

Curriculum of the Elementary Schools of Albania

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"EVERYTHING which advances Communism is morally right; everything which opposes it is morally wrong." This is the nature of the Communist morality which forms the basis of the school curriculum in the People's Republic of Albania. As a member of the Communist block of nations, Albania—a little-known entity and somewhat of an enigma to the western world—typifies those emerging countries which find themselves deeply immersed in Marxist-Leninist doctrines. The curriculum of Albania's schools is an essential ingredient of this immersion.

Albania's school curriculum reflects a many-faceted Communism intersected by international proletarianism, nationalism, and cultural traditions. Since the coming into power of the present Communist regime in 1944, the literature used in the schools has been an important element in this many-sided Communism. As a vital component of the curriculum it is used to disseminate the Communist ideology throughout the country. It is heavily weighed with selections that develop the themes of Albania's national liberation struggles.

Intended to instill a "patriotic-revolutionary spirit" in students, the literature used in the school curriculum is replete with essays which inform the students about the brave Partisans of Albania's own National Liberation War (1942-1945), the heroic work of young pioneers in North Korea against their imperialist aggressors, and the struggles of North Vietnam in the current Southeast Asian conflict.

The bases for the curriculum presently used in Albanian schools were established as early as 1942 at the Conference of Peza when the creation of an educational system designed to disseminate the Communist ideology came to light. Subsequently, teacher stations were established in the zones occupied by the armed forces of the National Liberation Movement. To put the tenets of this ideology into practice quickly, the authorities instituted classes wherever feasible—in existing schools, homes, fields, or forests. Later, at the Congress of Permet (May 24, 1944), an Office of Education was established. From this time on, the goals of the curriculum became increasingly clear. In October 1944, in fact, a directive was issued which stated:

Elementary schools were to be opened in all the liberated zones. The curricular content was to emphasize the education of children with the spirit of the National Liberation Movement, the struggles of the people during the past two or three years, the heroic

activities of the Partisans, patriotic songs, and the literature of the National Liberation Movement.¹

"Correct Knowledge"

The curriculum of the Albanian schools has continued to be a strong force in the dissemination of Communist doctrine to students. Since 1946, when the Minister of Education, Z. Sefulla Malleshova, made it clear that the political and ideological principles of the Albanian Communist Party would be an integral part of the educational program,² the literature of the schools has been designed to provide Albanian students with "correct knowledge."

History and geography textbooks in particular are used to point out class struggles and to foster the Communist ideology. They give special attention to the accomplishments of the Communist Party. The foundation for this is laid from the very beginning of the Albanian student's education. In the very first grades the student is exposed to literature designed to foster the goals of the existing power structure. These goals were reiterated by the Deputy-Minister of Education and Culture, Thoma Deliana, in an address to the Albanian League of Writers and Artists on April 10, 1964, when he stated that "Literature has played an important role for the Communist education of our children and youth, for the education of love for the Motherland and Party."³

Elementary school textbooks are designed to help prepare the student for "socialist construction and practice." Much of their content is patterned after that found in textbooks of the Soviet Union. Basal readers often include stories which portray the struggles for liberation and the courageous actions of individual students who fought as Partisans in World War II. The artwork depicted in most books often glorifies the Motherland, the working classes, the fortitude of Communists, and the achievements of the present socialist society. Pre-Communist accomplishments are excluded entirely, or are used only to highlight present progress by way of comparison: i.e., "Albania is very rich in minerals. However, the anti-people regimes in the past . . ." Although certain subjects such as mathematics, chemistry, and physics do not typically lend themselves to indoctrination, pre-Communist Albanian accomplishments are minimized in the texts used.

The Albanian school curriculum is largely textbook oriented. History and geography books, in particular, are used to shape the character of the Albanian student along Communist patterns of thought. In the fourth grade, for example, the student uses a history book which depicts the feudalistic state of Albania prior to that of the current Communist regime. The content of the book places strong emphasis on the study of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia, the role of the Albanian Partisans in World War II, the National Liberation War, the foun-

¹ Hamid Beqja, "Guret e pare në themëlet e arësimit tonë popullor u hodhen gjatës luftës Nacional—Clirimtare." *Arësimi Popullor*. Nëndor—Dhjetor 1964, f. 18.

² "Pardje u hap seanca e pare e mbledhjes së keshillit arësimore." *Bashkimi*. 17 Korrik 1946, f. 2.

³ Thoma Deliana, "Fjala e zv., Ministrit të Arësimit, dhe Kulturës. Shokut Thoma Deliana." *Arësimi Popullor*, Maj—Qershor, f. 52.

dation of the Albanian Communist Party (Partisë së Punës së Shqiperisë), and the Five-Year Plans of the country.⁴

Each of the topics included in the text is treated briefly and typically presents one point of view. Questions on the content are used to check the student's comprehension of the preceding topics. Most questions call for factual responses, leaving little room for interpretation by the student. The artwork pictured in the book tends to portray Partisan new figures and Party slogans ("Long Live the Party"). Patriotic songs are interspersed throughout the book. These invariably glorify the fortitude of Partisans who "liberated" Albania, and honor both the Communist Party and country.

The geography textbooks used in the curriculum of the Albanian schools follow much the same pattern. The fifth-grade text, for example, places strong emphasis on Albania's beauty (the "beautiful and glorious life that exists everywhere"), the accomplishments of the present political power structure, and aspects of life in the Soviet Union. Although the content of the geography text consists largely of factual material, like the history text, it is also designed to educate students in the "spirit of international proletarianism and indignation towards imperialism." Included in the text are statements which allude to resources used by capitalist countries for atomic bombs rather than for industrial purposes. Efforts of people to achieve freedom against foreign occupation and "imperialist exploitation" are described at length at every opportunity.

Since putting into practice the reorganization of the Albanian school system in 1963, authors have been required to give more attention to practical topics in the contexts of books. Stories which serve no practical purpose are gradually being eliminated from the literature of the schools. Stories in the first-grade basal reader which typically include woodpeckers and cuckoo-hens as central characters are being deleted because these birds serve no practical purpose. Content of texts in general is being increasingly aimed at educating the student in terms of the economic and socialistic development of Albania. That is, the literature is designed to educate the student for life in the form of practical work experiences. Consequently the curriculum of Albanian schools provides for both general and polytechnical education.

The emphasis placed by the current Albanian government on ideo-political and polytechnical education with respect to the curriculum used in the schools of Albania has conceivably shaped the character and direction of Albanian students and teachers. Ostensibly, because students and teachers must function within the dialectical limits of Marxist-Leninist doctrines, this conceivably could inhibit the self-initiative and free competition of ideas essential to viable societies. Needless to say, the Albanian school curriculum constitutes an important element in Albania's efforts to meet the educational standards set forth by the central authorities. ❁

⁴ *Libri i Historisë për Klasën IV të Shkollës Fillore*. Botim i Ministrisë së Arësimit dhe Kulturës. Aprovuar nga Ministria e Arësimit dhe Kulturës e R. P. të Shqipërisë (Tiranë, 1961). ff. 139-40.

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