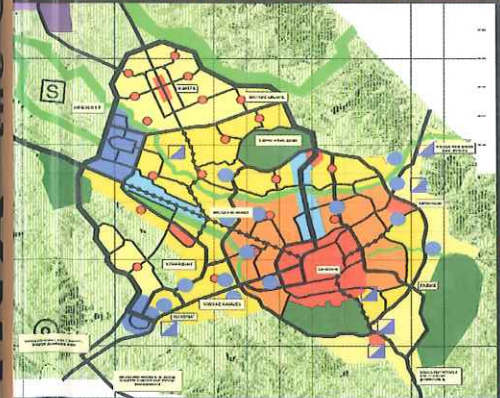
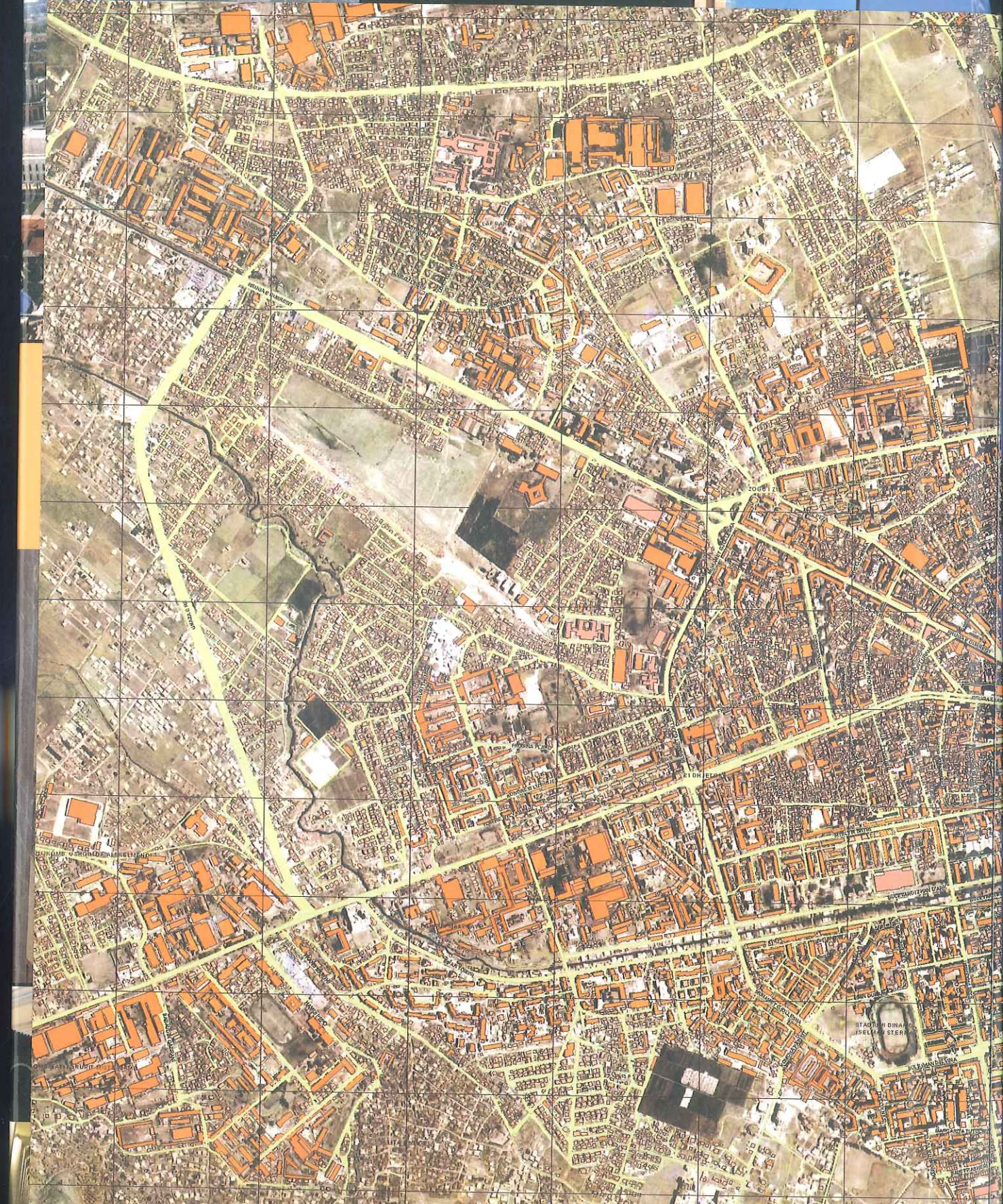


TIRANA

the Challenge of Urban Development

BESNIK ALIAJ KEIDA LULO GENC MYFTIU





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TIRANA

the Challenge
of Urban Development

Besnik Aliaj
Keida Lulo
Genc Myftiu



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Notice

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The International Conference of ENHR,
the European Network of Housing Research
MAKING CITIES WORK
Tirana - Albania, 26-28 May 2003

A prayer which calls for more work to come true:

“The centre of Albania, i.e. the general capital should be one of the cities that are located in the middle of Albania and where the Albanian language will be spoken. And it'd be even better that a new city be made in the middle of Albania in a healthy and beautiful place. Such a city, which we may call Skënderbegas, will be arranged in the most beautiful shape, with wide and straight-line streets, with nice houses, squares and everything necessary; and it will be enlarged and increase in a short time because all the Albanian elite and the savants of the country will need to get together and built their houses there. So this city will be free from the wicked vices preserved by old cities; and since its habitants would be from all parts of Albania, the language of the city will be a cultivated and a general one for all over Albania.

This city including nearby regions should be ruled and governed like an autonomous region.

Written by Sami Frashëri

“Albanian-her Past, Present and Future” published in 1899, predicting the future capital of Albania, which came true in many respects indeed.

Foreword

Tirana city and metropolitan area nearby is a typical and complex example of a city in transition, a transition, which is continuous, and incorporates mixed structures and historical events. Tirana is a symbol of urban culture between the sea and the mountain, preserving Illyrian, Roman, Byzantine cultures in a Oriental atmosphere; ... between European elements and those typical Mediterranean' and Balkans' ones; surviving from the most authoritarian urban planning discipline of fascism and communism to the most anarchist chaos of medieval and modern times of 21-st century...

In short, Tirana is actually one of the most dynamic cities in Europe and obviously represents a city of a typical and prolonged transition, which remains still the main and most dramatic challenge of the present days.

Starting from 1920, Tirana city has been always subject to studies and works to improve its architectural and urban development. Several studies are carried out recently also since 1994 and today, the most significant to be are "The Strategic Plans for the Greater Tirana and Kamza Municipality", which constitute a full set of documents including the complexity of the numerous social-economical issues, land use principles as well as future activities, infrastructure needed for normal development, what represents so far, the most recent urban research work for Tirana and Albania.

In the eve of new millennium Municipality of Tirana initiated important urban operations that are completely changing the image of the Albanian capital. Tirana Municipality's goal is to prepare a vision of development that is flexible and adaptable to the rapid changes of the city. This necessarily requires the complete reformation of the town planning legislation as a process that should go side by side with the development of the city. The new urban regulation of Tirana can serve as good starting point for the new package of laws on Town Planning, which the country needs desperately. The drafting of this new regulatory plan as a process and in partnership with many specialized institutions and other interested groups and communities, regardless of the differences that might exist, is likely to be efficient and not prone to raise contestations or create obstructions and urban chaos as it's been the case so far. Let us hope for a positive change in the future.

It bears stressing also that authorities of Tirana Municipality have realized that developing a new urban development plan should not be over estimated, for this plan cannot resolve automatically all the complicated problems of Tirana, except for it will raise transparency and will guide better the municipal administration in the process of outlining a clear vision for the city's development by considerably improving the logic of

development in the hope that distortions similar to those we have witnessed so far will be minimized and prevented.

Following the lessons learned from the urban planning in the past, taking into consideration the current urban phenomena, as well as the new proposed urban plans for Tirana Region (what is described in this Guide), *the future of Tirana is a challenge that depends on the contribution of its citizens, the role of communities, private business and the leadership of the public administration*. Tirana is in with a good chance of becoming a competitive city in the Balkans, creating opportunities for domestic and foreign business, and providing better services for inhabitants and visitors. Such chance must not be missed.

This book routes since early 90-s, thanks to individual and separated initiatives from both authors. Over time the idea for doing something about the history of the city and its development, become stronger, as somehow authors found each other on the way of their researches. They belong to a generation of architects in Albania, educated in the conditions of total lack of international and local literature on architectural and urban planning subjects. It is not fair that the new generations suffer the same. This fact probably encouraged both authors to write a book. The dramatic changes of 90-s in Tirana and Albania, especially in terms of urban developments is also another strong inspiring factor. This book might be followed in the future by other books. For the moment this is a good start.

The main target of the publication of this Guide of History of Architecture and Urban Planning of Tirana City is to incite the decision makers and civil society to take advantages of the current hope to assure its citizens and the whole Albania that *"this country will make it"*, despite the very difficult times in the past.

In the Annexes of the Guide there are included also several interesting chapters related to Archaeological Evidence around Tirana city, a short History of Tirana, Cultural Traditions, Cultural Life, Fine Arts and Tourism resorts, in order to present a complete panorama of cultural and natural resources of Tirana city and the metropolitan region.

As a conclusion, the authors of this Guide are confident that Tirana will work it out if many hands, hearts and heads will work together, so we are pleased to receive any comment to the ideas expressed, and discuss them in the form of an open and civic forum to the benefit of our beloved city, Tirana.

Arch. Urb. BESNIK ALIAJ
MA in Urban Management

Arch. KEIDA LULO

Tirana, March 2003

TIRANA

the Challenge of Urban Development

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PART ONE

History of Architecture and Urban Development of Tirana City

THE CITY OF TIRANA

HISTORY OF ARCHITECTURE AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT

1. FROM FOUNDATION TO 1920

Introduction

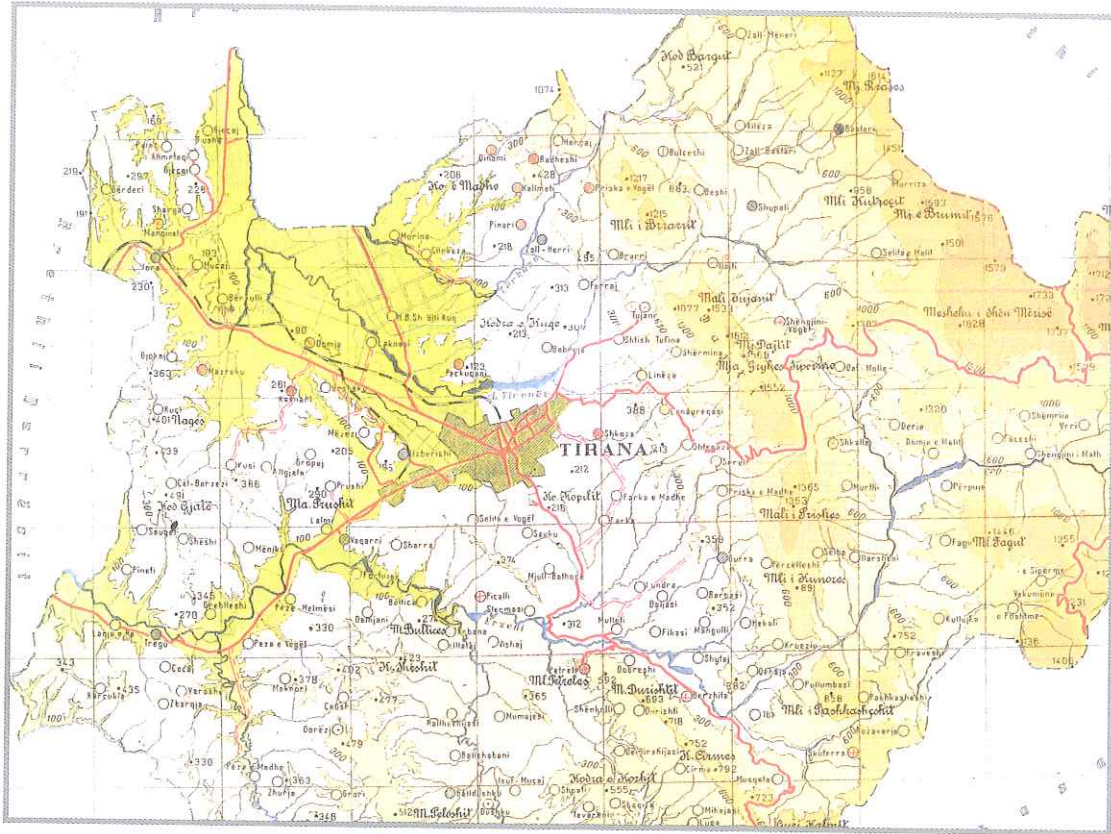
Tirana is the capital of Albania and the largest city of the country. The municipality of Tirana includes at least six

hundred thousand inhabitants, and the so-called Greater Tirana¹ region counts up to 700–800 thousand inhabitants. The



Aerial panoramic view of Tirana city, year 1999

¹The Greater Tirana includes the municipalities of Tirana, Kamzë, Vorë and the communes around them. The Metropolitan Area also includes the municipalities of Durrës, Shijak, Fushë Krujë and the communes thereof.



Map of the Tirana district (municipality and communes)

metropolitan area of Tiranë-Durrës-Fushë Krujë encompasses nearly one third of the country's population. Tirana is located almost at the center of the country and it stretches today over at least 3000 hectares.

The city of Tirana has a modest history as compared to many European metropolises, but it deserves special attention not only for its being the Albanian people's capital city, but also for the fact that it exemplifies one of the particular models of the urban development in Europe. Tirana is a typical example of a mixed structure between the sea and the

mountain, between the Illyrian, Roman and Byzantine cultural heritage and the Oriental atmosphere; between European elements and those that are typical Mediterranean and Balkan; between the most authoritarian urban planning discipline of the times and the most anarchist chaos of modern times... *In short, Tirana is one of the most dynamic cities in Europe and obviously represents a city of a typical and prolonged transition to the present days.*

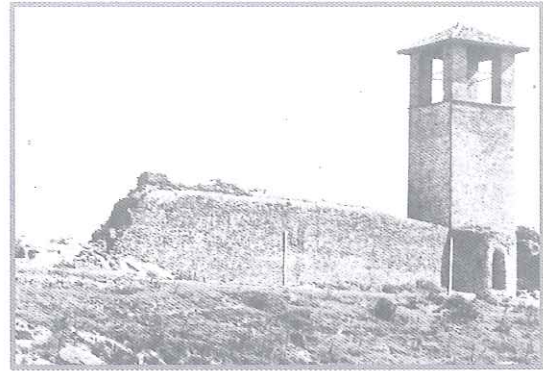
The transition as such is present in any inhabited area as an expression of a continuous and incessant historical process of urban transformation over time. As a

city in transition, Tirana represents a transitional period of a structural and urban evolution in several historical moments as a product of many factors, including political, economic and social changes that have taken place following the 1990s and are still going on.

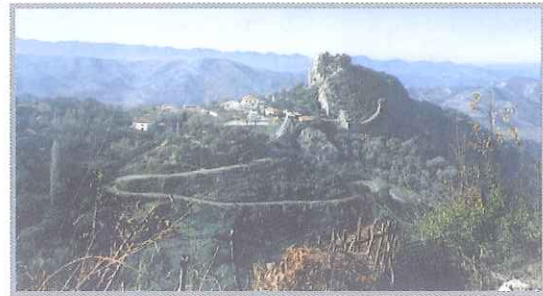
The continuous urban transformation has had a clear impact on the modest historical heritage of the city, especially during the political and economic transition of the 1990s. In order to have a clearer idea of the development of the city of Tirana, it is very important to analyze its historical evolution on an architectonic and urban planning perspective.

Prehistory and Origins Prior to the 14th Century

Although the origins of Tirana aren't as ancient as those of other historical towns of Albania such as Durrës, Berat, Gjirokastër, Krujë, Shkodër, Elbasan, Korçë, etc., the archaeological findings in ancient caves demonstrate that the territory where Tirana is situated in present time had been inhabited long before the Neolithic period and it concerns prehistoric settlements, one of which has been Cave of Pëllumbasit. It's been the Tirana's plains and hills fostering it, as they feature a special microclimate due to their geographic position and the mitigating impact of the Adriatic Sea that is located some 30 kilometers west. The climatic conditions, the abundant water sources in rivers and streams, the varied lowland and hilly relief in addition to the



View of the tower of Preza castle



Distant view of the Petrela castle amidst the hills of Tirana



Tirana common panoramic profile: distant view of Dajti Mountain shot from city centre

presence of the Dajti Mountain as a protecting wall from the northeastern strong winds have made the Tirana area, from ancient times until present days, to be a rich and fertile farm land totally suitable to be inhabited.

During the 3d and the 4th centuries A.D., the Tirana fields were farmed by the local population of the villages in and around those fields, who, for protective reasons, had built dwellings and fortresses in strategic points on the hills around. This is demonstrated by archaeological findings across strongholds and castles around Tirana such as those of Zgërdhesh, Lalm, Shkallë e Tujanit, Dorez, Kuc, Persqop, Farkë, Bërzhitë, Bastar, Dorak, Ndroq, Petrelë, Brrar, etc.

The Ottoman Conquest between the 14th and 20th Centuries

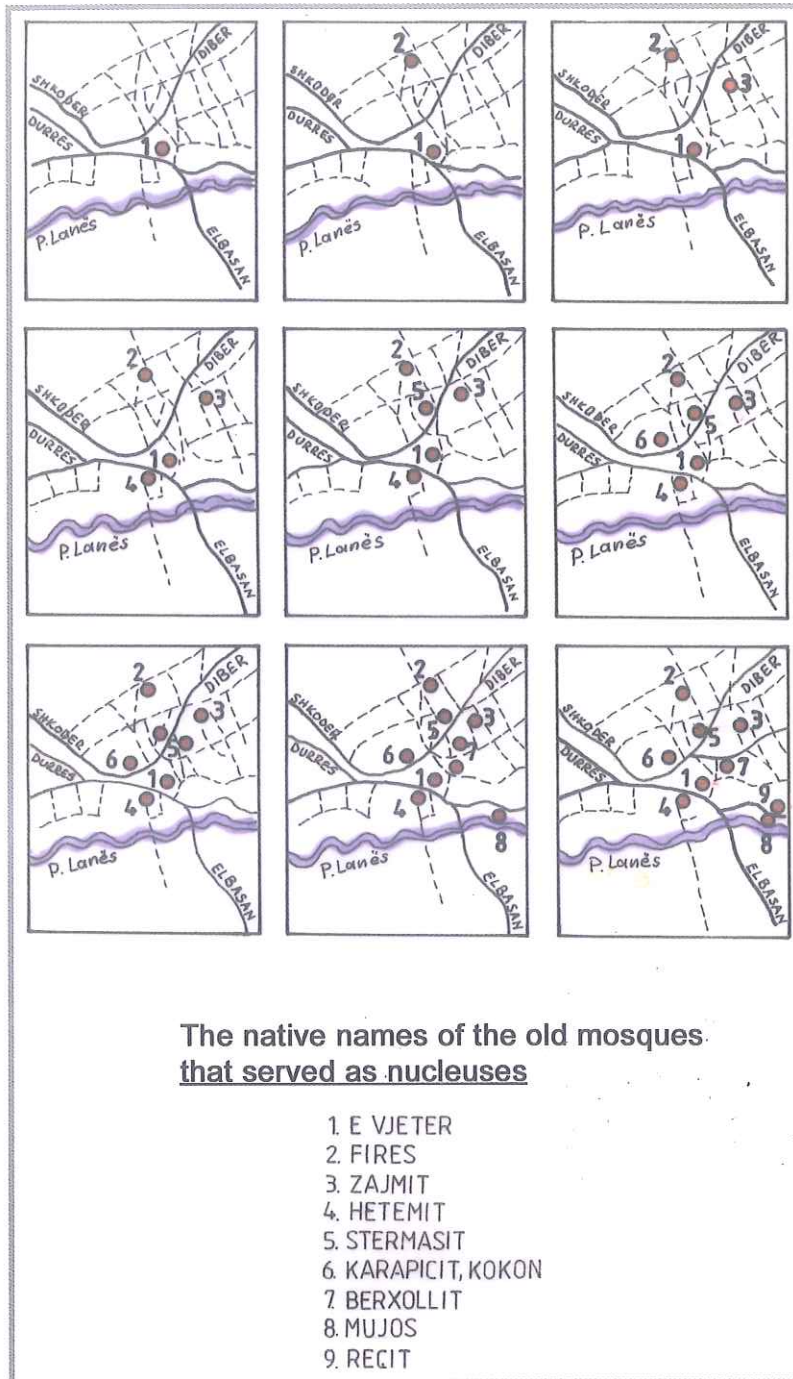
The Ottoman conquest of Albania that began in the 14th century found Tirana an important crossing point for the main transportation roads of both the Balkan region and the country itself, which led to its being considered a strategic transit point between Christian Europe and Oriental Turkey. Such geographic position could not influence positively on the architectural and urban development of the town because of the very transitory nature of the development purposes. Cult objects made an exception and grew because they were part of the policy for the conversion of the native population from Christians to Muslims. During the 16th to the 18th centuries, mosques became the defining objects in building the down-

towns. They used to be erected in the busiest parts of the towns, close to the markets and other public buildings, or were included into the architectural complexes containing objects mentioned above.

