

## **ASPECTS OF ATHEIST PROPAGANDA IN THE MAGAZINE "VATRA E KULTURES" DURING THE COMMUNIST REGIME 1965-1975**

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### **Abstract**

On 6 February 1967, Albania was declared the only atheist state in the world. The dictator Enver Hoxha in his speech on "Further Revolutionization of the Party and the Government" shocked every social foundation where communist arrows stucked more to religion. Most prominent clerics, religious institutions, religious media, religious schools since the establishment of the communist regime in 1945, had suffered an unprecedented aggression weakening what had brought weakening the religious and clerical activity in Albania. After weakening of religious activity in Albania, after the speech of Enver Hoxha, comes official atheism. Durres youth attacked the Monastery of St. Vlash in all major cities like Shkodra, Tirana, Elbasan, and youth and communist measures massively attacked religious institutions and religious cult objects. Albanian communist state achieved through printed media and repression to control, to influence and to orient labor masses. Communist press had a large role in atheist propaganda during the communist dictatorship, especially in 65-75 years where religious fighting had a broader scope. Printed media in the war that dictatorial state toked against religion, turned into a megaphone of the political system. The magazine "Hearth of Culture", a magazine devoted to communist women, turned to an important element in support of official propaganda of the atheist state. In this scientific article we will bring facts and details of the organization of atheist propaganda of the communist state in the magazine "Hearth of Culture". Religion for the communist state was considered as a serious obstacle in the construction of socialism and that's why in journal "Hearth" was developed a strong propaganda were as an element was used the albanian women in seeking development by abandoning religion as the element that conflicted with the official ideology of the communist

state. At a time when illiteracy was still high and people were unable to buy TV, the printed media turned into a tool of the communist system.

**Keywords:** *media, propaganda, newspaper, atheism, totalitarianisms, communism.*

## **1. Features of atheistic propaganda in “Culture of Hearth”**

### **1.1 Against religious opium**

The complete liberation of the popular consciousness from religious opium according to atheistic propaganda of communist regime, is a long process of re-education and education. Although there was developed an unprecedented war with concrete destructive actions of the clerical activity and eliminating leaders and simple clergy's, again the regime propagated for eradicating the root of the old forms of religious ideology that regime equated with exploiting and ruling classes. According to the article of Hulusi Hizmo " The full liberation of consciousness from the religious opium - long process of re- education and education" published in the journal "Hearth of Culture" in 1972, it states that in the fight to eradicate religion it's necessary to increase alertness and persistence by all, also to detect and combat manifestations of religious ideology because religion, according to atheist propaganda, it's related to all the other wastes. Hizmo recommends that the "war against religion should not be narrowed it should be seen in all its breadth, because the war against religion is a war against bourgeois and revisionist ideology."<sup>1</sup> According to the author, the notion: "religious refuse "is very broad and is extended in all areas of life such as at work, leisure, individual life, in family and in society. "The organization of education of the working masses, among others will lead us to the weakening and disappearance of religion"<sup>2</sup> because socialist life according to Hizmos is the best educator of atheism, it is agitator and the leader of the truth, and for this purpose according to the propaganda it should serve to all forms and means of education, and culture. The religious worldview of the atheist propaganda is not settled and does not have a theological basis; it is more a worldview that melts in backward

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<sup>1</sup>Hizmo Hulusi "The complete liberation of conscience from the religious opium - long process of reeducation and education", *Hearth of Culture*, No. 4, Tirana, 1972, p 33

