it must be pointed out that a new historical phenomenon — this new man who is affirming himself not only as the object, but also as the subject of this ideological and cultural revolution, a new and vital law of materialist dialectics which demands that man must not be a passive consumer of cultural values but an active creator of them, is affirming itself.

All the achievements made so far show that the present-day cultural progress is one of the more distinctive signs of the prosperity of the new socialist Albanian nation. The values of its culture have earned respect everywhere among the progressive circles of the world and all the well-wishers of Albania. This is apparent in the popularity of the Albanian Marxist-Leninist political thinking, of the Selected Works of Comrade Enver Hoxha, and especially those works published more recently which deal with the international developments following the Second World War, in the translation of the works of many outstanding modern Albanian writers and poets, among whom Ismail Kadare, Dritëro Agolli, and others, into several foreign languages, in the successes of our folklore ensembles and cultivated art and figurative arts exhibitions abroad, and

in the high appreciation of our films, etc. The Albanian socialist culture enjoys universal respect for its national and popular originality, its human and democratic spirit, its pure revolutionary socialist ideals.

3.

Looking always ahead towards the stage of the complete construction of socialist society and the all-round deepening of the socialist revolution, and especially the ideological and cultural revolution, the further and uninterrupted revolutionization of the entire life of the country, new and even more brilliant prospects open up for Albanian culture. This is closely connected with the present and perspective development in all walks of life.

The magnificent task for the intensification of the work for the complete construction of socialism, and especially of its material-technical base at rapid rates, in a small country which has emerged just a few decades ago from deep backwardness, and even more so in the conditions of the all-round imperialist-revisionist blockade, relying entirely on its own forces, a task which calls for the ceaseless raising of the cultural level of the whole society in the broadest meaning of the word, is unexampled in history. Bearing in mind this historical necessity and the roads for its achievement, at the 8th Congress of the PLA Comrade Enver Hoxha pointed out «The raising of people's knowledge and their cultural level represents a great potential for the realization of the present and future plans.»

The great need for more knowledge, education and culture, science and technology is forcefully felt everywhere in our country today. The present and perspective, extensive and intensive, quantitative and qualitative development in these fields must and will meet this need.

In this five-year period (1981-1985) the number of students trained in secondary schools will increase 46 per

cent. The complete cycle of secondary education, without being made compulsory by law, will become available for almost everybody. This is an exceptionally important step. Within a quarter of a century, in a country in which the overwhelming majority was illiterate, today every boy and girl will have the practical and effective possibility to receive full secondary education.

Perceptible quantitative increases will be made in all the fundamental indices of educational, cultural and technical development. Only in the 7th five-year period (1981-1985) one million books more than up till today will be published. Of fundamental importance is the fact that the means of culture, not only the major, but also the minor ones, will penetrate ever more into every institution and cell of socialist society, so as to make them increasingly available for every individual at work and school, as well as in his free time.

These giant steps forward will be taken proceeding from the broad principle, worked out by the PLA and Comrade Enver Hoxha, that our whole socialist life is and must be culture. The aim of this culture is to serve production best to bring about an uninterrupted rise in the productivity of labour and its quality, enabling our people to constantly and ever better prepare themselves for the defence of our socialist Homeland, to embellish their environment and life.

This is the only way to achieve a broad concept of the cultured man of the socialist society, with all-round communist development, with a Marxist-Leninist world outlook, with a creative mind and a deft hand, with socialist ethics and tastes, with a new mentality and way of life.

The demand for a further rise in the quality of work in all sectors of cultural activity is more than ever on the order of the day. While preserving and, moreover, further strengthening the new, socialist, ideological content which has already strongly affirmed itself in our culture, the stress is laid

on raising the productivity and efficiency of the whole cultural work at school and in all other fields of mental activity, in literary and artistic creativeness and in cultural and propaganda activities for the masses, in scientific-research work, in a word, in all the mechanisms of the spiritual life of society.

The qualitative improvement of the whole cultural work, apart from internal motives, is also dictated by the specific of the development of today's technical-scientific revolution, the achievements of which we have never neglected in the past nor will we neglect them in the future. If we forge ahead relying completely on our own forces, this does not mean in the least that we are for a closed and autarkic development, for isolating ourselves from the achievements of contemporary culture, science and technology, as the bourgeois and revisionist enemies accuse us. Further steps ahead must be taken to acquaint ourselves with and critically utilize contemporary scientific information, modern technical and technological progress, their creative applications in our conditions.

The scientific-pedagogical modernization of the whole teaching and educational process of the school, its contents and methods, will be intensified further, combating more energetically the conservatism and traditionalism apparent in some teaching programs and textbooks, as well as in the everyday teaching procedures of our school.

The arts, both popular and cultivated, in all their kinds and genres, are irresistibly flourishing in Albania today. The traditions of our people's culture are not only preserved and kept alive, but also further developed on a new, socialist basis. And this happens at a time when in the capitalist and revisionist world there is a strong tendency towards their constant degradation. Whereas in Albania the national ground and the communist partisanship of our socialist literature and arts are being strengthened, and at the same time, especially in the development of cultivated art, its sound content and revolutionary themes are matched ever better by a form standing at a high level of artistic realization. The constant perfecting and raising of professional skill has assumed particular importance in this field.

In the present stage of development of socialist Albania, the deepening of the technical-scientific revolution is particularly urgent and imperative. At a time when the economy has entered the road of its intensive development, it is required everywhere that work must be done with high quality, productivity and efficiency.

All these phenomena and trends of the present and perspective cultural development clearly show that now we cannot content ourselves with the quantitative indices of cultural progress: with the present advance and proficiency of the students and pupils

of our schools, with the present level of our books, radio and television broadcasts, artistic performances, etc. While continuing our work for the constant improvement of all these indices, we must aim at further improving their quality and raising their productivity.

On this road, of particular importance, not only for the present but also for the perspective, are a better co-ordination of all the many factors and organisms of cultural influence on our socialist society, the improvement of all the links of the full-time and part-time educational system, the co-ordination of the activity of the school with that of the means of mass culture and propaganda, learning from books with learning from life, the conscious, organized and systematic cultural and propaganda activity with the active participation of the masses themselves in the spiritual life of society — in the ideological class struggle and socio-political activity, in scientific-research work, in the creative artistic movement, etc.

In this manner our culture will never remain a vain ornament, intellectualist erudition, or a means for narrowly understood personal profit, for ensuring a job in the bureaucratic and technocratic hierarchy, as happens in the bourgeois and revisionist countries, but will always be an effective weapon for the all-round development and progress of our socialist nation.