In the case of Tirana as well, the mosques have played a positive role from urban point of view because they came to inspire the creation of 5-6 urban "isles" (on the family or clan basis) which during their drift to grow, they merged (united) and, in combination with local traditions, they created a new urban scenography, silhouette and identity: Tirana.

The First Urban Nucleus of Tirana

The first historical nucleus of the town emerged and grew together with the old Mosque of *Sulejman Pasha* at the center of the present-day structure of the city, just at the crossroads of the main arteries of the interregional trade transit. Together with the mosque in point, other buildings were erected, including those of the feudal lords and their relatives on the right bank of the Lana stream. Some farther, at a distance of 50-60 meters west of the mosque, they built a bakery, a bath and an inn, three service facilities that influenced the expansion of the bazaar. These buildings, together with the dwelling houses, barns, courtyards, wells, green groves, lanes, squares and graveyards – centered around the building of the mosque, by so forming an entity of sociological, property, gender and family connections not only at the time of their emergence, but also very long afterwards.



Dynâmic of the Tirana city development. The names of the oldest mosques (after K. Miho)

The second urbanistic nucleus was created at the beginning of the 18th century around the Mosque of Fire, located some 600 meters northwest of the first nucleus, just where the present-day Rruga e Barrikadave intersects the Rruga Fortuzi. This worn-out building was reconstructed on its previous foundations in 1859, this time being named the Mosque of Beshiri after the name of the trader who built it.

The third nucleus was built northeast of the first nucleus beginning with the erection of the Mosque of *Zajmi* at the intersection of Rruga e Dibrës with Rruga Thanas Ziko in 1775 which was later demolished for urban planning needs.

The fourth nucleus begins in the time of the foundation of the Mosque of *Haxhi Ethem*, which was located about 200 meters west of the old mosque and was surrounded by dwellings, gardens, graves, etc.

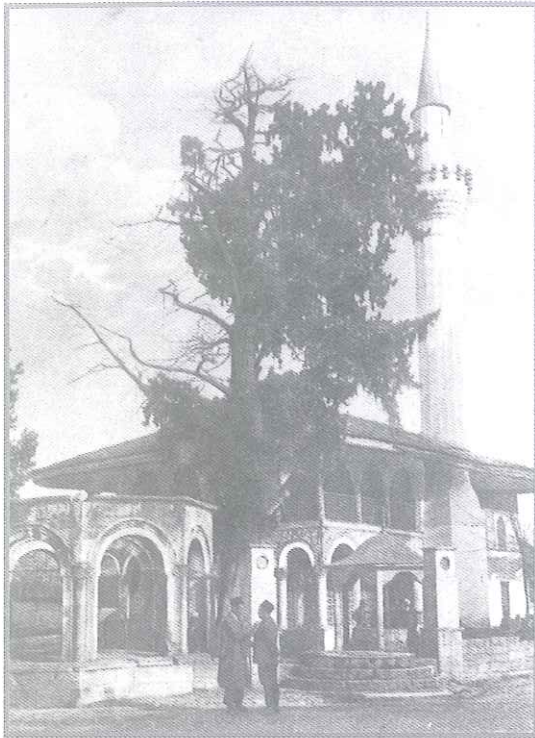
By the same logic, at different points, always at a near distance from the first nucleus, other nuclei were formed with a mosque at their centers like that of *Stërmas*, built in 1840, *Kokonozi* and *Bërxolli* in the 19th century, *Karapici* in 1858, *Mujo*, *Reçi*, etc., all moving centrifugally from downtown to the suburbs and then back towards downtown through independent islets located somewhat far off each other, all of which later, without any organization and discipline, came to enlarge gradually until they intersected one another by creating an urban planning

landscape of irregular layout and scant density, as conditioned by the existence of private land ownership. Feudal fragmentation of the land and the absence of a central administration capable of enforcing laws have conditioned the emergence of irregular and very much scattered constructions without any technical pre-arrangement.

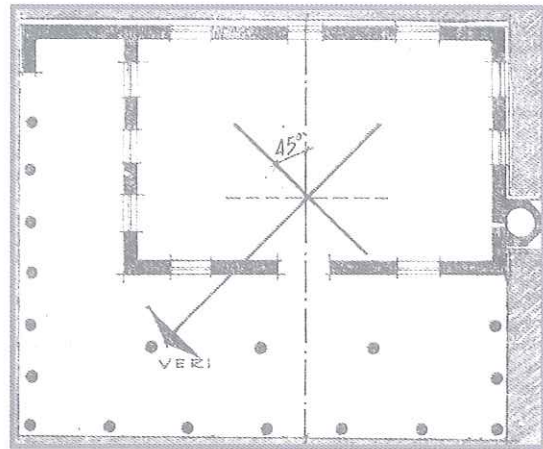
The construction of the Mosque of Sulejman Pasha (1614), however, together with the public baths (Turkish hamam), the inn, the bread bakery and later the Shrine (Grave) of Kapllan Pasha symbolizes, from the historical and architectural perspective, the birth of the town of Tirana. Of all these buildings — of which only the latter one exists today — as well as other ones, have been destroyed over time, especially during and after the Second World War.

Architecture

The Mosque of Sulejman Pasha and its minaret — the latter being constructed by his son 19 years later — was first made known by an engraving of the English painter E. Lear following its reconstruction by the Toptani feudal lords. Its hypothetical reconstruction was carried out on this basis and the records of the time. Architecturally, the old mosque had a rectangular plan with sides measuring 16 m x 13 m. The greater part of its space was taken by the prayers' hall, and the rest by the portico that represented the eastern and northern façades of the town. The volume of the mosque appeared in the form of a parallelepiped that was more



View of mosque of Sulejman Pasha



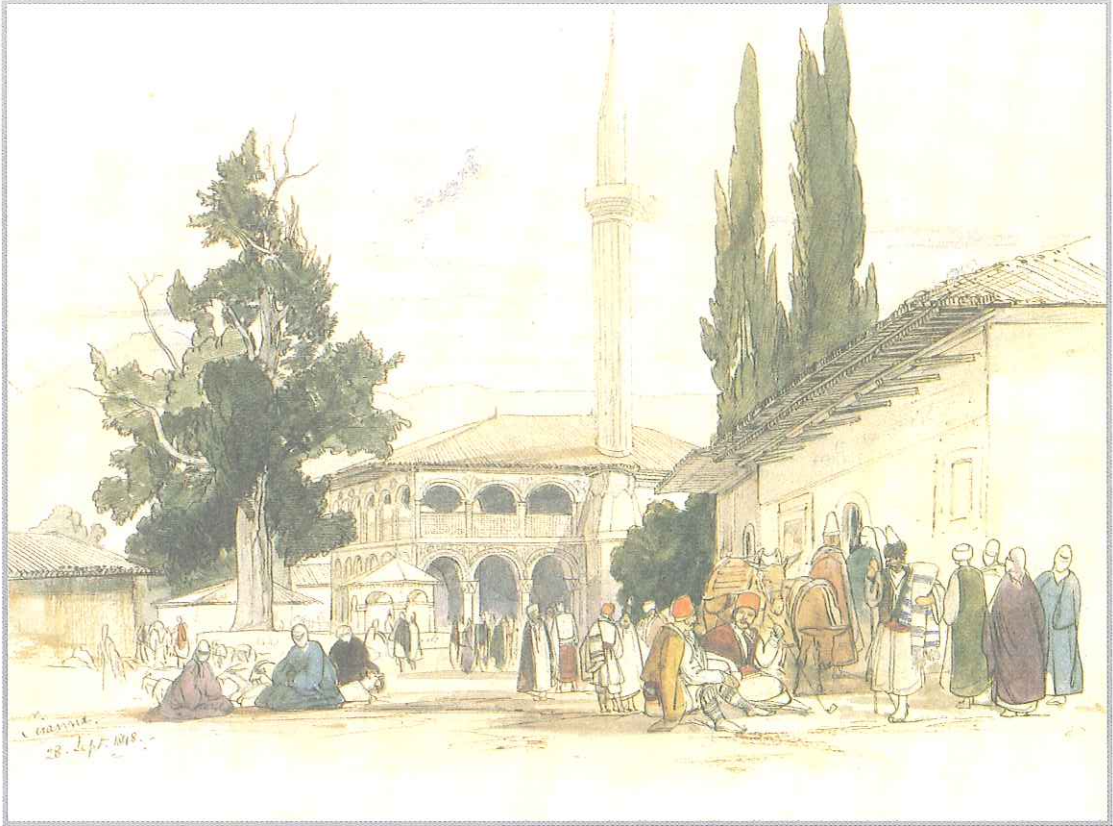
Plan lay out of Sulejman Pasha mosque



*View of the "Tyrbe", cemetery memorial
of Kapllan Pasha*



7.11.2018



View of Tirana, painted by Eduard Lear on 1848

extended longitudinally than it was vertically and its height measured nearly 9 m. The whole façade of the mosque was decorated with multicolored frescoes of floral and fruit motifs and images of Istanbul.

The Shrine (Grave) of *Sulejman Pasha*, a very interesting object, has been constructed of dressed stones, has an octagonal plan and is made of an arcade of columns resting on a low base. The columns are of stone and bear capitals ornamented with floreal motifs on their surface. Even though small, the shrine is

marked by an elegance in the arcade and a fine workmanship of details.

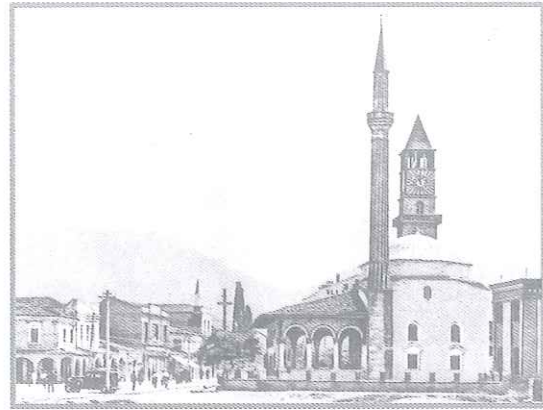
While the old Mosque of *Sulejman Pasha* symbolizes the birth of Tirana, the *Mosque of Ethem Beu* symbolizes the historical visual memory of the present-day city because it is the only mosque situated at the historical center of the town that had survived the destructions of wars and times.

– *The Mosque of Ethem Beu* and the *Clock Tower* were constructed during 1794–822 by also stimulating the vertical

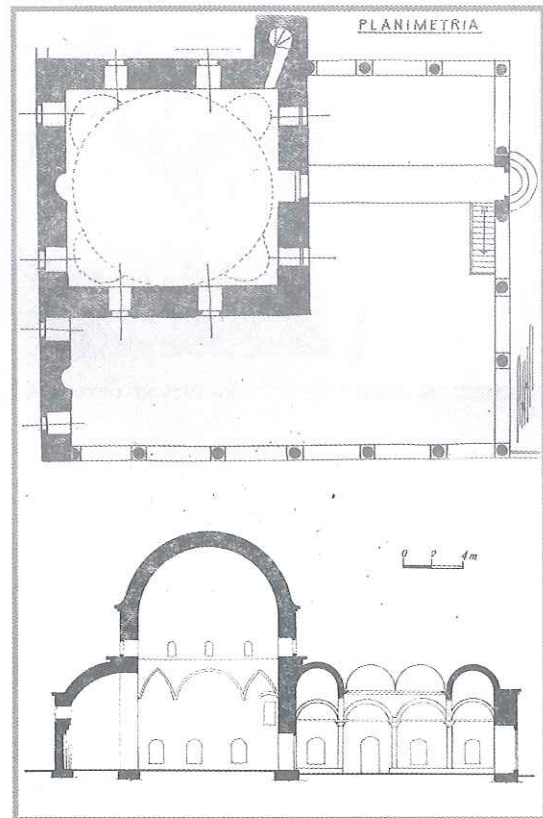
nature of the town's center. Even though none of them represent any autochthonous Albanian style in themselves, they have been built by a mixed style clearly featuring the influence of traditional culture. From the architectural aspect, this mosque is made up of the prayers' hall, which has a cubic form, and the porch. On the east and north sides, the cubic volume of the prayers' hall is surrounded by the portico, which is made of arcades resting on columns. The central setting is covered by a dome resting on parabolic abacuses at the corners. This hall is constructed of plastered river stones and its inside is painted with floral ornaments, whose designs abide by the rules of symmetry, while the outer part of the prayers' hall that is included within the portico, is decorated with floral motifs and a series of paintings with images from Istanbul.

This mosque features the emergence of a tendency for approximating the cult architecture to the folk one, a tendency that has also come as a result of the breaking away from old types copied from the architecture of the Islamic cult. With its delicate contour, the portico that is totally constructed by the surrounding semicircular arcade, predominates over the cubic bay of the prayers' hall and provides a more justified place for the *minaret*.

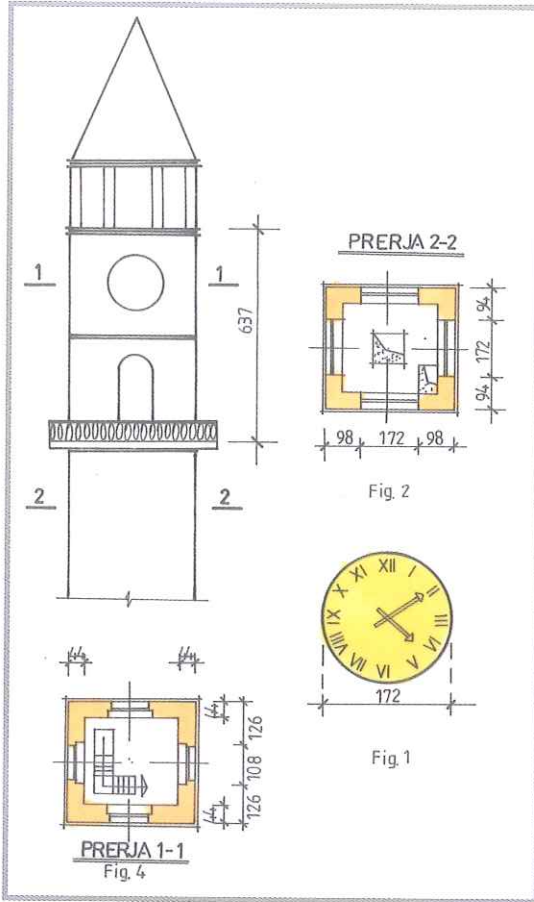
The high minaret is a slim structure constructed of dressed stones. The bottom part has a rectangular section, while the rest that goes towards becoming slightly



View of mosque of Ethem Bey



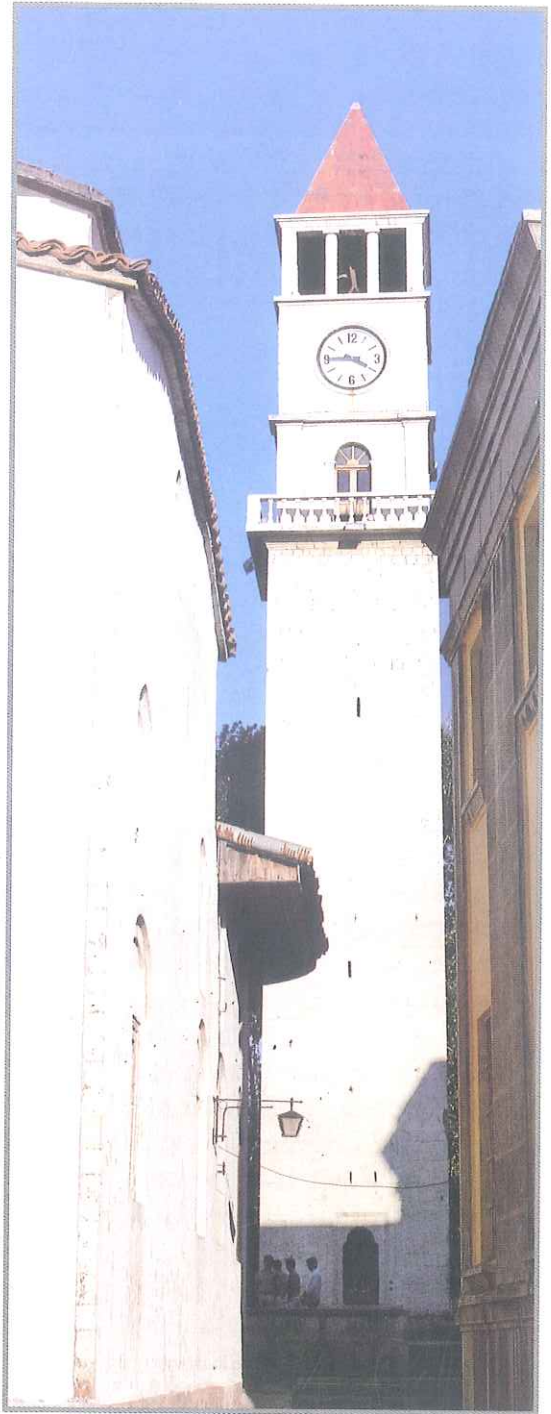
Plan lay out and section of Ethem Bey mosque



Plan lay out and section of Tirana clock tower



Clock tower before the reconstruction of 1928.



View of Tirana clock tower

narrower is marked by chiseled vertical well-proportioned flutes.

The *Clock Tower* takes a special place in the urban structuring of Tirana's downtown. It has been finished constructing in 1830. The Clock Tower is situated on the east wing of the Mosque, about 20 meters from it, with the sides of the walls oriented approximately in the direction of the four cardinal points. It represents a prismatic parallelepiped volume, which in the upper parts ends in a pyramidal roof.

Constructed by a vertical axis of great height, it has a rectangular basis and is made up of the lower part that takes the greatest height and where the weights move, of the clockworks bay on it, and the bell in the upper part. The outer part of the tower, from the sidewalk level to the balcony, is constructed of white dressed stones of rectangular shapes. On the north wing is the entrance door to the tower, which is covered by an arch entirely of stones. Going upstairs from the entrance door can be made through a staircase of small flights of steps around the perimeter of side walls, lit by small hatches, and to the balcony through four arched doors. The construction of the Clock Tower was an achievement in the field of economic and social development of the town and a new object in the existing repertoire of the contemporary architecture. The Clock Tower features a prominent architectonic character, over time becoming, with its silhouette, an integral part of the town's landscape, its symbolism.

In the 18th century, the *Trade Fair of Shën Lleshi* was established west of Tirana, which became an interface and an attractive pole of stock-raising and commercial interests by serving as a connecting medium of the town with the countryside and other towns such as Shkodër, Berat, Elbasan as well as the remotest regions of Dibër and Kosovë. In 1871, this fair began to resume its activity and used to be held at least once a year.

The structure of the city of Tirana (18th century - the beginning of the 20th century)

Very soon, the small and modest town obtained the appearance of a commercial hub meeting the economic needs of the area as a civic center and representing an example of a gradual transition from a small inhabited nucleus to a genuine town. This is mostly due to the contribution of the rich merchant families and the families of the town's nobility.

Until the first quarter of the 19th century, the town extended around its hub, where the bazaar and the two most distinguished mosques were established. The main streets opening in a radial shape would connect the town's hub with the neighborhoods scarcely inhabited, where the dwelling houses were surrounded by very spacious yards. The attachment of a part of the population to farming and stock-raising, in addition to handicrafts, has conditioned the urban nature of this hub, particularly in its peripheral quarters.

Compared to some towns that have been built by a pre-arranged plan and so

are marked by compact structures, the structural layout of the town of Tirana, principally a product of the feudal anarchism and the great economic and cultural backwardness, appears to be irregular, extended and fragmented. It is made up of two areas, the dwelling one and the economic one, both connected with each other by streets and side streets.