<sup>2</sup> Hizmo Hulusi "The complete liberation of conscience from the religious opium - long process of reeducation and education", *Hearth of Culture*, No. 4, Tirana, 1972, p 34

customs, traditions, way of life, and in the naive interpretation of the phenomena of the society. In the struggle against religion, Hizmo recommends that it should be done an explanatory convincing work and patiently people are convinced to abandon ideologically religious concepts. Also in scientific atheist work the author orders that "we should not waste bullets fighting only consequence, as a phenomenon; for example to destroy the antenna of the radio which is placed on a cross-shaped chimney "<sup>3</sup>but to enter in the depth of this known problem, to penetrate in the inside and to discover the roots of the concepts that feed those actions. Religion according to the atheist propaganda has allied ignorance, and the low level of cultural education. People, unformed with the materialist worldview, in front of diseases and difficulties lose their faith they fall in to pessimism and they search for solution in religion, which leads people darkness and ignorance. In the fight for the eradication of religious ideology from the conscience of the people, according to the writing of the author should be done through the cultural work and massive action to be known with lifestyle, education at work, concepts about the free time, relationship in family, hygiene and purity, society and friendship. According to the author only in this way will be detected and corrected every misconception and through the formation of psychology and the new worldview at different stages of economic and social development, formed to every individual and stratum. "Obedience is the main weapon for the eradication of everything old and regressive, contempt also the continued fight against old concepts through educational ideo politics work" <sup>4</sup>but except this, according to Hulusi Hizmos he says it should be done an infusion into people's consciousness for new concepts and customs, and the creation of the revolutionary traditions as a tool for the final elimination of religious elements from people's conscience. In the fight against religion propaganda and the system asked and aimed for the strength of social opinion, which according Hizmos, should be used more effectively in the formation of types of cultural work and the creation of a social consciousness without religion.

## **1.2 Against the waste of religious ideology**

During the national action for the disappearance of religion, in atheist propaganda students and teachers were involved in the fight against the waste of religious ideology.

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<sup>3</sup> Hizmo Hulusi "The complete liberation of conscience from the religious opium - long process of reeducation and education", *Hearth of Culture*, No. 4, Tirana, 1972, p 34

<sup>4</sup> Hizmo Hulusi "The complete liberation of conscience from the religious opium - long process of reeducation and education", *Hearth of Culture*, No. 4, Tirana, 1972, p 35

According to S.Sinani ideological work in the script "Uninterrupted war against the waste of religious ideology" published in the journal "Culture Hearth" in 1975, made by organizations of the Party, together with parents, pupils, teachers, educated with lessons of the party, have affirmed new rates and have disappeared rituals and religious parties. According to Sinan old norms and concepts are being fought in every rate and form of occurrence. "Religious vocabulary is never used from the students. Even putting names such as Petrit, Agim, Arta, for the area of Qeles with ex Catholic faith is a victory"<sup>5</sup> according to the author, it speaks clearly for the hit in every form of the old religious ideology. According to Sinan, in the war against religion contributed the opening of the exhibition "The religion opium for the people", the book "Traces lead in Qelë", "reactionary activity of clergy". According to Sinan these shows organized by the house of Culture in Qelë, had sparked the fight against religious waste and exposed per hours in debates and lectures the reactionary role of religion. According to the author Sinan, every teacher especially in Puka gave their contribution in this national action for the erection of religion by developing concrete tasks with educational topics, information and special works. As an objective of the ongoing work of students and teachers for the elimination of the waste for the religious ideology emerges that: the harmonization of educational work and action with works outside the school not only with students but also with villagers, to be done analyses for the achieved results, in order that the war not to be anymore with campaigns but to be an ongoing process, cultural and artistic activities to expose more and more religion and the religious ideology. In the writing of Rakip Mustafaj titled "We cure people" published in the journal "Culture Hearth" in 1968, speaks about the fame of Martanesh's Tekke which had utilized the people throughout all its operations. "Tekke was a parasites and lazy center where during day and night the raki and the meat flowed like a river"<sup>6</sup> where for fulfilling the wishes and desires of Tekke's father worked many workers and peasants.

