
PROF.DR. EMIN RIZA (Tirana)

THE OPENING SPEECH

Honourable Speaker of the People's Assembly!

Honourable Mr. Prime minister,

Honourable guests, colleagues and invitees,

It is a great honour for me to open the Symposium on the topic "The question of Kosova and of the Albanians in former Yugoslavia", organised by the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Albania and by the Academy of Sciences and Arts of the Republic of Kosova. It is an old and at the same time new topic, treated by Albanian scholars, organised in the systems of the two academies, as well as by Albanian and foreign scholars everywhere in the world.

Without changing the essence of this major topic for the destinies of the Albanian nation, I avail myself of the opportunity to notice with satisfaction that it is being treated in a new climate, thanks to the deep and on going changes towards democracy in Albania. It is precisely this major circumstance for the future of the Albanian question that enabled the fraternal and fruitful cooperation between the two Albanian Academies, devoid of the perverse ideological and anti-national prejudices of the past. Communist Albania's almost suffocating self-

-isolation, the extreme ideologization of everything, first and foremost of the history of the Albanian people, has undoubtedly brought about grave but not at all insuperable consequences in the sphere of our historical sciences. While one of the halves of the Albanian nation was ruled by the violence of the most anti-human Bolshevik variant, the other half was dominated by national violence against the Albanians, having assumed truly unique proportions and features. Both these situations, tragically, converged to a single aim: to damage, why not wipe out the major Albanian national issue, having century-long precedents. First of all it is due to all Albanians that this truly satanic goal towards the living rights of one of the most ancient peoples of Europe was surmounted. Although included in the spheres of two of the most authoritative international beliefs, and subsequently under powerful and perfidious pressure, they managed to avoid the extinction of Albanianism as a synonym of the undeniable right of the nation to live free in its traditional territory. This idea, nourished during centuries of bravery and self-denial down to sacrifice, has been concisely summarized by our great Sami, "Only the Albanian places besa (loyalty to a promise) second and his nationality first". For comprehensible reasons, the cultured people of this nation have been on the forefront of the endeavours to preserve our national identity, because this identity is linked with noble ideals that cannot be excluded from the ethics of a genuine intellectual. Not as a romantic goal, the less so as an idle-dreaming one, but as a concrete goal, the national ideal remains the foundation of the unity of Albanian intellectuals, an inalienable and always indispensable premise.

Do not deal with politics when you should deal with history and vice-versa.

This is a wise sentence. Albania's capillarily ideologized historiography had put history in the service of as absurd antinational idea; under the quixotic guise of internationalism. On the contrary, particularly when treating the Albanian issue, the Serbian historiography and the Yugoslav one strongly held the positions of the history's extreme politicization. Our internationalism was anti-national, the politicization of the Albanians' history by the Serbs, aiming at ethnic cleansing and later at expansion, was pure chauvinism. With regard to aggressiveness down to the elimination of the Albanian nation, which lives in its territories in Yugoslavia, the trinomial Cvijic-Georgevic-Cubrilovic area, in progressive growth even with qualitative leaps, is rather instructive in penetrating this end and in finding the means to attain it. But on the threshold of the new century, alongside the collapse of sophisticated dictatorships, Yugoslavia, the artificial construction of Great Powers, was demolished to conceal their identity. Serbian prepotency nourished with extreme chauvinism by pseudo-historians and generally pseudo-intellectuals found as always false reasons to give the alarm on the violation of the interests of its nationals. The hell they worked through with such methodism and persistence against the population of Bosnia-Herzegovina, presents in real proportions who our brothers in former Yugoslavia have to deal with. The strongest has more valid reasons. This medieval sentence is anti-human, but remains equally a leading one for Serbian chauvinism. It appears in Kosova in the same proportions as that in Bosnia, taking into account the fact that war is going on there, while peace reigns formally in Kosova.

For most diversified reasons, Albanian historiography is apparently lagging behind in reflecting the history of the Albanian people. Deeply-rooted ethnic identity awareness has always been displayed as a defence-nourishing argument, under the renowned circumstances of the violent and systematic shrinking of Albanian territories over the course of the centuries. On these conditions we should finally give up any complex that has to do with the excessive, henceforth deforming self-control, fearing to fall into chauvinism by defending our rights with arguments. Others, bearers of diametrically opposed complexes, nominate one of the most important centres of the Albanian national movement and the territory of exemplary ethnic Albanian compactness, Kosova, "Staraja Srbija", not to mention other examples. Those who covet the Albanian territories do not enjoy either the juridical or the moral right to look, with the help of a magnifying glass, for bits of historical romanticism in the studies of scholars who treat the history of the Albanian people over centuries. We have continuously been tolerant and noble, it is up to the others to pursue the same path. Our nationalism is pure because it covers the human dimension. I seize the opportunity to recall Goethe's opinion, formulated two centuries ago, "A total tolerance will certainly be attained if those which make up the peculiarities of various human individuals, of various peoples are left in peace, being convinced that the distinctive sign of what really matters stands in the all-human pertaining".

With coordinated efforts, which nobody hinders anymore, the Albanian historians are determined to make up for lost time with zealous and methodologically correct research. The major achievement, a people-a literary language, should necessarily be followed by the twin goal, a people-a history. The historians of the Albanian territories in former Yugoslavia, already meritoriously and professionally affirmed and devoted as few people are to enlighten the truth on the history of the

Albanians, those of the diaspora wherever they are as well as the foreign historians, who have made their contribution to this issue, alongside with Albania's historians, represent a powerful scientific potential. In this context, it is realistic to expect an acceleration in the progress of the studies of the history of the Albanian people, as well as in adequately enlightening the events that have taken place over the course of time, far from rigid schemes, pretentious bearers of absolute truths. Laying the foundations of history with facts constitutes, undoubtedly, the basis of the building we are expecting to be set up. Scientific criticism will be the most authoritative reviewer, investigating the truth, and eventually barring the way to dilettantism and manipulation of facts.

Internationalization of the Kosovar issue, and in general, making the international public aware of the Albanian question, inevitably demands the augmentation of publications on the

history of the Albanian people, as a natural and efficient means for their recognition in the European and broader spheres. I avail myself of the opportunity to thank the foreign scholars Messr. Alain Dusselier, Alexander Stipcevic, Michel Rue and others for the marked contribution to the treatment of Albanian history, as well as Messr. Sami Repishti and Elez Biberaj, who have always pursued the problems of their nation with exemplary patriotism and competence.

Honourable ladies and gentlemen,

I am sure that as for the diversity of themes and their treatment our symposium will be a marked event for our culture. In order to attain this and be sure of the future of the historiography of the Albanian people in centuries, generation after generations have tried hard and combatted to make our ancient ethnos survive. Amongst them claim distinction those who have devoted their lives to the Albanian cause. Under various circumstances, of different formations and viewpoints, they were united in their supreme sacrifice by the altar of Albanianism. Their endeavours, struggles, and sacrifices for the survival and unification of our ethnos, reach us nowadays as a moving and inspiring message to perform the tasks as members of this community, united by a single language and history.

Let this symposium with its scientific means be a continuation and honour for the major deed of the patriots of the Renaissance and other national combatants for the just Albanian cause.