During the whole course of the town's growth, these parts have been in reciprocal connection and dependence in various levels and degrees, while always retaining their primary features, a fact that has been reflected in the layout structure of the town. Indeed, in spite of the evolution that had taken place in the course of history from its beginnings down to the turn of the 20th century, as Degrand had put it in 1905, "The town has retained almost the same layout that it has had 3 to 4 centuries ago." On the basis of this consideration, the town's structure would have appeared as follows:

- *The inhabited area*, mostly driven by strong property interests and due to a lack of centralized control, appeared to be extended and scattered everywhere without any limits or defined areas. Only the households of the dominant feudal aris-



Dwellings in the north-east part of Tirana city

ocracy of the town were accumulated almost at the center, behind high walls, which formed the castle of the town. But later, due to their growth in number, their houses were built outside these walls. As to the other categories - feudal lords, artisans and traders - they were scattered in all corners of the town, without any bonds and cares to one another, even being divided from each other by large empty spaces, which has influenced the unjustified extension of the town.

A typical Tirana dwelling of the time was a one- or two-storied building constructed out of mud-bricks and divided by other neighboring ones by yards that were surrounded by relatively low walls lining the lanes. Although in the numerical aspect the dwelling house was the main object of the town life, in urban planning aspect it stayed totally passive on account of its distance from the main streets. But, in time, these proportions would obtain new values. By the mid-18th century, the townspeople began to erect dwelling houses facing the street, with their principal façades directed to it, while the shops began to dissociate with the hub of the town and appear by the sides of the streets.

- *The commercial and economic area* was represented by the bazaar² that was entirely settled in the central part of the town. The old bazaar was a big shopping mall made up of numerous shops, galleries and wooden eaves and which, according to Degrand, has been demolished in 1905 and then rebuilt on the soil of the

previous one. As is known, the rebuilt bazaar was shattered again in the 1960s to open space for building the great Palace of Culture.

The bazaar of Tirana stretched within a space bordering Rruga e Barrikadave, Rruga e Dibrës, the present-day Rruga Luigj Gurakuqi and partly the square of the Tirana downtown, encompassing in total an expanse of 2-3 hectares.

- The System of Streets

The two areas mentioned above were connected between them through a number of streets and lanes which perhaps represent the most characteristic feature of the town. Notwithstanding its extension in a clear low terrain that favors a rectangular road network, Tirana's street system was such that could allow the main streets to converge to the center.

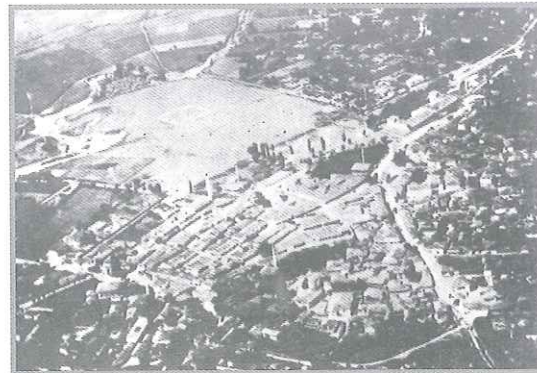
The streets for carriages, caravans, pedestrians, animals and, in later times, for automotive vehicles – some wide and some narrow, somewhere straight, but more often broken and particularly curved, discontinued and frequently blind – due to family separations and additions and property interests would ramify into additional ones to form hundreds of threads that caused the road network of the town to look, in the whole, like the ribs of a poplar leaf. In general they would measure 2 to 12 meters in width and all of them were unpaved.



View of the old Bazaar



View of the Bazaar after the reconstruction of 1905



Aerial view of Bazaar and south-west of Tirana

² Unfortunately, this bazaar has been demolished only 30 years ago during the attempts for reorganizing and modernizing the center of the city by the communist government of the post-Second World War.



Common view of "rrugice" narrow street of Tirana

- **Public squares.** Those worth mentioning include the square in front of the old mosque and the Mosque of Ethem Beu, the prayers' square (Namazgjah) in Lagja e Tabakëve (the present-day Ali Demi), the square of the military parades that today is the Shallvare area, and the Square of Albanians in front of Kinema Republika. Rather than *typical squares* as organized geometrical spaces surrounded by buildings, they were small plots created as partial expansions of streets with irregular shapes and free of buildings.

- **Landscape gardening.**

Tirana itself was born amidst a natural garden. Green gardens have been part of every house, even the poorest ones. In a somewhat reduced state, the gardens used to be found in or at public service facilities, for example in front of a mosque or a square serving as a reference point, or by the sides of the streets, such as Rruga e Kavajës.

From the breakdown analysis made about the urban structure of the town of

Tirana from its birth to the beginning of the 20th century, it results that the town has had a spontaneous constructional start, a slow but steady growth marked by an irregular structure and an irrational expansion.

November 1912 marks the date of the political independence of Albania from the five centuries-long Ottoman occupation. This date marks the end of the first important period of transition in terms of the urban structure of the town – the one in which the town was established as an urban center with clear oriental Ottoman influences and character. During this period, the consciousness of urban development in the native Albanian tradition was mostly focused on architecture rather than urban planning. That was an expression of a special form of resistance against the occupation. A product of this period is the *Traditional Tirana House*, built of soft local construction materials (adobe-qerpiç) accompanied with handicraft work on wood and iron. The typical Tirana dwelling house is the earliest type of the traditional Albanian house, which can be clearly seen in its compositional evolution.

The Architecture of the Tirana

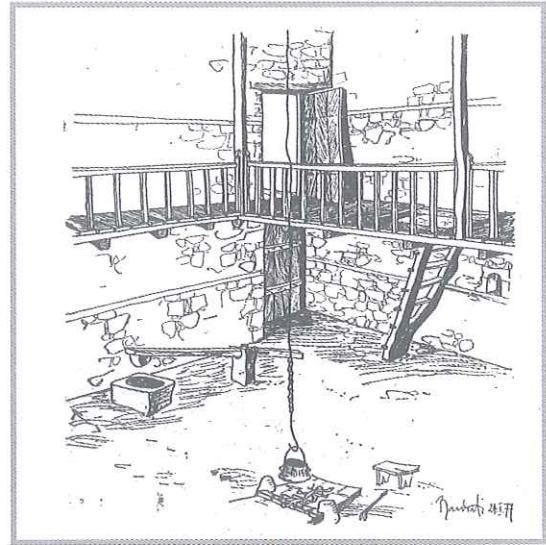
Adobe House is typical in that it is built on a very large plot surrounded by high walls. Generally it does not border the street. Its gate is made of two large wings and, in some cases, a smaller door is contrived for everyday usage in one of the wings. In the spacious courtyard full

of trees is a well, and a lane laid with cobbles links the house with the gate.

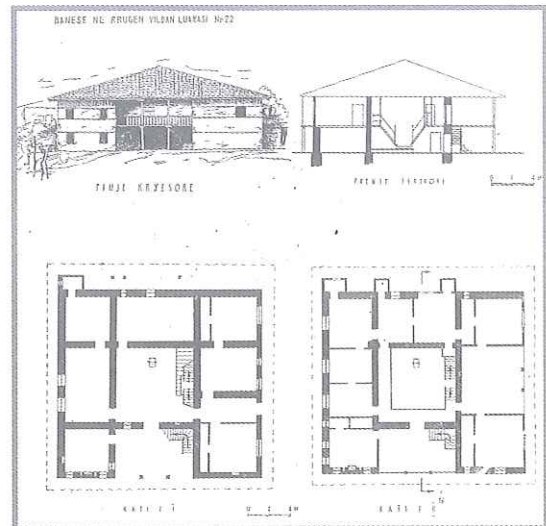
As to the *compositional plan*, the house is characterized by an original solution, which bears no parallel with any other dwelling types in Albania. According to this solution, the central place as the compositional nucleus is taken by the *hearth house*. This setting, in which the whole everyday life is carried on, and in some simpler variants can be used even as a bedroom, is distinguished from other settings not only by its location and composition, but also by the space and volume it takes. The relatively great height of the ground hearth house, which in some cases would reach up to 5 m, has enabled the settings around it to be erected in two floors. The space of the hearth room ranges from 30 to 35 square meters and its plan is in the shape of a rectangle. In this setting, the hearth is ever-present and is built in the longitudinal direction of the room. The connection of the hearth room with the upper floors that surround it is made through an inner balcony called *Mafil*, to which the route is through a light wooden staircase. In front of the hearth house was the *porch*, sharing the same roof with the hearth house. Its front was made of wooden pilasters and it created a protected space in front of the entrance that served for the processing of farm products, working in the loom, etc.

The most developed and the most characteristic kind of Tirana house is the one that features a total closure of the hearth

house on all sides by storied buildings. The Tirana house both from its outer appearance and the inside is characterized by a simple treatment of architectonic elements. What is striking from the outside



"Fire House" the nucleus of Tirana house



Plan lay out of one most developed forms of Tirana house

is its great volume and simple volumetric shapes which to some extent are broken only by the open spaces of the porch.

This house is made of mud-bricks and, as binding material, kneaded clay, and is reinforced with wooden sashes. The tim-

ber is used for the construction of roofs, floors, doors and windows; the roof is covered with concave red tiles and this is why the old Tirana was often called the *Red Tirana*, unlike what the communist ideology preached about it following the Second World War.

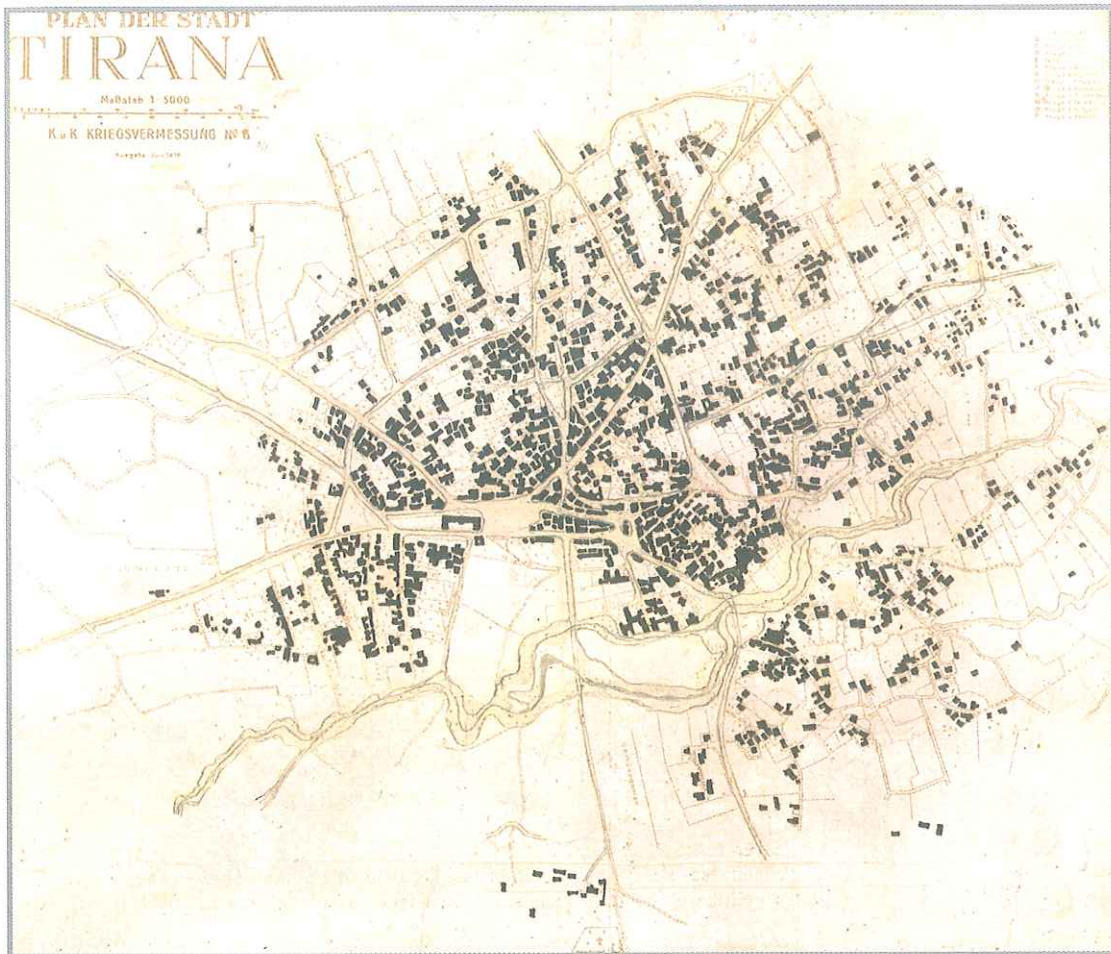


Photo of Tabak Bridge in Tirana, in the period 1920-1930

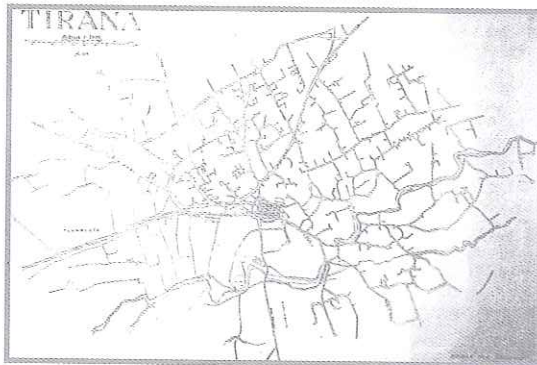
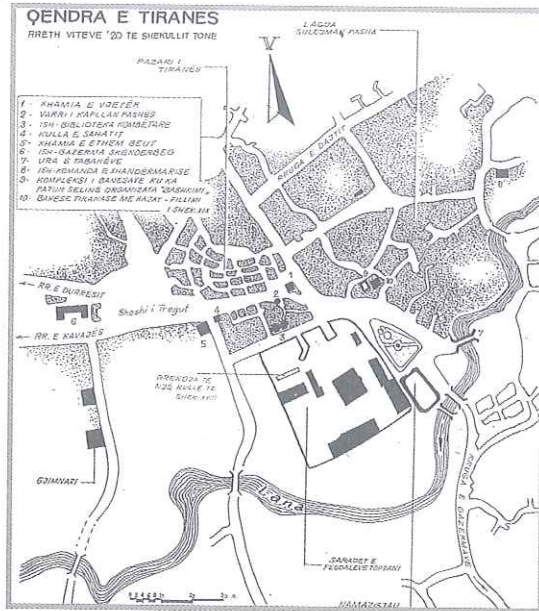
2. FROM INDEPENDENCE TO THE WORLD WARS (1920–1938)

On January 20, 1920, the Congress of Lushnja declared Tirana the country's capital. This act was a remarkable historical, political and administrative event. This is how Sami Frashëri had written over the future capital of Albania: "The general capital should be one of the cities that are located in the middle of Albania and where the Albanian language will be spoken. And it'd be even better that a new city be made in

the middle of Albania in a healthy and beautiful place. Such a city, which we may call *Skënderbegas*, will be arranged in the most beautiful shape, with wide and straight-line streets, with nice houses, squares and everything necessary." Clearly, the time satisfied this wish of the great Renaissance figure completely by establishing Tirana as the capital, as it enjoys favorable climatic conditions, a moderate distance



Urban Plan of Tirana drafted by Austrians on the year 1916, scale 1/5000



Road traffic structures drafted by Austrians on
1917, scale 1/5000

from mountains and sea, fertile lands and agreeable weather, and good prospects for economic development, growth in transportation and trade, etc. But Tirana had to be prepared for the role it would assume and to this end it was necessary to take measures for its gradual transformation into a political and administrative center. This was a both key act and a key

moment in the town's transformation from a spontaneous urban and chaotic structure into a developed and modern one, based on studies and regulatory plans.

The year 1920 finds Tirana a town stretching over a space of 305 ha, where the residential area occupies 98.2% of the town's space, and the population of 15,000 inhabitants with a density roughly of 50 inhabitants per ha. The town evolves around the old bazaar's nucleus with the residential area principally extending north and east of town.

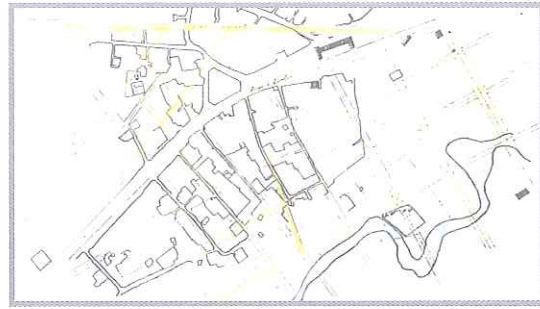
The residential section and the economic one communicate through a network of streets and lanes that marked the most characteristic feature of the town. They were too narrow and curved and often blind. Amidst this swarm of streets and alleyways, the interregional roadways such those leading to Durrës, Elbasan, Shkodër, Dibër, Kavajë, Shëngjergj, etc. were the most conspicuous and all of them converged on the center (*bazaar*). So, the center of the town is the bazaar, where the business and commercial activity took place.

In the following year, 1921, the town grows by 15%, that is into 350 ha, and tends to stretch in the northeast and southwest directions.

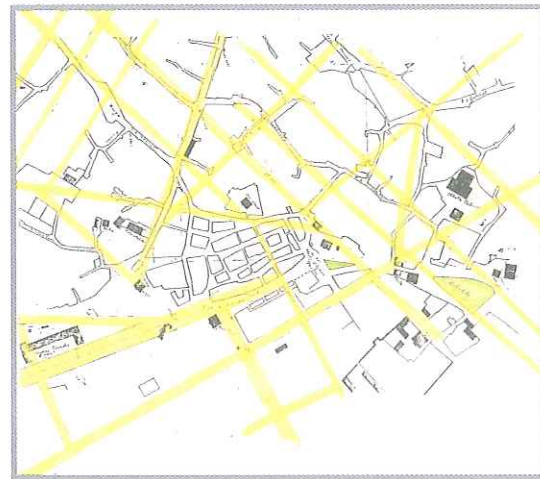
In 1923, Austrian architects and engineers developed *the first regulatory town plan*. The regulatory plan of 1923 seeks to reach a compromise between the con-

struction of a regular orthogonal street network and the improvement and adjustment of the existing one, thereby seeking to create a rectangular and clean street network south and west of the bazaar, an area which has been almost free, and in other parts of the town, north and east of the bazaar, this street network has to consider the direction of the main streets and lanes, especially the radial streets by straightening and widening them. The center of the town still remains the bazaar. Although it was not a very successful study in terms of its feasibility, the plan led to the opening (widening) of the main streets of the town, such as those of *Rruga e Durrësit*, *Rruga e Kavajës*, *Rruga e Barrikadave*, etc.

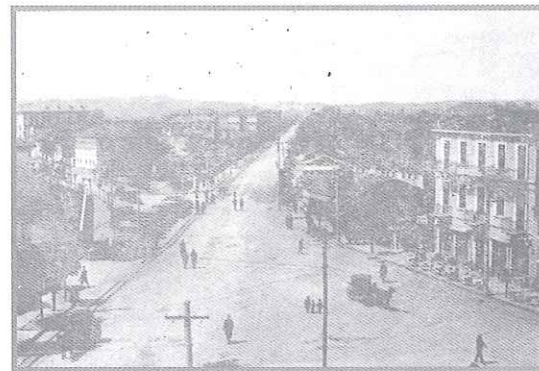
Following a chaotic political period and with the coming to power of the government led by Ahmet Zogu, the authorities of the time oriented the country's policy towards Italy, which, at that time, was the most powerful and developed neighboring country. In the circumstances of a total lack of financial recourses, the government asked economic aid of Italy for geodesic surveying of Albanian towns as well as the development of their regulatory plans. With the economic aid given by Italy through the National Bank, Italy founded the "Society for the Economic Development of Albania." Mussolini's Italy saw this rapprochement as an ideal opportunity to finalize its aspirations for a possible expansion towards the Balkans. So, following the Ottoman occupation Albania, for a second time, was considered as a "bridge" or a crossing point for specific geopolitical interests of



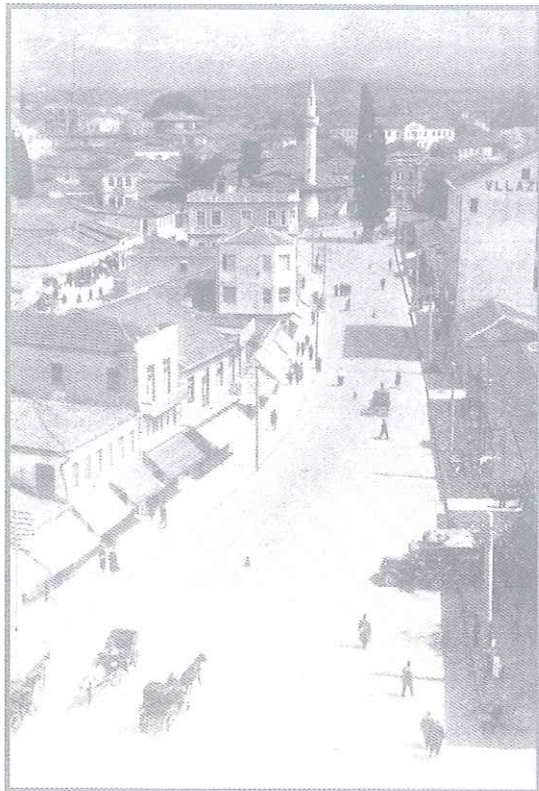
Part of Urban Plan of the year 1923. Zone between Str. of Durrës and Lana river.