According to the author Mustafaj, the people of good that stayed in this Tekke were nothing more but ignorant and uneducated people. According to Mustafaj the Tekke was a center for different diseases, the believers used to drink the holly water that was in a copper in order to be cured but many people sleeping in concrete got sick. The organizations of the mass and the party with the aim winning the war against religion started a differentiated work with students, youth women elders etc.. For all brigades the culture house showed different shows attacking religion with the

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<sup>5</sup> Sinani, S. "Sustaneous war against waste of religious ideology" Hearth of Culture No. 1, Tirana, 1975, p 29

<sup>6</sup> Mustafaj Rakip "We cure people," Hearth of culture No. 2, Tirana, 1968, page 11

aim of making people aware for the work and for being involved in the ideological action. According to Rakip Martanesh the extensive propaganda and disclosure of the Tekke of Martanesh activity made that everything that the Father of Tekke had done was discovered from the public, he declared in a meeting in front of the public that religion has been a reactionary street, also he had cheated the people in order to live as a parasite with the work and the sweat of the honest people.

### **1.3 The strengthening of atheistic propaganda**

The Growing of atheist propaganda was the most efficient way to eradicate religion and religious practices. Religion in the area of Burrel in a devilish way had penetrated by the writing of Skender Tuna "We for the atheist-scientific propaganda ", published in the journal "Hearth of culture" in 1968, benefiting from villagers lifestyle and through the good customs such as loyalty, courage, honesty, etc. The success of the war against religion was done through the disclosure of the clergy's activities and good ideological preparation with Marxist-Leninist worldview. According to Tuna, when people were convinced for the futility of religion, were organized meetings with elders to transform mosques from the hearth poisoning human's conscience, in the center of education, culture and education and with the replacement of religious festivals with national festivals. After the convince and the approval of the people one mosque in Gure of Matt turned into school and the other in the warehouse of the cooperative, while an imam who did not agree with this was taken in self-criticism from the elders and it was unmasked his role and the religion he represents by exposing everything. In the writing of Trifon Dafa titled "How was prepared a paper" published in the journal "Hearth of Culture" in 1968, it is noticed the Tekke of Suka in Përmet where this Tekke in the years after and before the liberation it has been a center for the repression of the villagers, it was a center of ignorance, hearth that spread vain beliefs, utilizing and deceiving. According to the propagandist article, in order to gain the working masses respect and that the revolution would have the biggest support it should be found among people declarations of this Tekke's activity in order to be totally revealed its activity. The greatest engagement in this action connected with the beneficiaries and extended activities of Suke's Tekke was taken by the teachers of high school. They found the evidence of an elder Çuli Kano who declared in the propagandistic writing of the author that the Suke Tekke has terrified farmers.

Beating, hunger, suffering, misery, which have been the presents for the villagers<sup>7</sup>. According to Trifon Dafa the activity of this Tekke, is very hostile because religion was trying to get even through rites and family relationships of the people, where the Father or Dervishi intervene to all farmers and they get engaged their girls where they wanted even if man was an elder or anomalous, enough to fill his father's pocket, it insisted atheistic propaganda of the communist regime.

#### **1.4 The war against religious prejudice**

In the dictatorial regime, it was not allowed any ideology except that of Marxist-Leninist which was state's ideology. In the war for the ultimate elimination of religion as the stain of the past, according to Arif Gashi in his article "How can be worked against the prejudice of religious waste"<sup>8</sup> published in the magazine "Hearth of Culture" in 1974 it is required a special attention in each neighborhood, village or area and to be discovered and studied the stains that are appeared in cases of different forms of shows, the reasons for the occurrence of these rates, the ages of the carriers, the damages that these shows bring, the impact to youth and children who have performances of norms, antiquated customs and religious. According to Gashi In the war against religion, the more powerful mean of anti-religious propaganda is the organization of anti-religious exhibitions. In these need to be reflected the themes: "The role of the reactionary clerics of the area, province, village, city, forms of exploitation and fraud that have used clerics, an organization of disruption and tinkering in mass from the clerics, increasing their wealth through utilization ceremonies of birth, death, marriage, taxes, tricks of priests for steeling the wealth of those who died, saying that they ahead left as a last will to the church, many gifts for the dead's soul, talismans, fetishes etc., the cultivation of discord and hostility between believers and those who did not believe "beside these it was suggested the use of caricatures as a tool of making the theory more understandable. According to the author the atheist decomposition of the religion dogma, leads in to their explanation and urges the agitation against religious dogma. As a very efficient tool in the atheistic propaganda the discussion was well organized and very interesting.

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<sup>7</sup> Dafa, Trifon, "How was prepared a statement," *Hearth of culture* No. 3, Tirana, 1968, page 11

<sup>8</sup> Gashi, Arif "How can be worked against the prejudice of religious waste" *Hearth of Culture*, No. 4, Tirana, 1974, page 42

In these atheist conversations it was necessary that the content of the topic, the development of dialogue, accompanied with sketches, parody, kupleta, recitations, songs, questions and answers, which attract the mass and influence in enforcing the social opinion against religious stains and in forcing and forming the Marxist-Leninist ideals of the individual. The organization of questions and answers into teams during their free time was a very efficient form. In this propagandistic communication regime's aim was that the questions would be concrete and the content of the questions to be in allegory without offending because through it the discussion would be more stimulating and interesting. In the scientific-atheist propaganda an important role had the book including artistic literature, novels, plays, stories, novellas, etc., and this work with the book required recommendations, discussions, readings in tight circles, dissemination with tables for the religion. Xhavit MEZEZI in his writin "Çajupi unmasked religion", published in the journal "Hearth of Culture" in 1967, propagates that in the writings of Çajupi are deriding the priests that with their wile have introduced lance discord in the body of Albania with the policy: divide and rule and have thrown gall against Albanians. Religion sanctifies the backward habits in life and in the family. It protects every conservative thing and it is against everything new. She despises woman calling her a low human being<sup>9</sup>. Çajupi according to MEZEZI, in the poem "Lament" defends women and mothers in which religion has send them in to darkness, ignorance and submission. According to MEZEZI in Cajupi's poems it's evident the critic that the writer does to the traditions of the people and some religious customs that have kept the people in ignorance by the empty sermons of the bible. According to the author in works Çajupi mentions the immorality and meanness of people of religion who are nothing more but immoral people. Even in the comedy "14 years bridegroom" according to the author MEZEZI reaches the climax of the accusation that Çajupi makes to the church by calling the priest playful, drinker and a low person.

## 2. Features of Albanian Totalitarianism

In the totalitarian countries the propaganda and the terror are two sides of the same coin. Wherever totalitarianism possesses absolute control, it possesses propaganda with indoctrination and uses the violence not to fright people but to realize its ideological doctrines and his practice lies<sup>10</sup>. The history of Albanian totalitarianism as one of the most brutal, and inhuman dictatorships,

<sup>9</sup> MEZEZI Javit, "Çajupi unmasks religion" *Hearth of Culture*, No. 4, Tirana, 1967, page 39

<sup>10</sup> Arendt, Hannah, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, KNOWLEDGE, Pristina, 2002, p. 441.

that has faced the society, is the story of a "coup d'état, an only person established a dictatorship on his own in Albania. He sowed terror for nearly 50 years by forcing all against their will. "11 According to Artan Fuga, totalitarianism is first of all a certain worldview. Totalitarian thought represents a structure of understanding the world and the society."12 Totalitarianism is a political system of the one-party regimes, which do not tolerate the organized opposition in political life. In this political system, the state controls the activities of the society and the individual. In the struggle of classes as the strongest weapon to destroy opponents of the communist regime, the elimination of the opponent turned into a vital goal for the regime. This opponent "will pass through the gate of hell through special courts, military and political courts after he would be eliminated or punished, his family would be deported, expelled and massacred"13. After the outbreak of the cultural and ideological revolution and the great transformations in the life of the country for building a new socialist society, the main characteristics in the early 60s, facing the Albanian totalitarian system are: "atheism, (war against religion), religious institutions and religious conscience, equalization in terms of life and way of living, proletarian internationalism, collectivism of agriculture, politicization of customs and traditions , political totalitarianism, personal asceticism of people's life, in terms of material poverty"14. Totalitarian regime conceived the social system in Albania like this, "society is perceived as a body, the Communist Party as the brain or its heart, the top leadership of the party is the head, the law enforcement authorities are the coup, state security is the vigilant eye, different institutions of the administration and the political system are called organs, youth organizations and unions are the right wing of the party and the individuals considered as enemies of the nation are called nation's excrement"15. According to Spartak Ngjela, Bolsheviks conceived dictatorship of the proletariat as a terrorist state formation, they considered themselves as they were elected from God to bring peace, development and equality in a world where crime prevailed. In the fabrication of the proletarian dictatorship Albanian communists, according to Ngjela leveled the history simplifying it as a history of class struggle and the rule of one class over another and, with it, because for erasing the rule of one class over a another class, should come in power the workers, who had been slaves and who will make