Part of Urban Plan of the year 1923, central zone and Bazaar



Str. "Mother Queen" (Str. of Durrës), reconstructed on 1922-23



Str. "28 November", reconstructed on 1923

the time, but now in opposite direction: from west towards east.

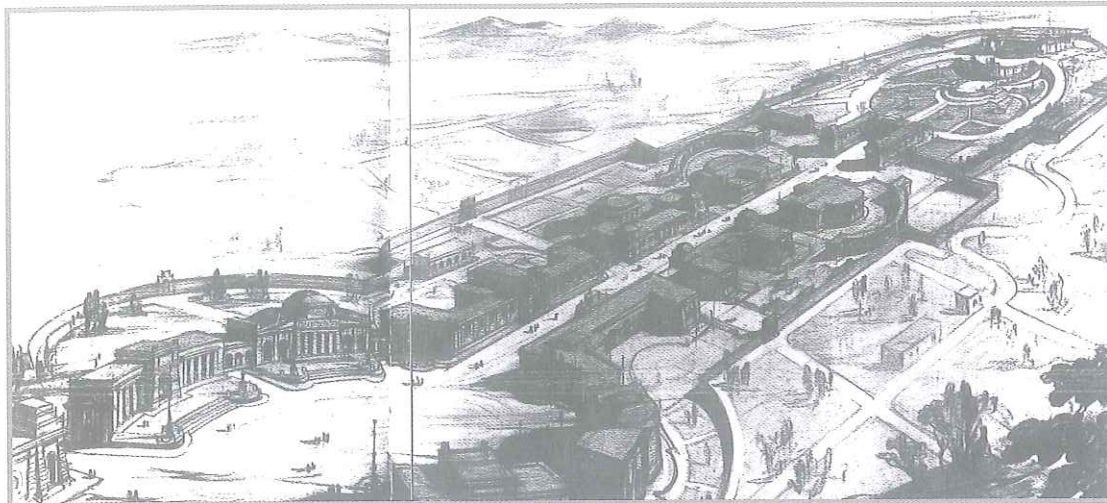
This time marks the beginning of the second important period in the transformation of the urban and architectural structure of Tirana. The first attempt made by authorities of the time was the invitation of the government to well known professionals such the Italian architect *Brasini* in 1925.

The latter accepted the invitation and developed the first master plan about the rearrangement of the new center of the Albanian capital, which consisted in a

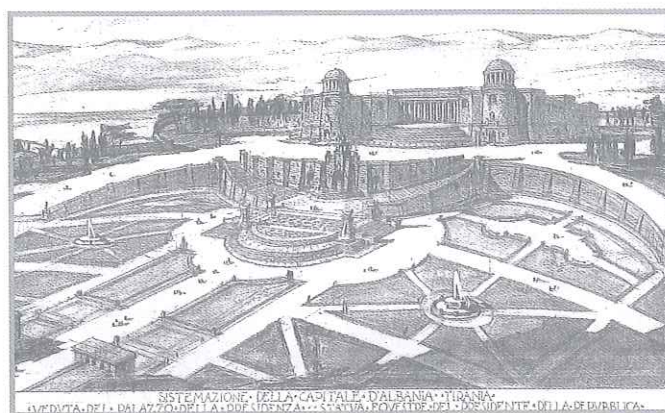
group of six buildings for the ministries and a central eclectic boulevard, a plan that would later be carried out with some modifications and, even later, would be translated into more pragmatic forms by the Italian architect Florestano Di Fausto who would work on Tirana some times later.

The idea of the architect Brasini was to create a Roman isle in the city without combining it with the rest that was marked by a prominent Oriental character, an isle that would serve as a connecting joint between the old town and the modern one that was to be built in the future. The project consisted in developing a wide boulevard in NS direction, which divides the existing city from its periphery and which was proposed as a monumental and governmental center of a new autonomous city that was to be developed while ignoring the Oriental heritage of the old town.

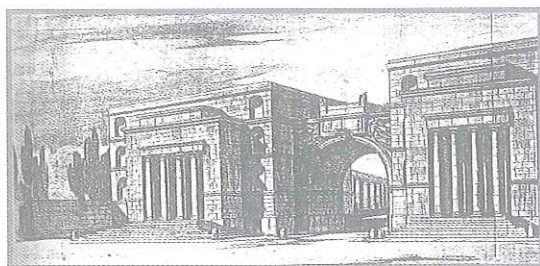
The new Tirana would be nothing but the materialization of a project of that Western culture of the time that would impose a grand visibility and appearance. The Square of the Ministries and the grand boulevard were distinctively the central core of a city inspired by the "unreal dependence" on the Italian Renaissance, associated only with the wish of the authorities of the time to build a modern city in the style of the most contemporary architecture and with an immense space (the southern and western parts of Tirana were practically empty), which could allow the realization of any idea, however majestic it might be.



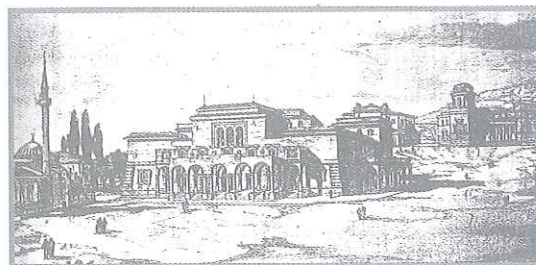
The first draft of north-south axis launched by Italian arch. Brasini



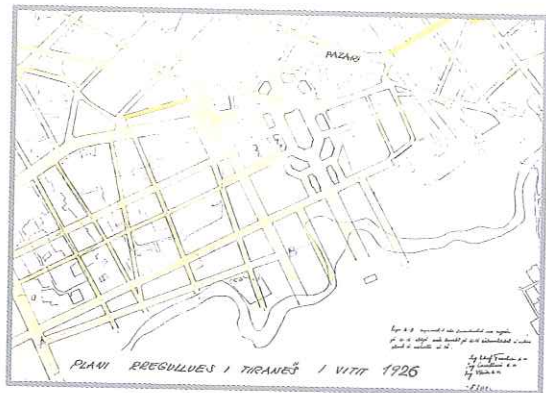
*Draft design of King Palace in the south end of
 boulevard(nowdays the location of University headquarters)*



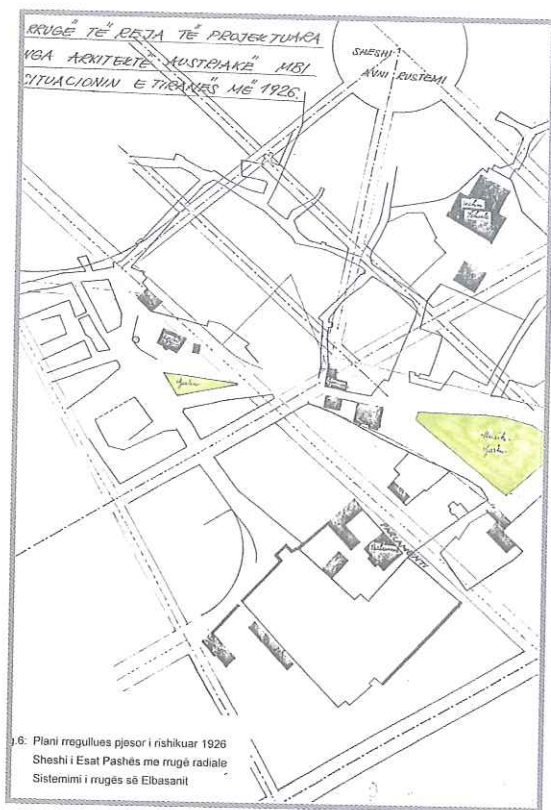
*Draft of the Entrance of the Square of Ministries
 designed by Italian arch. Brasini*



*Draft of Office of Prefecture looked from
 Scanderbeg Square designed by Italian arch. Brasini*



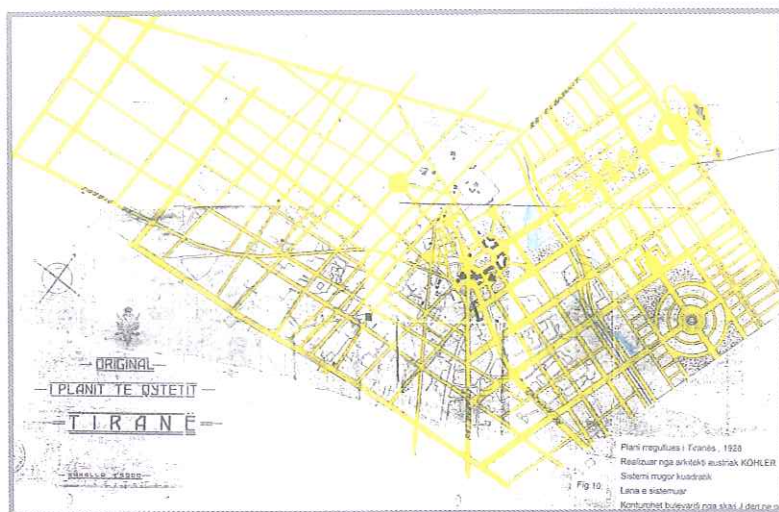
Part of Urban Plan of the year 1926



Part of Urban Plan of the year 1926

In 1926, the second regulatory plan of Tirana was developed, one that was not only a revision of the one of 1923 that had had certain shortcomings, but such one that, for the first time, comes to materialize architect Brasini's idea of the construction of a wide boulevard in the direction north-south that would intersect perpendicularly the Lana stream that runs right through the middle of the city. Three other authors contributed to this regulatory plan: the Albanian engineer Mr. Eshref Frashëri, the Italian engineer Castellani and the Austrian Weiss. The administrative center was to be erected SW of the bazaar, and the first blotch of the "Scanderbeg" Square was jotted down, a square whose new shape resulted from processing architect Brasini's drawings, who had masterminded it in a circular shape, and which, in this regulatory plan, would take a longitudinal shape that more or less it retains to the present days. For the first time this regulatory plan provides the systemization of Lana, though there's no mention for a proper systemization thereof. Interestingly, in this plan a round square is projected from which many radial streets originate, one of which is the one that begins from the Sulejman Pasha Square, in that time called *Rruga e Pishës*, and that overlaps completely with the present-day *Avni Rustemi* Square.

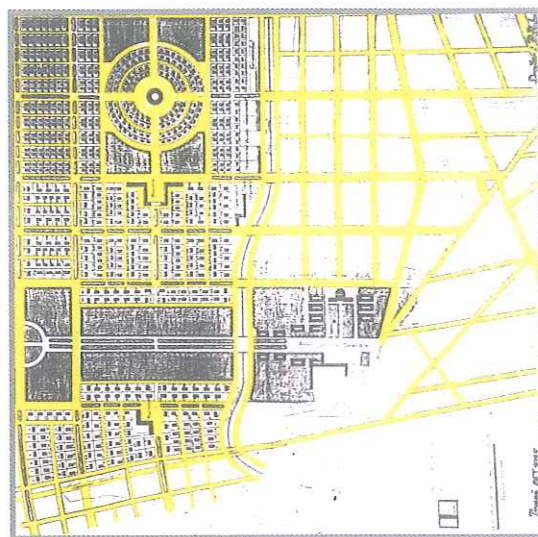
The third regulatory plan in the chronological order, but the first of the period when Albania became a kingdom, is that of 1928 as developed by the Austrian architect KOHLER. This plan that was drawn to a scale of 1:5000 shows clearly



Urban Plan of the year 1928

the quadratic system of the road network, especially in the New Tirana area, which was almost uninhabited.

In this quadratic road system, it's again the radial streets that have a primary role, particularly those of Rruga e Durrësit and Rruga e Kavajës which appear to be very broad thoroughfares. The New Tirana area had been designed as an area of an extensive development, that is an area of mansions, which would be generally built in rectangular courts and would form quadratic quarters matching the road network, or would be placed by several concentric circles. In the regulatory plan of the New Tirana, all of the plots bear the names of the new owners, and in spite of the changes this plan would undergo later, the area of private plots was observed. These plots ranged from 1,000 to 1,500 m² and allowed abundant spaces for gardens, and Italian architects that revised this regulatory plan



Urban Plan of the year 1928, the quadratic zones of New Tirana area

would later call this area "Citta giardino", that is, a "Garden-city."

Based on this plan, magnificent villas of contemporary architecture were built in Tirana that varied from the manifes-

Architecture & Urban
Development
1920-1938



Vila Goldi



House of Omer Fortuzi



Vila of Petrela family



Italian Embassy headquarters on 1930



*Vila of the year 1930 located in the
Str. "Mother Queen"*



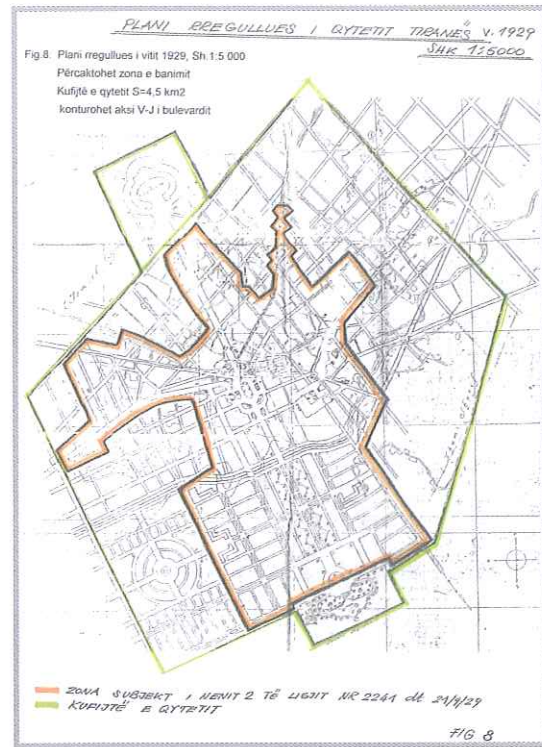
*Turkish (Yougoslav) Embassy, property of Qemal
Jusufati built in 1931*

tations of neoclassicism to the recent manifestations of modernism.

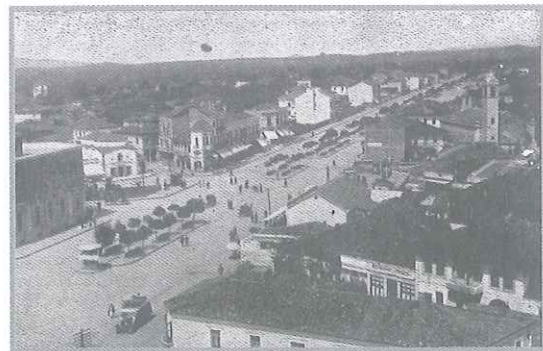
It's in this plan that the NS-directed boulevard, with the administrative center by its sides, is outlined precisely as beginning from the bazaar and terminating in the southern foothills, at the Royal Palace. In this regulatory plan, the proper systemization of the Lana stream has been projected as being perpendicular to the boulevard, with two parallel avenues that would border the stream banks in both of its sides.

The fourth regulatory plan of the King Zogu times is that of 1929. In it, the whole boulevard is designed as beginning not from the bazaar, but from the future stadium of the city that would be built in the place of the present-day railway station, down to the Royal Palace south. This regulatory plan defines the boundaries of the city as circumscribing a space of 4.5 km² and also outlines the area of the city's center that was to encompass both the NS boulevard and the main streets, such as Rruga e Durrësit, Rruga e Kavajës, Rruga e Elbasanit, etc. These streets would undergo full reconstruction in accordance with the contemporary architecture and the layout plan so as to become paved, wide streets, lined with buildings of a contemporary architecture according to the Law No. 2241 of 9.21.1929 of the Royal Government, a date which marked the beginning of the works for the building of "Zogu I" Boulevard that represented only the northern half of this boulevard.

Early in 1930, works for the building of the two main parts of the boulevard



Urban Plan of the year 1929



View of the boulevard Zog after inauguration

get started; the two parts would be one single central boulevard with the name "Zogu I" terminating in the Scanderbeg square and giving the city breathing

Architecture & Urban
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House of Z. A. Libohova 1930



Houses of clerks in the New Tirana zone, built from 1930 to 37



Vila of princess Sanie 1930

space; besides, works began for opening and widening the Rruga e Durrësit and for constructing the buildings of the ministries around the central square. Along with these main streets, other modern constructions of Western architecture for the time, with the facades decorated in relief with ornaments of admirable elegance, were underway. At this time, Tirana was experiencing a period of glory and urban prosperity that would get expression especially with the opening of the new boulevard of the city. A French architect of the time, who was visiting Tirana at that moment, would utter his surprised remark not without an irony, *"I saw a boulevard without a city!"* which demonstrates that the new Western developments were fairly advanced as compared to the city's Oriental stage of development at that time.

The boulevard that stretched in NS direction measured a length of 2 km and a minimal width of 35 m. As concerns the solution of its layout, it was a two-way straight-line highway of four lanes in each way for vehicular traffic, paved with bitumen slates, with broad sidewalks paved with small pumice-stones of mosaic shape and lined with four rows of trees and privets.

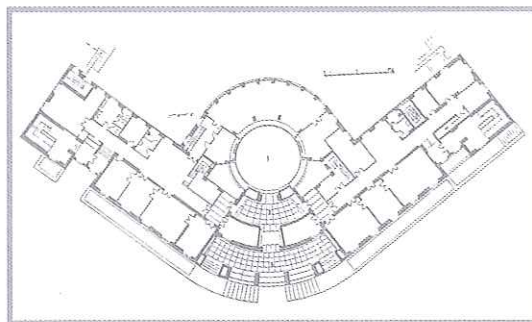
It is worth to mention that in the late 1930s, works began for the construction of the *"National Bank of Albania"* building, whose inauguration was made in 1938. This large building with architectonic lines as a symbol of power and solidity was the work of the Italian architect Vit-

torio Morpurgo. The building was erected at the head of Mussolini Road at the time, the present-day Rruga e Kavajës. This very modern building for the time is constructed of reinforced concrete and is coated with ceramic bricks and stone slates brought from Italy. The central porch that is made up of four grand pilasters in its inner sides is decorated with sculptures made of a special terra cotta, a work of Alfredo Biagini, and the interior of the circular-shaped central hall containing the counter wickets, is lit by the light coming from a sky lighted vault covering the hall that towers on a drum laid with mosaics, accomplished by Giulio Rosso. The *Catholic Church* located in the Rruga e Kavajës also belongs to this period.

Also in the 1930s, because of the economic development of the city and its greater role as an administrative center, the new boundaries of the city are defined, that is, their extension in the shape of a circle with the "Sulejman Pasha" square at the center with a radius of 2.2 kilometers which circumscribed an expansion of 12 km². Given that the city counted about 30,000 inhabitants from the census of 1930, the density of the extended city would be 2,500 inhabitants per 1 km². The extension of the boundaries would be made to enable the growth of the residential area, the landscaping of the eastern part of the city, and the growth of industry on the western side. This circle circumscribes eight points of a polygon. This variant of defining boundaries was not accomplished and was replaced by a



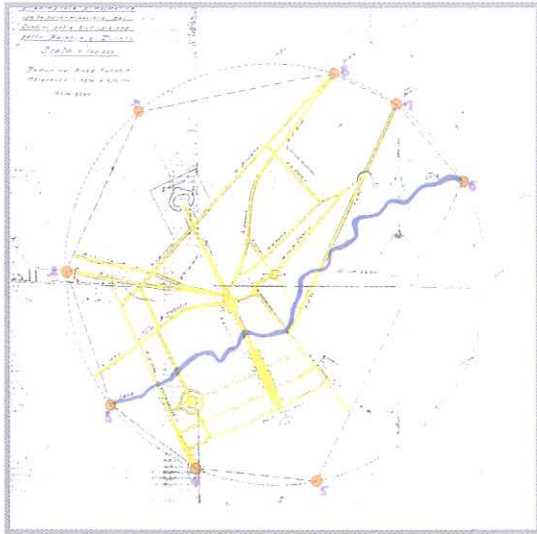
View of the rear part of the National Bank built on 1930-38



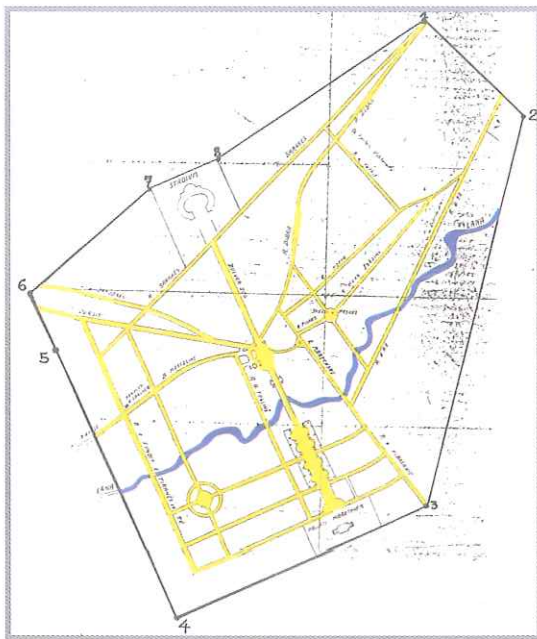
Plan layout of ground floor of National Bank



Catholic church (1930-35)



The borders of Tirana city on 1930, draft designed by Italian arch. Brasini

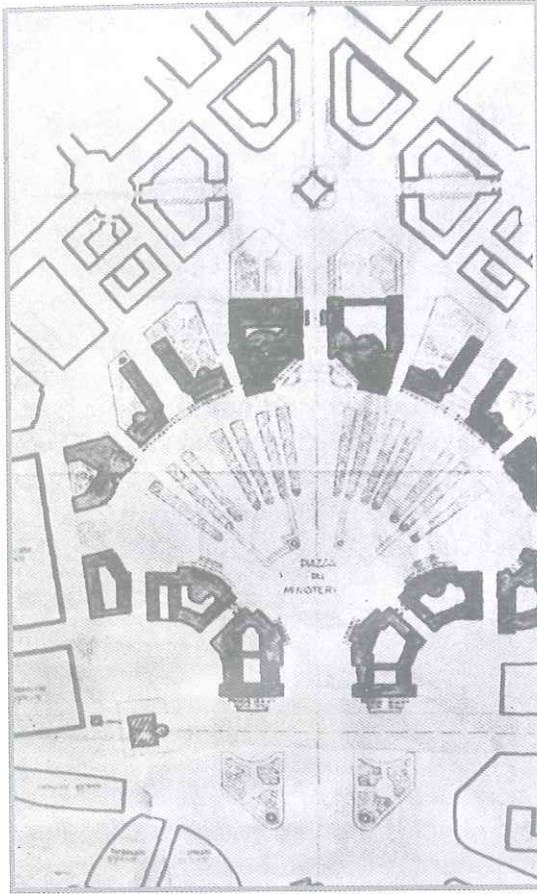


The borders of Tirana city on 1931

new one developed in 1931 that relied on a broken line that circumscribed a space of 6 km².

As far as the center of Tirana is concerned, several kinds of blueprints were developed which, regardless of the alterations and transformations they underwent later until its realization, all of them had the position of the boulevard as a point of reference, had the same compositional design and all were located in the middle of the city, west of the bazaar, where all the city's radial streets converged, and which in that time was an empty space.

The first earliest variant that was conceived following the regulatory plan of 1923 was the one that provided the creation of three squares, where the main and the greatest of them would be in front of the administration buildings and would occupy a space of 2 ha in the shape of a circle sector with its arc stretched towards south. The plan was to erect in this square several large-volume buildings, designed after the classical style that was still alive due to the Italian architectural school of the beginning of the 20th century, surrounded by frontals, porticos and colonnades. The second square placed south of the first was much smaller, had a rectangular shape and was included within a geometrical structure of the buildings in a position of 45° to the boulevard's direction. And the third one which occupied the entire space of the former "Scanderbeg" Square, had an undefined form and was surrounded by the existing buildings.



First option of centre of Tirana city, draft designed by Italian arch. Brasini

The second and the most prominent variant was that of architect Brasini, who designed the center of the town in the shape of a circle, similar to the Square of St. Peter in Rome, where the buildings of ministries would be placed by the perimeter of this circle. Other buildings of administrative and social functions, with facades parallel to the street, would be constructed along the boulevard, while at the end of the boulevard, south of the city, the presidential palace was to be built. Both the first and the second vari-

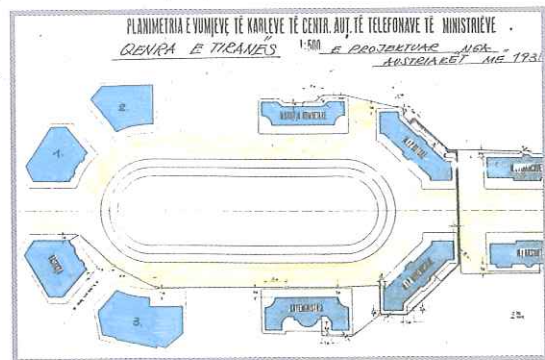
ants were not approved because of an inappropriate composition scheme in the first variant and because of the failure to include into them the historical objects such as the Mosque and the Clock Tower.



Brasinian north-east axis

The third variant that relied on the compositional solution of the second variant included only the project of a single square with a space of 2 ha and a longitudinal shape in the direction of the boulevard, where the narrow edges would end in semicircular shapes. The square is surrounded on all sides by 8 objects placed symmetrically.

This variant was approved not only because it offered a simpler compositional and harmonious solution, but also be-



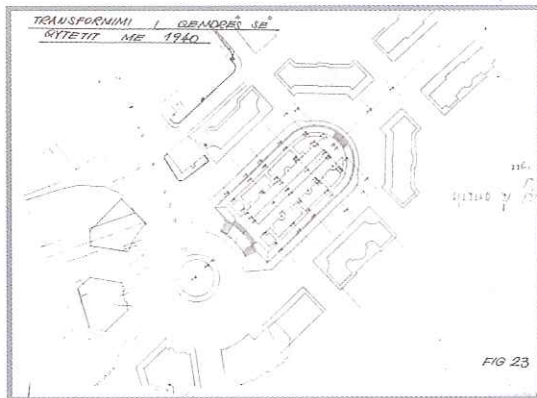
Third option of centre of Tirana city

cause it included the Mosque of Ethem Beu and the Clock Tower.

The fourth variant In the same year 1931, the Florentine architect *Florestano De Fausto* made the last attempt for the systemization of the city's center, an attempt that ended in success this time and was carried out almost entirely thanks to the ambitions of the King Zogu to make Tirana a modern European city. According to this plan, the *six-ministries' complex, the City Hall of Tirana, the National Bank, the flower garden* in the middle of this central complex, the *central square* with its *fountain* as well as the place that today is known as "*Parku Rinia*" were built.

The architectonic structure and style of the ministries' square

Architect De Fausto elaborated on and complemented the third variant with a flower garden in the middle of the four buildings of the ministries and a fountain in a circular shape between two other buildings north of the square. (The third



Fourth option of centre of Tirana city

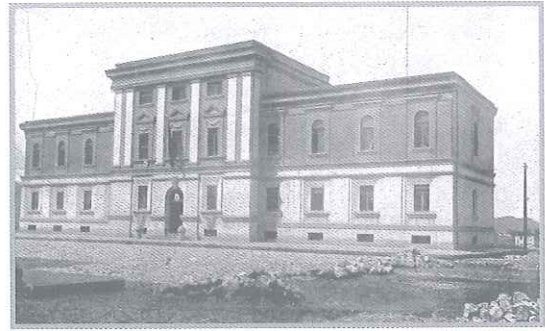
variant disposed 4 objects in the north wing). Because of the very great linear dimensions of the square and since the buildings around it were not very high, one or two floors were added to them, while the flower garden in their middle was dug deeper by 1.5 m so as to increase their height by an artificial effect. In fact, the architectural and urban project was trying to highlight the new image of Tirana by maximally avoiding the tearing down of the existing buildings such the old bazaar, shops, mosques, the Clock Tower, etc. The newly-built objects featured a high architectural quality and a powerful drive to look imposing, which demonstrated the power of the government of the King Zogu.

Architecturally, the Complex of the Ministries was performed inspired by pure Italian Renaissance style. The construction appears to be a mixture of reinforced concrete and brickwork. The use of heavy cornices at the division of floors in their facades, the decorative cornices at the windows, the tiny ornaments and sculptures as well as the stately entrance doors show again the pompousness of the neo-classical style and the power of a new government that was increasingly consolidating.

Raised fairly high from the ground, coated with bricks and grit mortar, accomplished according to very felicitous and harmonious proportions in the outer form and ornamented with architectonic elements after the neo-classical style, they doubtless represented the most contemporary and imposing style of the capital.



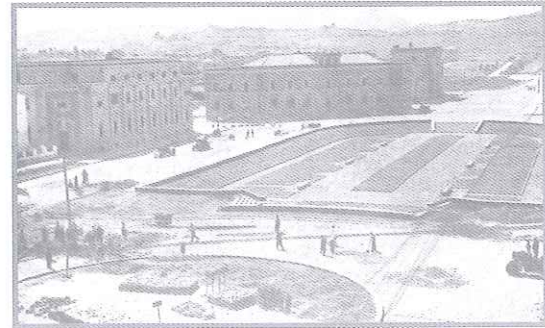
The finishing works of Scanderbeg Square, in the front: former Ministry of Internal Affairs.



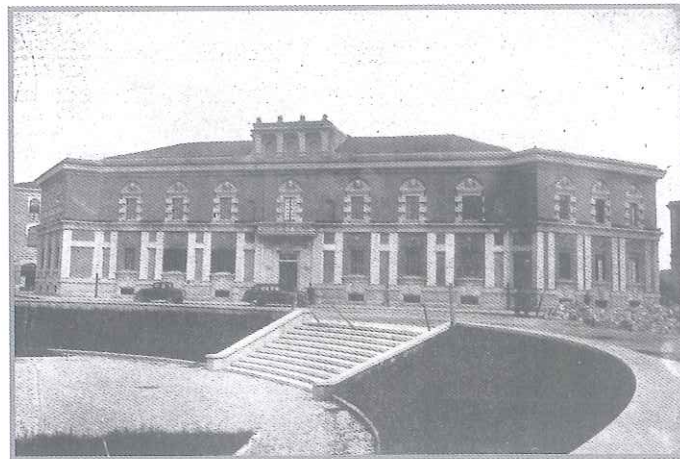
The former Ministry of Justice and Education



Municipality of Tirana built from 1929 to 1931



Gardens in the Scanderbeg Square finished on 1936

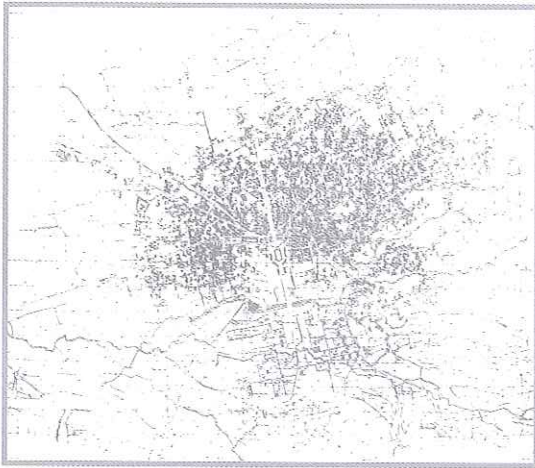


The former Ministry of Public Works

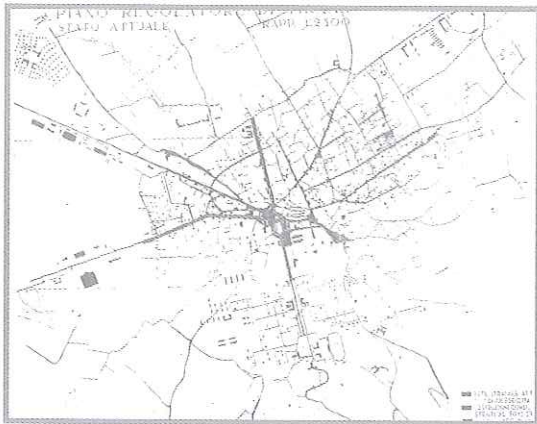
3. THE ITALIAN OCCUPATION AND THE WORLD WAR II (1939-1944)

On April 7, 1939, Italy occupied Albania officially and declared it a part of the Italian Kingdom by also adopting a special policy in the field of urban development. A product of this political change was the drafting of a *new regulatory plan* of Tirana, which, after being

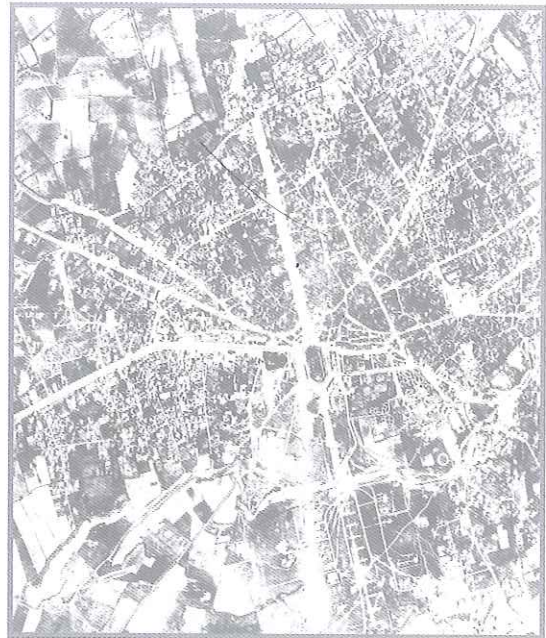
adopted, began to be implemented during 1939-1942. This plan provided the creation of a developed urban center that would be populated with Italian colonists. It was prepared by a mixed working group of Italian and Albanian specialists led by the Florentine architect *Gherardo Bossio* and the engineer *Ferdinando Poggi*.



Urban situation of Tirana on 1939



*Road traffic situation of Tirana on 1939
(scheme of transport)*



Aerial photo of Tirana on 1939

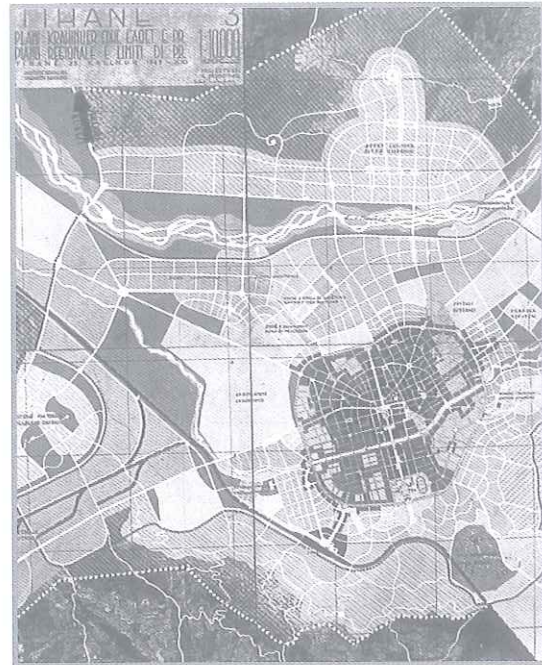
The regulatory plan of 1940

In their regulatory plan, the Italian architects foresaw Tirana as a city that would grow and develop increasingly, especially after the arrival of many Italian administrators and citizens who would reside in Albania permanently.

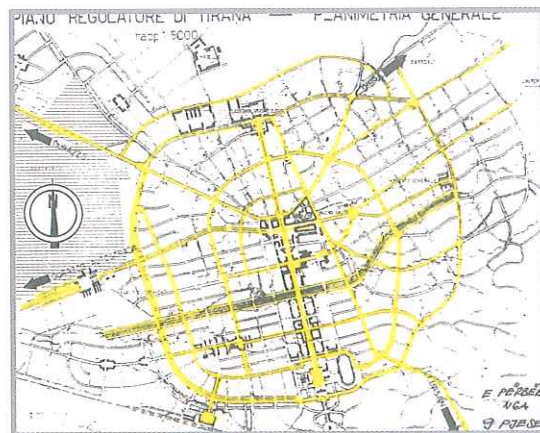
In 1937, Tirana counted 35,000 inhabitants, and when the work for the implementation of the regulatory plan began in 1939, the population had increased to 40,000, and by the end of the regulatory plan it had reached 75,000, with the city expanded from 500 ha to 800 ha.

The regulatory plan provided the development of the city for a period of 60 years, when the population would grow to 130,000 inhabitants, and the space of the city to 1,100 ha, with an average density of 130 inhabitants per ha, a mean figure for an extensive city.

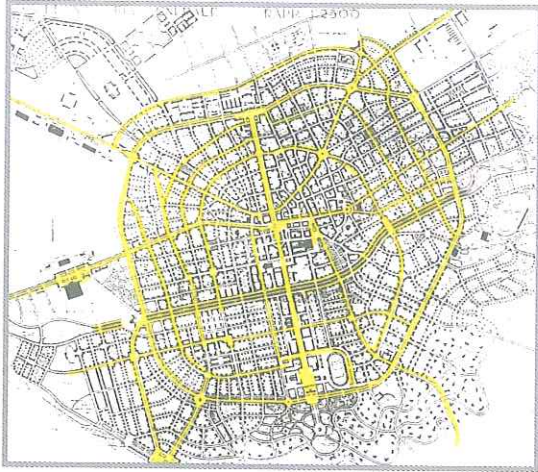
The master plan studies an area that is stretched on 2,800 ha by including here the military sections, the airport, the connecting and industrial sections that in total would make 1,700 ha. What's important in this master plan is that it defines the limits of Tirana as a municipality bordering the communes around it. These limits encompass a space of 7,300 ha. The landscaped areas, chiefly north and south of the city, would be of 132 ha, the sports section east of the city of 33 ha, the park behind the Fascio House (the University) in the hilly area of 22 ha, and the residential area of 660 ha. The city would grow northward, beyond the Lana River, so a satellite zone would be created and linked with the city by streets/bridges. This townlet of mansions would be greatly landscaped and be called CITTA GIARDINO (city-garden). The industrial section would grow NW and SW of the city, and in between these two sections a townlet of workers would



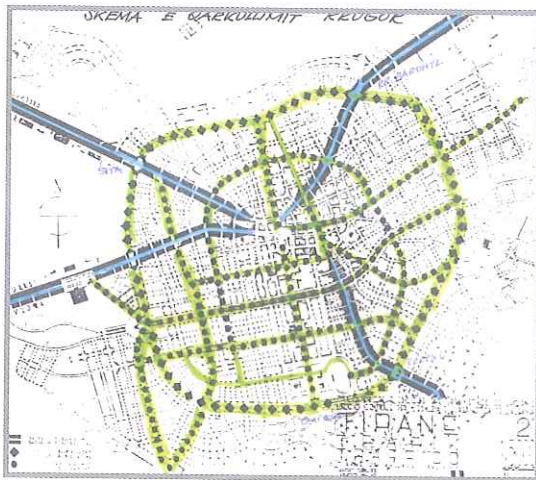
Urban MasterPlan of the year 1942



Proposed ring-radial road traffic system in the Urban MasterPlan of the year 1942



Tirana city Urban Conditions Rules in the Urban MasterPlan of the year 1942



Road circulation system in the Urban MasterPlan of the year 1942

be built. The railway station would be located SW of the city and would link Tirana with Durrës and the eastern region of Albania, and a track spur would link the industrial section; the hospital section and the cemetery would NE of the city; the fairs' section would be built NW of the city, and the airport would be west of

it and would be circumscribed by the outer ring road of the city, i.e. by the road of Durrës and road of Kavaja.

The system of streets is both radial and circular, and in the southern and south-western parts it is quadratic with parallel and perpendicular roadways. The systemized Lana River has an E-W direction and crosses the boulevard that is in the NS direction perpendicularly. The city is traversed by many ring roads such as the Greater Ring Road that intersects both the northern and southern parts of the boulevard, the Middle Ring Road, the Smaller Ring Road, and some partial ring roads. A principal roadway is the avenue that runs parallel with the western part of the Greater Ring Road and that terminates in the railway station.