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<sup>11</sup> Fuga Artan, Trails to the serpent's cave, Time, Tirana, 2004, p.22.

<sup>12</sup> Fuga Artan, Trails to the serpent's cave, Time, Tirana, 2004, p.18.

<sup>13</sup> Albanian Centre of rehabilitation for the trauma and torture, Communist Crime. Anthology QSHRTT, Tirana 2006 p6.

<sup>14</sup> Fuga Artan, Left not Right, The Time, Tirana 2003 p 90.

<sup>15</sup> Fuga Artan, Trails to the serpent's cave, Time, Tirana, 2004, p.102.



the liberation of every individual from the injustice. "They were demanding that with terror, they would build their own state, in fact they built this country, but never got out from this terror and subsequently this terror was exercised by the secret police"<sup>16</sup>.

### **3. The press as an instrument of the totalitarian power**

Media in the totalitarian Albania transmitted those information and data that are consistent with ideological and political principles of the party and the leaders of the state party. The authority, the media and the public conceive and function as the same thing, since the state controlled, operated and managed everything.

The press sector in the apparatus of Central Committee more than control was a missing interconnection, transmission and decomposition in different directions".<sup>17</sup> The work of media in Albanian totalitarian regime was organizing and mobilizing the masses in order to protect and build the Albanian socialist country. The communist press was turned into collective propagandist, collective agitator and collective organizer. According to Hannah Arendt's, totalitarianism promotes extreme isolation and paranoia. In the totalitarian regimes, the media is crushed and only the propaganda is promoted, so the people are isolated. Followed by media propaganda demands to discourage any form of free thinking or spontaneous political action that can fight against it. "In a totalitarian society, ways of reading the press, except individual reading, it is even exercised organized reading, sometimes even forced"<sup>18</sup>. According to Schamm, the main features of the communist media are: Communications with the majority are used as an instrument of the state and the party, are tightly integrated with the other instruments of state authorities and the political influence, are used as an instrument of the unit within the state and the party, are used as an instrument of State and "detective" Party, are used particularly as an instrument of propaganda and agitation. The Communist press was ideologically and politically united, orchestrated in direct response to political orders that came from the Central Committee. In the totalitarian Albanian regime the media was totally dependent and controlled by the authority of that time. The media was strictly controlled by the First Secretary of the Central Committee Party, by the secretary of the Central Committee Party of the propaganda and by the head of the press sector or the director

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<sup>16</sup> Ngjela Spartak, Bending and declining of Albanian tyranny 1957 to 2010, UET Press, Tirana 2011 p 193.

<sup>17</sup> Hayati, Marash, The back door of press, Logoreci, Tirana 1998 p 61.