In this regulatory plan Tirana is projected as an overly landscaped *city-park*, with low buildings and a very busy section at its center, whose accomplishment has been extremely difficult because of the strong feelings of private property expressed by the inhabitants. The regulatory plan has done its utmost to make as few expropriations as possible, to preserve the existing buildings and to maximally evaluate them, with the best purpose that the city would not lose the traces of the Turkish influence. The intensive area includes the boulevard with the government buildings, the avenues road of Durrës and road of Kavaja, the Old Bazaar Street, and the areas around them with buildings up to 5-storied high, which would house offices, shops, banks and

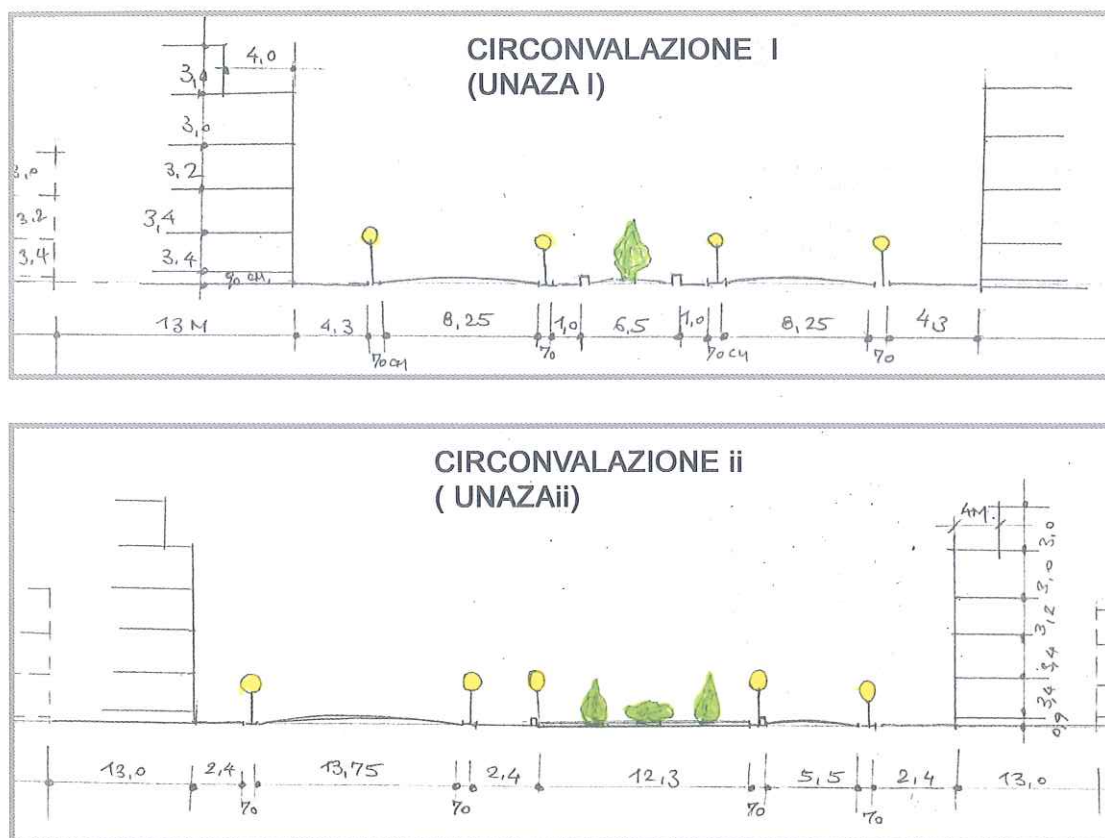
other facilities for serving the citizens. This regulatory plan contains schemes of the street traffic, the development of the downtown, the urbanistic conditions for the whole city, the zoning maps, the connection of the city with the Dajti Mountain by means of a lift, the plan of the graveyard, etc.

The urbanistic conditions are given in great detail both as summarized in the map of the entire city and as presented in 9 component maps of the general plan which, being drawn to a small scale,

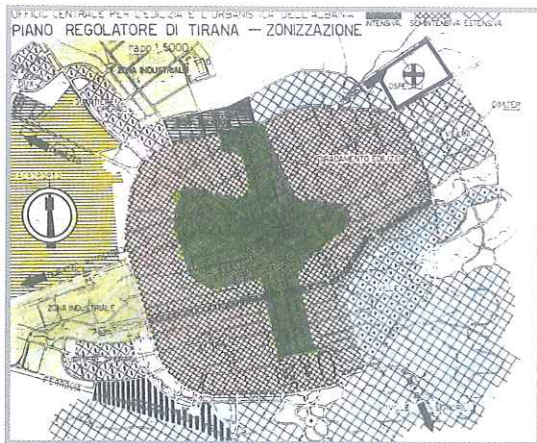
indicates every detail without leaving room for misinterpretations. By the same principles, the plan details the cross sections of all of the main streets and squares, including the sizes of streets and side-walks, the locations of the landscaped areas, the lighting, the distances of the buildings from the streets, their heights, etc.

Zoning

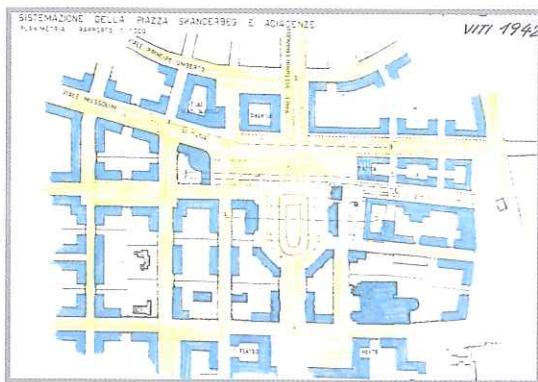
In the zoning map, the intensive area occupies 110 ha, it sustains a population of 33,000 inhabitants and includes the



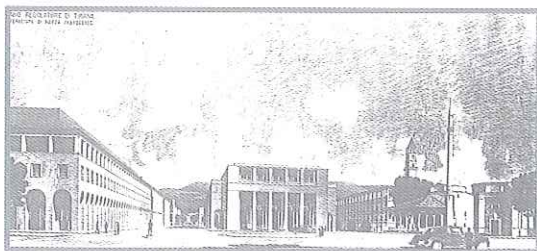
Details of the Tirana city Urban Conditions Rules of the two main rings of Tirana as defined in the Urban MasterPlan of the year 1942



Zonation according to Master Plan of the year 1942



Adjustment of the city centre, Master Plan of the year 1942



Hypothetic reconstruction of the Tirana centre,
Master Plan of the year 1942

area around the city's center, around the boulevard and the area in between the road of Durres and road of Kavaja, with a density of 300 inhabitants per ha. The half-intensive area occupies 280 ha, has a population of 56,000 inhabitants and a density of 200 inhabitants per ha, and encompasses nearly the greatest part of the city by extending mostly west and northeast. The extensive area stretches in the southern and eastern part of the city and occupies a space of 550 ha with a population of 44,000 inhabitants and a density of 80 inhabitants per ha. The extensive area and

The rational style of the fascist architecture and town planning

This urbanistic operation brought to Albania, particularly to Tirana, the influence of Italian architecture and town planning, especially of the times of Fascism, whose predominant feature is their rational character.

If during 1929-1938, from the urbanistic and architectonic aspect Tirana witnessed a qualitative leap of development by building a number of new roadways, the most notable of which being the boulevard "Zogu I", as well as by constructing the ministries' complex and many other objects of administrative, social and cult functions, *its real thrive Tirana witnessed during the period of Fascism*. During the period 1939-1944 Tirana assumed the appearance of a modern city with a powerful economic potency. The start of the implementation of the new regulatory plan and the

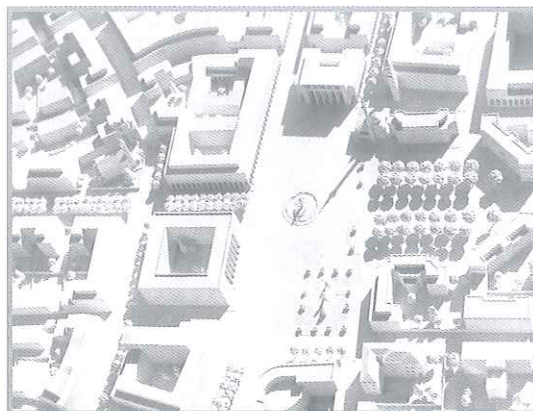
opening of job opportunities in addition to the substantial financing for the building of a new complex of Fascio caused Tirana to experience an economic prosperity and significant urban development.

The center

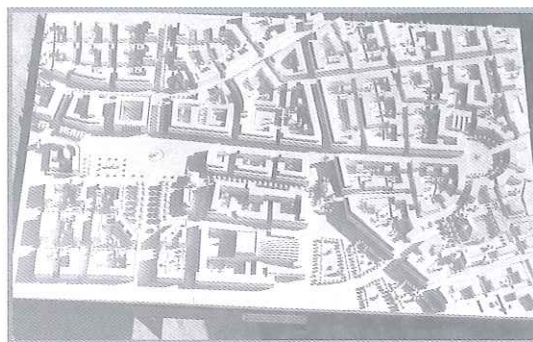
In the new regulatory plan of the downtown, the configuration of the central "Scanderbeg" Square underwent changes. The plan provided the tearing down of the building located in the northern part of the square (the former building of Executive Committee) as well as the construction of the new building of the City Hall, which was to be of a quadrangular shape in its ground plan and with an inner courtyard, thereby definitely correcting the flaw in the preceding plan that brought confusion in the city movement on account of the influx that came to the square from all of the radial roadways. The construction of the new City Hall would bring a smooth flow of traffic from the avenue road of Durrës to the one of road of Dibra, the latter being located in the eastern side of the object, and a smooth flow of traffic from the avenue road of Kavaja to the one of road of 28 Nëntori, the latter located south of the object, without any crash between them. Likewise, service and social and cultural facilities would be constructed around the city's center, such as the theater, the post office, various utilities, etc.

The "Impero" Boulevard

The elongation of the "Vittorio Emanuele" boulevard – the former "Zogu I"



Three dimensional view of hypothetical reconstruction of the Tirana centre, Master Plan of the year 1942

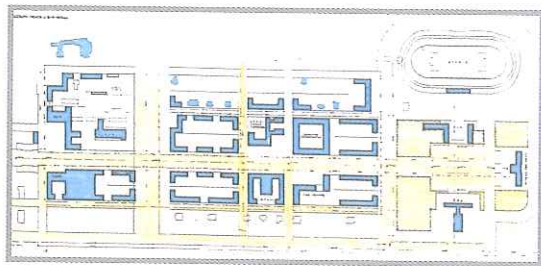


Model of hypothetical reconstruction of the Tirana centre, Master Plan of the year 1942

boulevard – south of the "Scanderbeg" Square, in the direction set by Brasini, was doubtless the most significant measure for the urban development of the city. It had been pre-arranged by a greatly detailed regulatory plan covering both the city's center and the "Impero" boulevard. But in order to justify the grandeur of this boulevard, it was proper for it to be complemented in both sides with buildings designed for offices, banks and social and commercial activities. From the volumet-



Brasianian axis of boulevard "Via del Impero",
nowdays the bl. "Martyrs of Nation"



Plan Layout of boulevard "Via del Impero",
Master Plan of the year 1942

ric aspect the buildings should be identical; also, they would be built within very appropriate distances from each other so as to achieve a proper density, and from the architectonic aspect they should be fairly descent to justify the width, the grandeur and the importance of this avenue, absolutely the most important of the city that traverses it right through the middle.



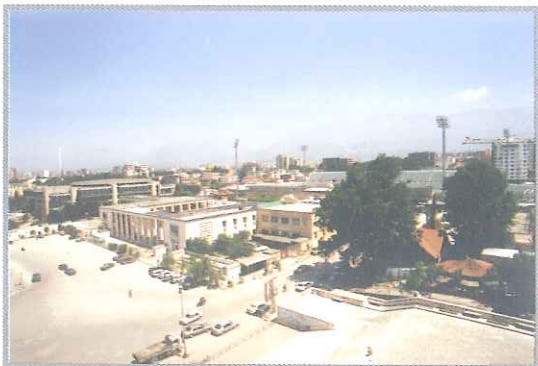
North- South axis of boulevard "Martyrs of
Nation" and "Zog I"

The political and sports complex

The boulevard "Viale del Impero" would serve as a connecting joint between the existing center of the city that was developing around the "Scanderbeg" Square and the new political and sports center that was to be developed in the southernmost end of this boulevard. The author of this great architectonic complex is architect Gherardo Bosio; it features a typical rational fascist architecture and includes the *Offices of the top officers* (the present-day building of the Council of Ministers), the *Military Headquarters* (the present-day Maternity Hospital) and the *Hotel* (Hotel Dajti), all of which are loca-



Actual night view of University of Tirana,
year 2003



Actual view of a part of "political-sportive"
complex



Actual view of the square "Madre Teresa" in the
centre of "political-sportive" complex

Thus, the neo-fascist architecture of the 1930s and the beginning of the 1940s was materialized through broad ceremonial avenues and squares for organizing grandiose parades, with porticos and walls coated with natural stones, with high colonnades and wide monumental stairs and with elevated stylobades, relieves and captions in Latin. In order to distinguish this new architectonic style from the Renaissance models, its authors adopted style, schematizations or simplifications of ancient ornaments such as the omission of capitals and frontals and the replacement of the tiled roofs with flat roofs.

Even though officially criticised by Albanian specialist since after World War II, the main ideas of this regulatory plan have played a positive role in envisioning and orienting the expansion of the city.

Although limited to a very short period of time due to the capitulation of the Fascist Italy, the plan had a very strong influence especially on the road network where it stimulated the creation of a *ring-radial street system* by building new roadways, and as concerns the four main streets that connect Tirana with the rest of the country, they were linked through a ring road measuring 8,11 km long and 33 m wide in the northeastern and northwestern parts, and 42 m wide in the southern and southwestern ones. The urban and architectonic transformation of this period was obvious.

In this period, *it was the most renowned architects in Italy and beyond who worked*

on and showed great interest in Tirana, including the father of modern architecture, the French architect Le Corbusier, who drew some preliminary rough ideas on the town planning of Tirana, but being charged with the task of developing the urbanistic plan of the city of Algiers (Algeria) at that time, he declined from being involved in working for the Albanian capital.

German occupation

The fall of Mussolini on September 1943 and the entry of nazi armies in Albania marked the end of urban and architecture developments in Tirana. The increase of the resistance against nazi forces brought series of fighting's to be finalised with the famous battle for the liberation of Tirana (October-November 1944), which caused a lot of damages to the cultural and historical monuments of Tirana. The panoramas of Tirana during

and after this battle were subject of many photos, movies and paintings of Albanian artists. The date of Liberation of Tirana, 17 Novembre 1944, apart from the glorious victory of Albanian Nacional Liberation Army, marks also the end of a period



*Ruins of the war for liberation of Tirana,
November 1944*

of urban development framed with the balance of private property and public interest based on the market principles.

4. DEVELOPMENT DURING THE CENTRALIZED ECONOMY (1945-1990)

The end of the World War II brought a communist government in Albania. This marks the end of the Italian of the Fascist period's influence on Tirana's town planning. The dictatorial communist system was too centralized and inclined toward launching urban operations that ignored private ownership, with architects and town planners enjoying the "freedom" to revolutionarize and transform everything with one stroke of the pencil always within the limits and the political instructions of the routine Plenum of the Central Committee of the Party of Labor of Albania.

So, following 1945, *private property* began to suffer a gradual and eventually a total elimination through forced and unrecompensed expropriations. *Collectivization* became the basic principle of organizing the way of life. In the meantime, Albanian professionals were educated and oriented in the concepts of Russian school. Economy was increasingly shifting toward centralization and drastic cuts in financial resources and means on the principles of "*economic frugality*" and "*total reliance on our own forces*", principles that were especially emphasized after the break of relations with the Soviet Union and China, particularly following 1978 when Albania remained "the only center of true Communism" in the world! (quotations are taken from officials' declarations of the time). It is in this general political and ideological background the when started the first efforts to repair the war

ruins and which continued with creating new urban structures during a period of nearly half a century.

The regulatory plan of 1957

The new regulatory plan of Tirana was drawn up in 1957. Its basis consisted in a renewed development of the existing zones and creating new peripheral areas in the form of *satellite towns* in order to provide the labor force for the new local industry (mechanical and textile), agricultural enterprises and coal mines mainly along the main transport roadway and towards the outskirts of the city.

Although the creation of new peripheral zones was one of the main dilemmas for Albanian architects and town planners, in practice the development and the redevelopment of the existing Tirana with the aim to eliminate the private estate was turned into a real "mania". So, except for a significant transformation and improvement in some specific urban situations, town planning operations often came to annihilate entire blocks of traditional buildings of historical and environmental values. Admittedly, a positive effect of this plan was that for the first time after the war, the unplanned constructions were strictly curbed.

The statistics of the time shows that:
in 1945 Tirana counted 59,000 inhabitants;
in 1955 the population was 108,000 inhabitants,

in 1960 it grows to 136,000 inhabitants.

The directives of the new regulatory plan of 1957 can be summed up as follows:

1 - Growth of habitation density in the existing Tirana in order to eliminate private estate.

2 - Re-adjusting the zoning functions, redistributing the industrial and residential zone.

3 - Improvement and enlargement of road network.

4 - Preserving several zones as monuments of culture as historic values.

5 - Rational exploitation of the land.



Urban Plan of the year 1957



Aerial photo of Tirana on 1959



Urban situation of Tirana on 1965

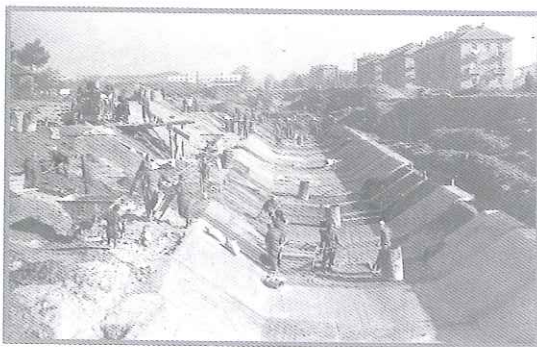
Road system

The regulatory plan of 1957 was drawn up on the basis of the existing situation of the road network. In 1957 Tirana had only 14.1 km of streets. This plan gave the city expansion to the boundaries of the old ring road and provided for the paving of 73.5 km of streets including two ring roads, one inner and one outer.

One more reason for the new plan of 1957 to provide for the enlargement and extension of the city eastward (towards Dajti) was because of the good geological conditions of the ground. The street system of the city was thought to be a radial-circular one by attaching utmost importance to the north-south-directed boulevard.

In spite of the strong ideological pressure, it can be clearly seen that the roadbed of the outer ring road passes exactly according to the outer ring road that had been projected in the regulatory plan of 1942.

The outer ring road of 7.5 km was almost finished in 1965. Two other avenues parallel with Lana were built, and the



View from the works of construction of the "bed" of Lana river

main streets such as road of Durrës, road of Kavaja etc. were improved.

The expansion of the city towards east and south dictated the elongation of the radial streets; one part of the ring road from Rruga Labinoti to the great boulevard was not carried out due to financial difficulties, and its roadbed was kept for building it in a later time.

Zoning

Historical Zone

In spite of declarations for preserving the historical zone, the intent was to lower the significant importance of the old city that bore Oriental influences, a measure that found expression in tearing down the old bazaar and developing the area where today is the Palace of Culture built in 1960.

Industrial Zone was to be developed east and west of the city, where the most prominent construction was the "Stalin" Textile Plant and the workers' townlet of 4,000 families.

Landscaping

As far as landscaping is concerned, the set objective was to reach the standard of 8 m²/inhabitant and build a landscaped zone (the park around the Lake) of 190 ha south of the city.

Residential Area

The residential area plan inside the first ring road provided for the construction of 3-4-floor buildings that would have a density of 350 inhabitants/ha,



Blocs of flats of habitations in the two sides of Str. of Kavaja.

while the residential area outside the first ring road would contain 1-3-storied buildings.

During this period, new residential areas were created which, from the town planning standpoint, appear to be interesting efforts, but that were accomplished with an extremely low architectural and execution quality. The urban layout and the panoramic silhouettes of these residential quarters such as *Laparakë*, *Allias*, the "Partizani" block, the "Vasil Shanto" block, "Ali Demi", "Profarma", "Dina-



View from the former "Stalin" Textile Plant in Tirana

mo" etc. were utterly disregarded in the name of cost reductions. But it was more a reflection of cuts in financial resources rather than the lack of skills among specialists, who suffered an extreme isolation from foreign contemporary experience and literature and the impossibility to turn back to tradition.

Consequently, it was almost impossible to avoid the monotonous replication and architectonic paucity of these blocks, especially of the prefabs. In spite of the considerable investment and the abuse of unpaid labor in the name of voluntary work, housing in Tirana became a social nightmare that was further aggravated by the increase in population.

The regulatory plan of 1957 proved to be a great deviation from what was expected, beginning with the demolition of the old bazaar (no building project was ever submitted for the construction of the Palace of Culture) to the extension of the industrial zone, which *overextended* to 390 *ha* instead of 86 *ha* that was planned to extend in 20 years.

The city's center

The idea to organize the center of Tirana was inspired by the tendencies of communist authorities to deny everything that was connected with the past, especially with monarchy and Fascism. The history of Tirana would originate only after 1945!

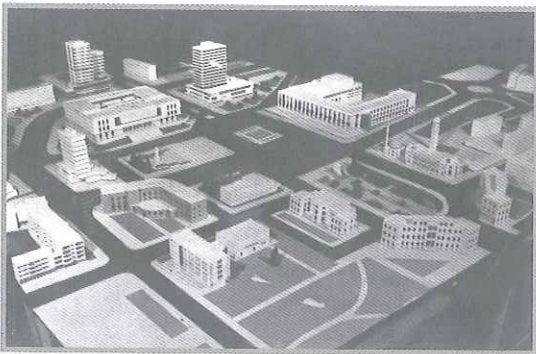
The operations that began in Tirana following the town planning studies of 1963 and 1974 and that focused the au-

thorities' attention on the city's center were really typical. This was a delicate moment for Tirana's identity.

These changes didn't come without high costs in losing one important part of the historical memory of the city. Even though the architectonic values of the demolished buildings were often modest, which was also because of the deterioration of the private estate's condition due to the lack of maintenance thereof and the elimination of private property, in fact, together with "modernization" an attempt was made thereby to wipe out the scant evidence of the city's origins.



View of buildings flats in the Str. of Dures and Str. Mine Peza.

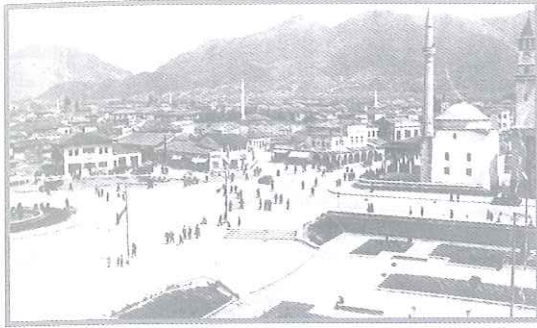


Model of the centre of the city designed on 1970

The center of Tirana was conceived as a "monumental space" that would represent the "force and rebirth" of Albania, Albanian nation and state. To achieve this goal, the *old bazaar of Tirana, the City Hall, the Orthodox Cathedral, an old ensemble* of shops, hotels, bars, and a group of traditional houses were torn down on account of being considered as "degraded and worthless" objects. This is how the scant evidence of their Tirana-esque origins were substituted by important objects such as the *Palace of Culture, Hotel Tirana, the National Historical Museum, the "Scanderbeg" Square* and a group of new residential buildings, etc. The only historical buildings that were taken under protection were the *Mosque of Ethem Beu and the Clock Tower*, the complex of ministries (excluding the old City Hall) and some typical Tirana houses which, though they borrowed certain foreign elements, they were in themselves genuine interpretations of local architecture.

At the end of the 1980s, the city' center assumed an excessively official character, monumental size and inhuman proportions, such that even today most citizens consider it a cold expanse. This was further emphasized by a shortage in service facilities and by the fact that many objects had official nature and functions.

So, from a meeting point for its citizens, Tirana's downtown was simply transformed into a "cycloramic backdrop" for the regime and a crossroads for the regulation of the daily pedestrian and



The location of old bazaar occupied by the construction of "Palace of Culture"

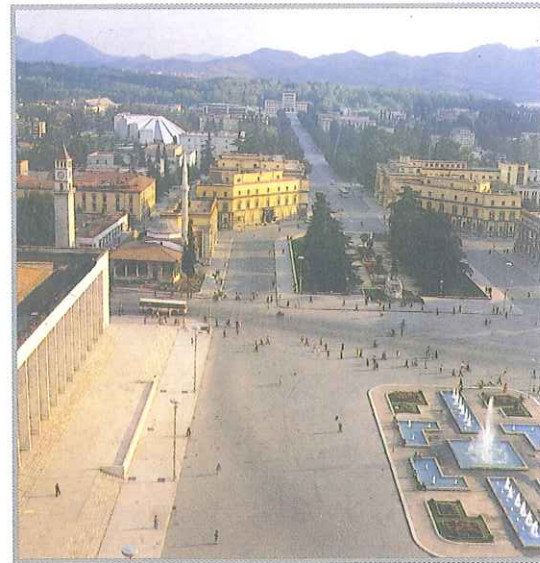
vehicular traffic. The architectonic style somewhat outlandish was no longer attractive for the citizens and the executed urban operations had a negative impact on majority's psychology. They interrupted the historical continuum of tradition, let alone the present and the future, which ensures the very continuation of development.

This was so because technical solutions were conditioned by zealous ideological interpretations. With the erection of the National Historical Museum, the "Scanderbeg" Square assumed its definitive shape and was designed for political rallies, public manifestations and ideological events. Such interventions reflected the inclination towards the models of Stalinist architecture and town planning of East-European countries.

The construction of the National Historical Museum brought about important changes on "Scanderbeg" Square. The new avenue "Ded Gjon Luli" located behind the Museum was widened to 21 m, and its 6-10 m wide side-walks together with the widened street "Rruga e Barrika-



The new view of the centre on 1960. "Palace of Culture"

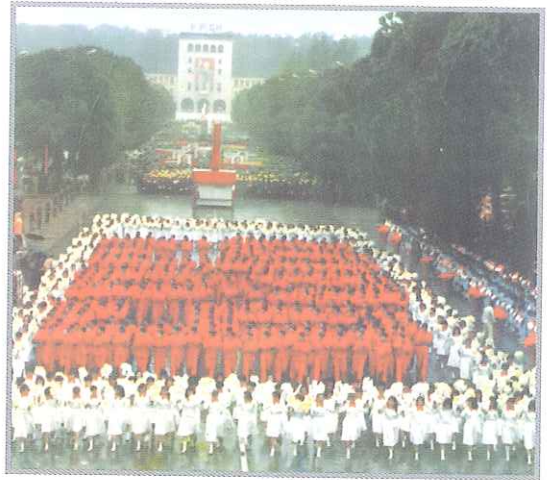


View of centre of Tirana city on 1980

dave" were included in the ring road that was built later, the city's smallest ring road around its center, that has facilitated greatly the traffic in the center.



View of the north of the Tirana centre



View of the parades and manifestations on the occasion of 1 May



Arial view of Muse of Dictator Enver Hoxha



Panoramic view of South of Tirana city



View of the Tirana centre, 1980

The existing situation of the city

If the density of the streets in downtown was 5-5.3 km/km², that is greater than normal (2.5-4), in the outskirts it was 1.7-1.8 km/km², smaller than the standard because of the failure to carry out the regulatory plan.

The new layout of the center of Tirana was in sharp contrast with the rest of the city. The traditional quarters, such as the one that is known by the name of "Red Tirana", were isolated and became hid-



The building flats beyond National Historical Museum, in the side of the smallest ring of the city



A line of flat building units based on pre-fabricated armed concrete elements



Modern trend on flat building in Albania, applied by arch. Maks Velo, an Albanian dissident, imprisoned during communist regime



Panoramic view of Tirana of the years 80'

den from the city behind the dummy constructions on main streets.

Such psychology predominated in the redevelopment of other parts of the city too, where the quality of interventions was much lower than that in the center and left much to be desired.

In order to totally eliminate the private estate, both old and not quite old urban structures were torn down to be replaced by complexes of apartment buildings (often prefabs) of a very modest quality.

Generally, the use of rehabilitation projects was not preferred and it's redevelopment of existing sections that was applied rather than opening new zones for development. The new urban structures frequently did not produce better situations, while the costs of redevelopment remained constantly very high.

The regulatory plan of 1989

In 1985, the National Planning & Architecture Institute launched the drawing

up of a new regulatory plan that was adopted by government on 1989.

This new regulatory plan had become most necessary than ever because the plan of 1957 had gone outdated, the housing needs had increased beyond the projected limits, the residential sections were expanded to the detriment of public service facilities and the industrial section had not only been enlarged beyond expectations, but had also become mixed with residential areas.

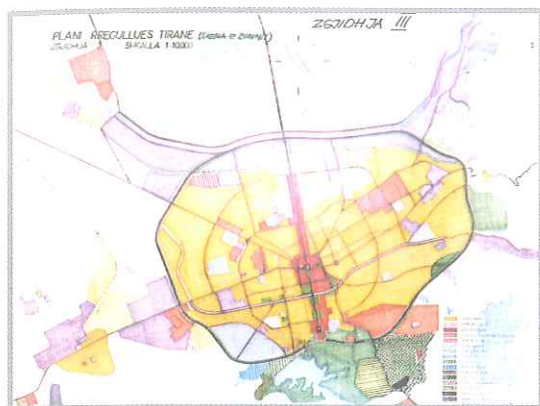
Objectives

Objective I of this plan was to satisfy the housing needs by 2005; to define new spaces for industrial development by considering ways of settling the pollution problems; and to enlarge and improve the road network.

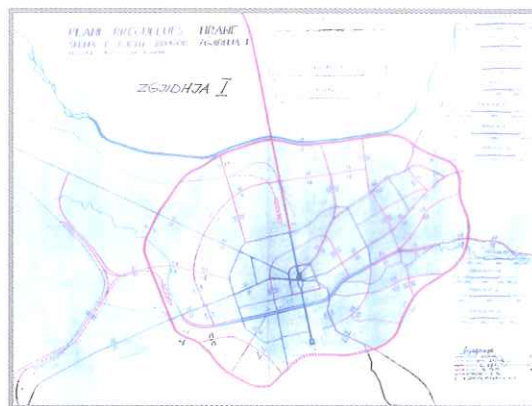
Objective II of the regulatory plan was to review and reassess a great part of the residential area that was marked as an inappropriate settlement area. From 960 ha of the inhabited area, only 460 ha were considered as properly settled, while the rest of 500 ha was to be the focus of more detailed reassessment plans, in which the necessary space for service facilities was to be found even at the cost of obtaining such space by tearing down existing structures.

Objective III A growing concern to be settled by the new regulatory plan was that of immigration, which would be very difficult to control following 1990.

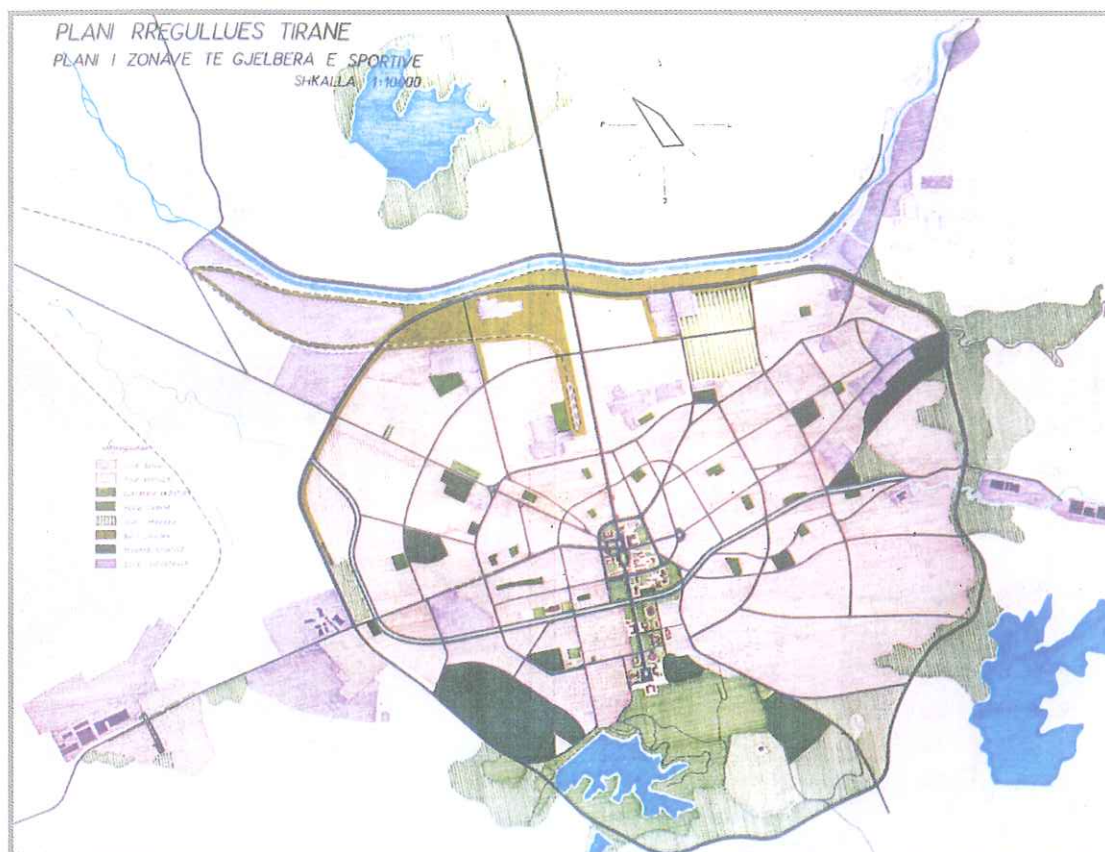
From 60,000 inhabitants that Tirana counted in 1945, the population had in-



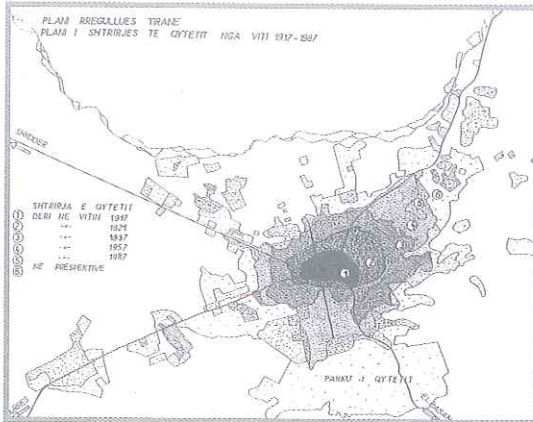
Urban Plan of the year 1989.
Option I of the zoning scheme



Option I of the road system, Urban Plan of the
year 1989



Option II of the road system and green areas, Urban Plan of the year 1989



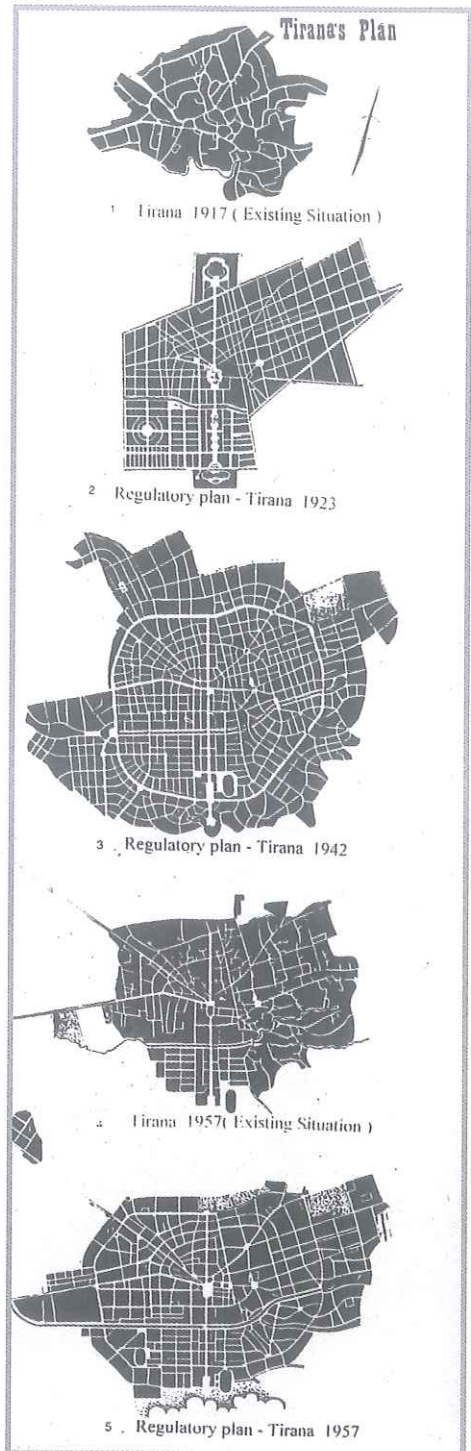
Tirana city extension process from 1917 until 1987

creased to 300.000 in 1992. The new plan provided for the population's growth to reach 317.000 by 2005. In spite of the presence of this demographic dynamics, the plan provides for a reduction in the residential density from 224 inh./ha in 1988 to 170 inh./ha in 2005 due to the enlargement of the residential area space.

Road network

This regulatory plan was designed to use the existing network of roadways and to accommodate it to the increasing needs of the city. The road system remained ring-radial, which creates problems in cities bigger than half a million because of traffic jam by crossroads.

1 - The main focus of this regulatory plan was considered to be *the elongation of the boulevard "Martyrs of Nation" northward*, which at a turn in the western side intersects the road to Kruja and there is where its break takes place, as one branch is connected with the highway, the other one terminates in Rinas. This would be the main entrance to the city.



2 - Another important task of this regulatory plan was the creation of a new *outer ring road* that would be used for the heavy traffic and, most importantly, would be set as a boundary for other developments. From this roadway, only a small segment in the western part of Tirana has been built, one that links the avenue road of Durrës with that of road of Kavaja.

3 - Other assignments of this plan were *the elongation* of all of *the radial streets* down to their intersections with the new ring road.

4 - Creating two new *radial roads* such as road "Don Bosko" and a new street close to the Civil Engineering Faculty.

5 - *Elongating the avenues parallel with Lana* westward and eastward, from the

eastern part down to Shkozë, and from the western part down to its intersection with Rruga e Kavajës.

6 - *Creating a half ring road between the existing ring road and the new one.*

Zoning

Until 1985 Tirana extended to 1540 ha.

The 1989 plan provided for an expansion of the city to 32 km² (3238 ha) divided into:

- Residential area of 1902 ha
- Industrial area of 524 ha
- Facilities 293 of ha
- Landscaped area of 439 ha
- Farming area (greenhouses, nursery plots, etc.) of 80 ha.

5. DEVELOPMENTS IN POST-COMMUNIST ERA

Following 1990, a period of democratic changes that was typical all over the Eastern and Central Europe began in Albania as well. For the very specificity of Albania (the crisis of pyramid investments schemes, the Kosova crisis 1999, the events in FYROM and the frequently irrational conflict between the political powers) this transition period, which is still going on, in the present days of March 2003, would leave very distinctive traces on the architecture and urban development of Tirana.

Illegal constructions

The new experience with urban development during the 1990s in Tirana created one of the most singular cases of architectural and urban development models in Europe, especially for its dynamism and energy as well as for its irregularity and total chaos on the one hand, and the total absence of development plans and policies on the other hand. The pattern of the chaotic development of Tirana during this period is the best indication of a difficult political, econo-



The overthrow of the dictator monument in the centre of Tirana, 20 February 1991, 14.00, HRS, sunshine, more than 100 000 people in the Scanderbeg Square

mic and social transition from a centralized economy to a free-market society. The situation of architecture and urban planning in this period is the best visual expression of the city's difficult transition.

The achieved freedom was miss-used to such an extent that it came to almost ignore and violate the public interest. At least 70 percent of constructions made in Tirana following 1990 have been without building permissions. This situation went on degenerating further because of an hesitation in the restitution process of the

private estates that were expropriated without compensation after 1945.

What characterizes Tirana of this period is an extreme degradation in the quality of urban environments and the occupation of public lands by illegal developments, a process that is accompanied by serious harms to environment. Shortcomings in legislation and the failure to enforce the law aggravated this chaos further. Such situation was also favored by a high level of unemployment and poverty. Conflicts between the political powers had a negative influence on



Aerial photo of Tirana year 1994



Illegal kiosks near Tirana clock tower



Illegal kiosks in Str. of Elbasani



*View of illegal construction and kiosks over
Lana river*



Kiosks near National Historical Museum



Illegal construction in north – east of Tirana



*A process of illegal construction in the side and
over Lana river*



Common view of the centre of Tirana in the years 1993-1999

the culture of co-existence in a free society. They came to incite urban disorders that could find expression in two main directions:

- illegal constructions for housing purposes, mainly in the outskirts of the city, as is the case of Bathore;
- illegal constructions for business purposes, mainly around the center of the city, such is the case with the Lana River.