<sup>18</sup> Fuga Artan, Monologue, Dudaj, Tirana 2010, p.71.

of agitation-propaganda. In the totalitarian Albanian regime "the secretary of the propaganda is the person who operates in general and specifically in the field of education, culture, science and media. The task of media is taking care in only one of the areas that it closely covers"<sup>19</sup> the function of propaganda's secretary was transmitting orders and instructions that come from the leaders of political power. Media in the totalitarian regime is depended from a close group of people that directs the Party and the State with an iron fist. The leaders of the totalitarian system through media they realize the propaganda according to the specifications and needs of the Party-State and transmit to the public the information they want. "The press was governed by the country, contradiction was not allowed, the debate was dangerous and the dialogue was disappearing and gradually replaced by long speeches and monotonous monologues"<sup>20</sup>. Editors of newspapers, editorial foremen and audiovisual media executives were under the command and occasionally gave account to the secretary of the propaganda. In the communist media "the Informative system of government does not take, perceives, absorbs but only distributes, gives and transmits. It takes from the world and the reality only the information that is in line with the structure of its ideas, its ideology, and its political beliefs".<sup>21</sup> The agenda of press and totalitarian media is determined by the communist regime under and in the service of state's propaganda. The press transmits that information and messages that supports national government. In the communist media "the revolts are censored. The collective despair is censored. According to Fuga, in the communist media the journalist never goes out of the alternatives, opinions and official directives where the government of the time had set limits and none of the journalists can transcend them for speaking to the contemporary media. According to Artan Fuga, the journalist in the totalitarian media, it's between political borders that the ideological censure officially decides for the articles and programs also for the concrete content of the reflections and the analyzes that take place in them. The Communist Party, which led the state, had in its hands all the mechanisms of government, by using the press and media in general mainly to clarify certain political or ideological decisions and actions. The ideology of Albanian media in communism is the official ideology of authority which controlled everything within the totalitarian regime that had built, where the media had a specific role. "The press was the drug of high quality. The press was the loyalist assistant of the party, where was not

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<sup>19</sup> Fuga Artan, Monologue, Dudaj, Tirana 2010, P86.

<sup>20</sup> Repishti, Sami, Under the shadow of Rozafa Onufri, Tirana 2004. P111.

<sup>21</sup> Fuga Artan, Monologue, Dudaj, Tirana 2010, P98

allowed any deviation. Newspapers and magazines were few. The Press was used by the dictatorship as a tool for hiding her face".<sup>22</sup> The dictator, Enver Hoxha, calls the newspaper "The Union" a very important tool of the press by giving the merits in education with the spirit of patriotism and of proletarian internationalism and has a merit by the leaders of the Party-state in the toughening of Albanian unity for the Party, mobilization of the people for building socialism and exposing the enemies. Hoxha in his letter of gratitude to the editorial office of the Union, does not forget to emphasize that the newspaper "The Union" will increase its role as a collective agitator, propagandist and organizer<sup>23</sup>, which reveals the role that press had in building and consolidating further the dictatorship. The dictator Hoxha ordered all the Communists that "each of us has the duty to cooperate with the organs of the press"<sup>24</sup>.

## CONCLUSIONS

The key role in the communist press was the development of atheistic propaganda in the totalitarian regime. The written press turned into a megaphone for the totalitarian government, mirroring in details the propaganda and the national actions for the disappearance of religion from the atheistic state. The magazine "Hearth of culture" reflecting the cultural activities, managed to convince the public about the legality of the action in the disappearance of religion in this national atheist action. The growing atheist propaganda was the most efficient way to eradicate religion and religious practices.

Propaganda in the journal "Hearth of Culture" was focused in the living style of the villagers, the undermining of good habits such as loyalty, courage, honesty, disclosure of clergy's activities, the conviction of people for the futility of religion and oppressive and deceive nature that religion had etc. In the atheistic propaganda it was randomly said that churches and mosques were turned out from worship into hearths for poisoning people's consciousness. Objects of religious worship according to the atheist propaganda were nothing but centers of peasants' oppression, centers of

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<sup>22</sup> Velo, Max, Essay for the communist dictatorship, Tirana 2003 p55.58.

<sup>23</sup> Hoxha, Enver, Piece 24, Mihal Duri, Tirana 1977 P 332.

<sup>24</sup> Hoxha, Enver, Piece 40, 8 November, 1983 Tirana p 120.

ignorance, hearths that spread vain beliefs, centers for utilizing and deceiving people. The communist press in the totalitarian regime turned into collective propagandist, collective agitator and collective organizer.

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