The extent of law infringement ranges further from *informality* (where land ownership is respected, but town planning norms and standards are violated) to *illicitness* (where land ownership and town planning regulations are not re-

spected). According to unofficial sources, the number of informal and illegal objects in Tirana is about 20.000, while in the district there are counted about 80.000 ones.

By mid-1990s, Tirana counted at least 2,000 *kiosks* of which only about 500 were with provisional permits. The majority of them were constructed without projects at all and often in amateurish and hackneyed ways because of shortages in financial resources. Whole quarters of illicit buildings were constructed in the outskirts of Tirana as a result of the free movement of people who came mainly from the northeastern regions of the country, where economic problems were even more complicated.

Illegal buildings are neither simply an expression of the low level of development in Albanian society, nor are they simply a question of culture of the poor.

They are primarily a clear expression of the weakness of public administration and, in particular, to ensure other legal alternatives as well as that laws are obeyed and implemented.

They also reflect a lack of vision and vacuum of development policies by the local authorities, especially in the field of urban development and housing over the years of transition. They bear witness to the lack of connection between the local authorities and the communities in question. They are also a reflection of the negative influence of the centralised policies drafted at the central governmental level.

The concept of illegal construction must not be seen as activity of unlawful buildings only. There are also a great number of buildings which are "legal" from the point of view of official urban planning, though they do not respect even the most elementary rules of urban development, because they are built on green spaces between existing buildings and provide accommodation only, without other important functions of urban existence, such as green spaces, room for car parking, emergency exists, etc..

The building plans drafted by architects and reviewed by the urban planning authorities are regarded only as instru-

ments for getting a building licence. The main criterion is the profit, as interpreted by the investors themselves.

In many instances, they are not the fruit of in-depth studies comprising all the factors needed to be taken into consideration to guarantee not only the housing as living space, but also all the other components of human existence and social activity under normal living condition.

The process of the demolition of Illegal constructions

The dilemma on what to do with the illegal constructions in major urban areas first occurred in 1998 when the Albanian authorities began to exercise control after the civil unrest of 1997. Before that, virtually all buildings were built without planning permission and it was quite unthinkable that anyone would ever tear them down.

The first demolitions began rather as an attempt by the state authorities to demonstrate their resolution in the matter. The demolition work was welcomed by the population.

Public confidence in the seriousness and resolution of the authorities to set forth zoning regulations, depended on the attitude the authorities toward strategic areas of illegal buildings in the capital city, such as in the (RINIA YOUTH) park and along the banks of the Lana river, where much of green space in the city center was destroyed in the last few

years by booming of informal business enterprises, or in the neighbourhood of Bathore which represent the highest rate and number of illegal buildings in the country, with a surface of about 400 ha.

In the former case, in which the illegal buildings consist primarily of business premises, the authorities were extremely harsh in their reaction. The buildings in question were demolished within a relatively short period of time and there was little resistance.

Today the demolition process has entered in a new phase. The Municipality of Tirana in cooperation with the Construction Police has completed the clearance of the most of the illegal buildings along the banks of Lana river and in the city centre. In a short period of time, about 550 illegal buildings were crushed down along a 4 km length of Lana river.

The demolition process included even illegal 10 store buildings which damage the urban-plan and the existing infrastructure of the location, achieving finally the target that, multi store buildings, additional sided floors, garages, and other fencing works of any kind which represent the worse urban phenomena in Tirana, cannot survive only because of the high rate of return.

Additional floor extentions, especially the sided ones, damaged the facades of majority of the buildings, creating a negative image especially those erected along the main streets.

Demolition of the illegal construction, big or small, has recently stopped the trend of breaking urban rules which cause destruction of public interest and damage image of Tirana city.

The demolition process is not the only urban policy. Specific actions are carried out based on comprehensive projects of rehabilitation of a certain areas, neighbourhoods, or main street.

There were considerable economic losses involved by all this demolition process and a large profit might have gone to the local authorities if the investments had originally been carried out in a legal manner.

The typical case were the demolitions on Lana river which consisted of a physical investment totalling 6 million US\$, not counting 2 millions USD for site cleaning, and the economic spin-off effect of the economic activities, employment and tax revenues.

This case has shown the lack of vision and of vacuum of development policies by the local authorities, to utilise in the right and proper manner the financial means of private entrepreneurs.

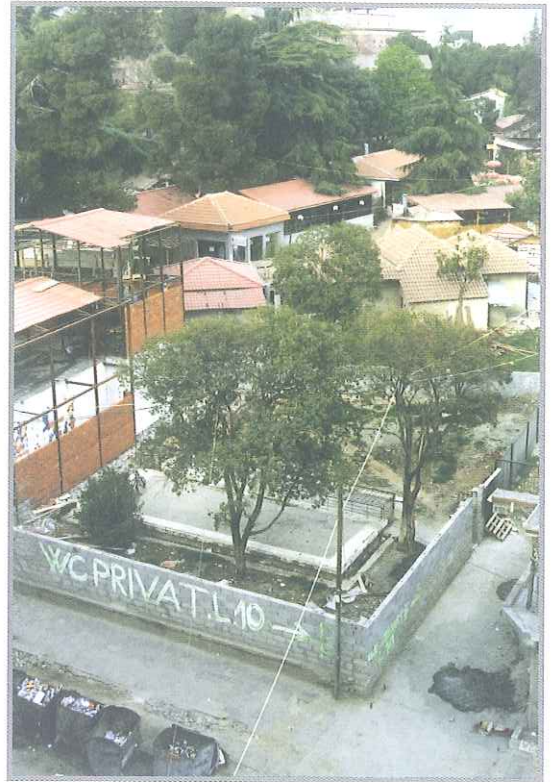
In the case of Bathore neighbourhood, where the buildings are primarily private homes, the local authorities have hesitated to undertake any action to demolish them. Similar attempts, made in 1995 and 1998 failed and degenerated into concerning social conflicts with the inhabit-



Kiosks behind Palace of Culture



Kiosks along the road from Unknown soldier to clock tower



Kiosks constructed within the area of Park "Rinia-Youth"



Demolition of kiosks in the Park "Rinia-Youth"



Demolition of kiosks in the banks of Lana

ants of the area. As such, the authorities have preferred to take a softer approach, that of improving and integrating the areas in question. Indeed, during the last local elections the issue of "illegalization", which had been a taboo up to then, was brought at stake for the first time. The Municipality of Tirana recently created a special unit to study the possibility of legalization of buildings on a case to case basis. A pilot area is selected to produce a model to be used further as national policy.

Existing infrastructure

General overview

The rapid increase of population and, as a consequence, the great extension of housing and development areas exceeded the containing capacity of infrastructure network. The densification of existing zones over years combined with negative effects accumulated by limited investment in maintaining the infrastructure is resulting in lowering the quality in community service utilities such as vehicle highways, drinking water, sewage system (sewerages), electric power, telephone service, refuse disposal, etc.

The lack of infrastructure in the zones of new developments, especially in the neighborhoods of squatters in the city's outskirts has had a serious impact on the health of the suburb dwellers and it is expected that the situation may degrade further if prevention measures are not taken.

The scarcity of roads impedes the development of public transport, reduces



Land degradation behind the Palace of Culture from the suspension of construction permit



Degradation of the bed and sides of Lana river from illegal construction

job opportunities, hinders the disposal of waste and generally contributes to the inefficiency of all urban activities. Consequently, the economic profits that usually derive from the urbanization process get hindered.

The environmental negative impact caused by informal non-urban development of territory is aggravated and likely to become irreversible. Unpaved and undrained roadways in these areas increase erosion, damage the sewage system and increase pollution. Illicit discharge of sewerage in entire habitation areas can pollute potable water sources such as wells that are often used by new squatters. The lack of roadways for vehicles can hinder the disposal of garbage which generally ends in rivers or is dumped in big heaps.

Many of these new areas have no schools and social service facilities, and illiteracy is becoming a growing problem.

All these factors have made the phenomenon of rapid urbanization a critical



Aerial view of Bathore zone in 1994

and harmful process accompanied by high economic and social costs.

The illegal quarter of "BATHORE"

At the turn of 1990s, Kamza location was a rural area with about 7,000 inhabitants. Early in 1991, soon after the adoption of the free movement of population and the launch of land privatization reform, a rapid process of illegal buildings began to take place. Nearly all the squatters of this zone are from northeastern regions of Albania (Tropojë, Dibër, Kukës, Mat, Mirditë, Pukë, etc.) that are economically poor regions because of their isolation by mountainous territories and the lack of necessary road infrastructure and telecommunications and limited resources as well.

In addition, the isolated and hopeless people of above mentioned poor regions, encouraged by the chaos of political changes as well as the total lack of vision



Aerial view of Bathore zone in 1999

on the part of authorities of the time, took the initiative to settle in the vicinity of big cities and particularly Tirana for a better living.

In present days, the population of Kamza municipality, where the neighborhood of Bathore is included, is 10 times greater than what it was in 1990 and represents the highest rate of urban growth in the country.

In the area of Bathore, which is extended over a space of 400 ha, all squatters either have unofficial status, or are illicit.

While the number of newcomers increases by every passing day, the Kamza municipality have been able to register only 60 percent of them.

Local government authorities have been almost totally unable to cope with such population growth rates. They have had very small budgets at their disposal; their powers have been quite limited and their experience inadequate. The Kamza municipality, however, can be mentioned as an interesting example for establishing a better way of governing into practice even in such difficult local conditions.

Such specific urban reality is in the Municipality of Kamza as informal as dynamic, and so are the social-economic parameters, challenges and difficulties to be faced every day. The local authorities are intensively collaborating in some development projects with the World Bank and other NGOs in order to alleviate the



Aerial view of Kamza 1995

situation. The most strategic partner has been Co-PLAN, Institute for Habitat Development, a professional non-governmental and non-profit organisation. It operates in the urban management and community development field as well as in designing or implementing different projects and development policies in these fields.

Co-PLAN has started its activity in illegal settlements since 1995 and in Kamza since 1997. As a result of the collaboration with the Municipality, a three-year project was in place: *"Empowering Local Government and Community Based Initiatives in Kamza Municipality"*.

Based on the preliminarily identified priorities from the Kamza Municipality, three basic objectives of the project were identified:

1. *Designing the Strategic Urban Development Plan of the Municipality (SUDP)*
2. *Training the Municipality staff*
3. *Pilot investments on basic social and physical infrastructure*



Arrival the first load of stones



Building the first floor



Building a "barrake"



Completing the house

The sample of the steps of process of the illegal construction



Bathore - Kamez 2002



Community participation in the draft of the urban plan and exposure of this plan in a visible place as a transparency activity of the consensual process



Pointing on site of the future public spaces and roads

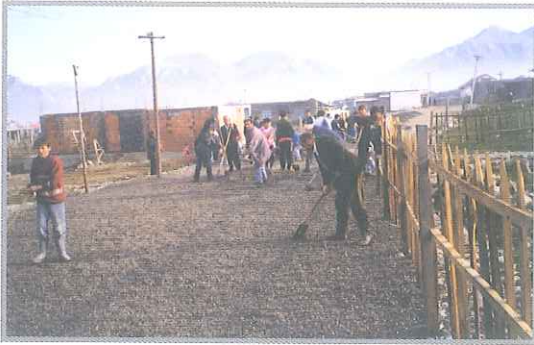


Consensual removal of the private fences to make room for public spaces and roads



View of a road in construction in Bathore based on implementation of Co-Plan and World Bank Community Driven Development projects





View of a road in construction based on implementation of Co-Plan and World Bank CDD principles



Gardens in the centre of Kamza before and after rehabilitation



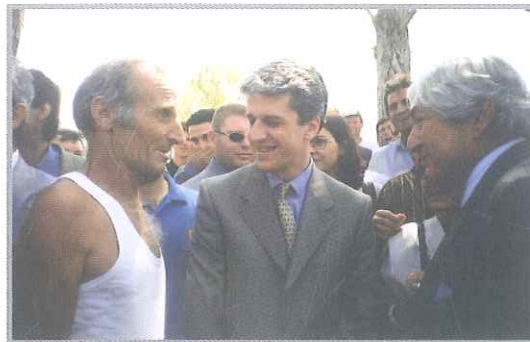
New community centre in Bathore



Maintainance of children playground



Bathore community NGO signed the cooperation agreement with District Council, Tirana, 2000



Site Visit of World Bank President, Wolfhanson, and Prime Minister of Albania in Bathore, 2000

Designing of the SUD Plan, as the main and basic objective of the project which synthesizes the long-term interests and visions of the municipality for the future, is led and accompanied by a special communication strategy.

It aimed at the transparency and the publication of the process and the collaboration among all the interested parties and actors as well as the involvement of the community as a partner and co-owner of the plan. This has been carried out through publications in media, brochures, leaflets, posters or through direct meetings with residents.

Structural elements of the SUD Plan are:

- a - Data collection and analysis of situation of the Municipality
- b - forecast of the growth of population
- c - Drafting a Land use Plan
- d - Drafting an Infrastructure Plan
- e - Design of Solid waste management Plan
- f - Drafting of local Economic development Plan

Forecast of the population growth for the coming 20 years has been analysed from two point of views based on two possible scenario:

I. If the government does not take measures for the infrastructure and services the possibility of chaotic, un-controlled and un-oriented development still continues.

In this case, calculations indicate that the population of Kamza in 2022 might be 105.000 inhabitants, with a density of 45 inhabitants/ha.

II. The second possibility is that the government will provide infrastructure and services thus starting to manage the urban reality. In that way, the regular urbanisation process will be in place. According to this scenario, the population of Kamza and its density in 2022 will be respectively 154.000 inhabitants and 66 inhabitants/ha.

The Municipality of Kamza may be divided in three areas regarding to the

urban characteristics: the southern area, the intermediate area and the northern area.

The main recommendation of the *Land Use Plan* is to further densify areas, which are already densified, limiting thus further urbanization process and stopping the waste of agricultural land.

The provision of infrastructure will be cheaper especially if the area will be more compact.

Concrete steps to be taken under the *Infrastructure Plan* include:

1. Opening of the public spaces (roads and squares for social-economic objects) in the South Area
2. Building of infrastructure in the South Area
3. Starting the process of the identification of properties in the South and Intermediate Area in the perspective of the development of the Northern Area.
4. Designating and providing of the public spaces in the Intermediate Area
5. Setting a tax-system based on the system of geographic information, GIS, of the immovable properties.
6. Starting the process of providing infrastructure and legalizations in the South Area.
7. Starting the process of designing Partial Urban Plans in the South Area and then in the Intermediate Area.

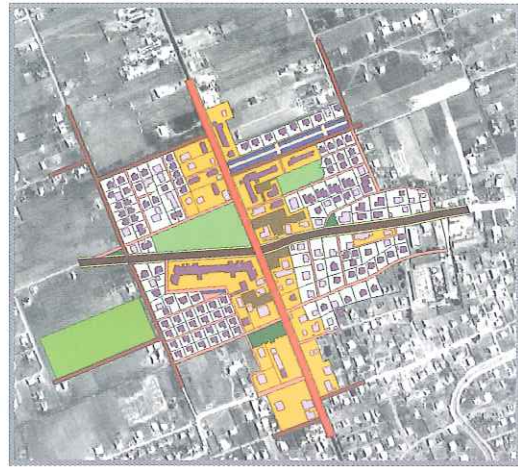
8. Co-ordination work with District and Central Government for the construction of the heavy infrastructure, i.e. the connection with the north entrance of Tirana and the connection with Rinas (Mother Tereza) Airport.

The economic development plan has taken in consideration spatial demands of the Municipality (crossings, corridors and specific development areas)

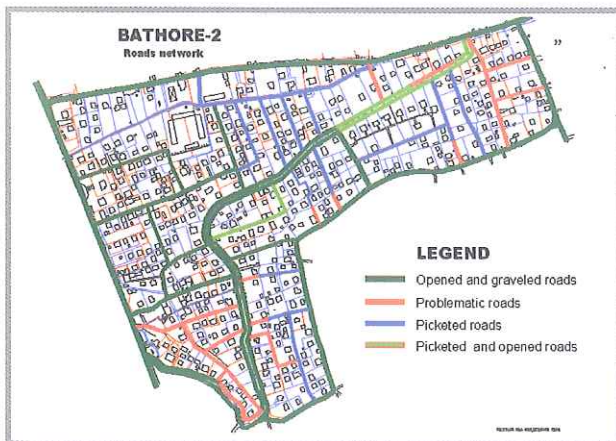
The solid waste management plan indicates the new scheme for the solid waste collection and treatment.

The objective of the pilot investments, has aimed at promoting Local Government, ensuring of collaboration with community as well as generating of provisory employment of the residents. Those are carried out in cooperation with the community or municipal financial contributions and have served very well in consolidating the idea of co-financing and community driven development principles. Out of these important investments we can list the following:

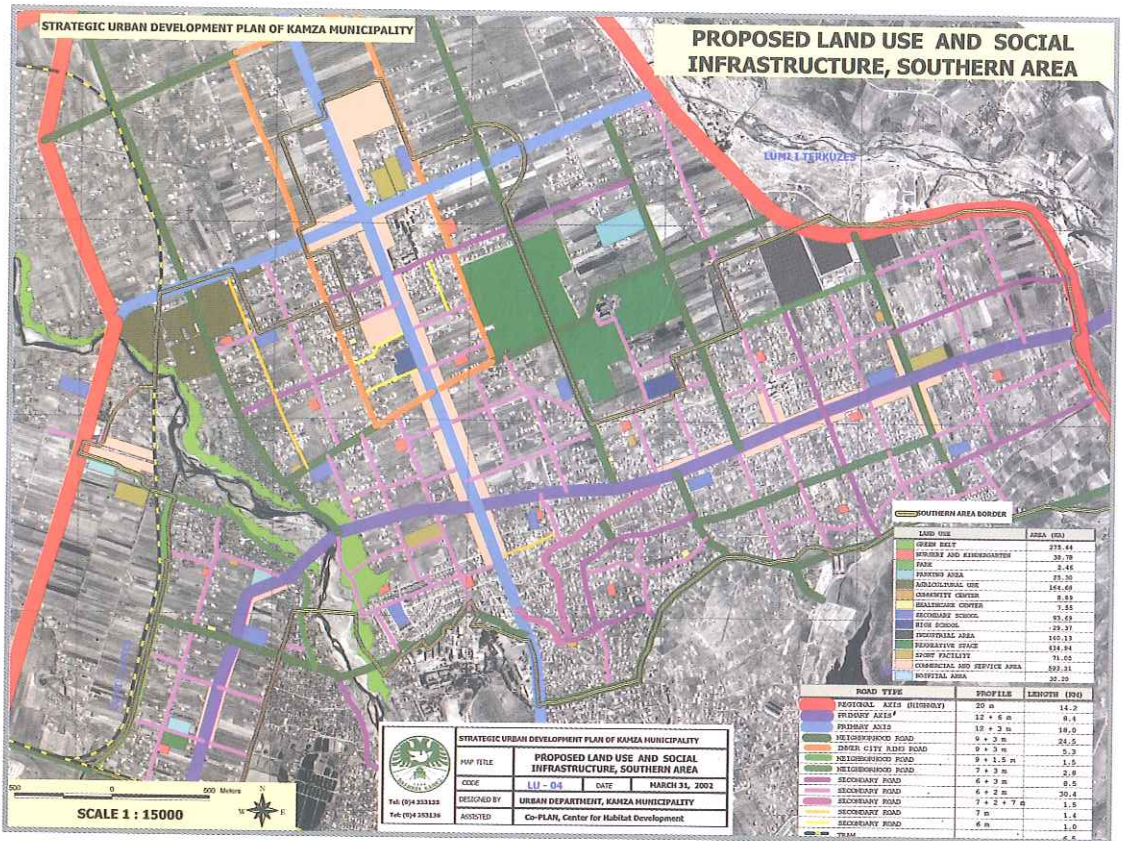
- Cleaning and rehabilitating of the green space in the center of the city in co-financing with Municipality.
- Building of sewerage network in the New Neighbourhood (Lagja e Re) in Lakanas village in co-financing with community.
- Rehabilitating of football stadium, co-financed with the Municipality.
- Building of a 3-floor multifunctional building in Bathore (kindergarten, community center, offices).



Strategic plan of the municipality of Kamza indicative site planes



Bathore Partial Urban Plan drafted by Co-Plan and Urban Land Management Project (WB) in cooperation with community. The urban plan is accepted by community, approved by District Council of Territory Adjustment and it is in the process of implementation. Apart from 6 km of road, there are carried out also pilot water and sewage network system. 95% of inhabitants have paid the community contribution.



Proposed land use and social infrastructure of Southern areas of Kamza

Population migration

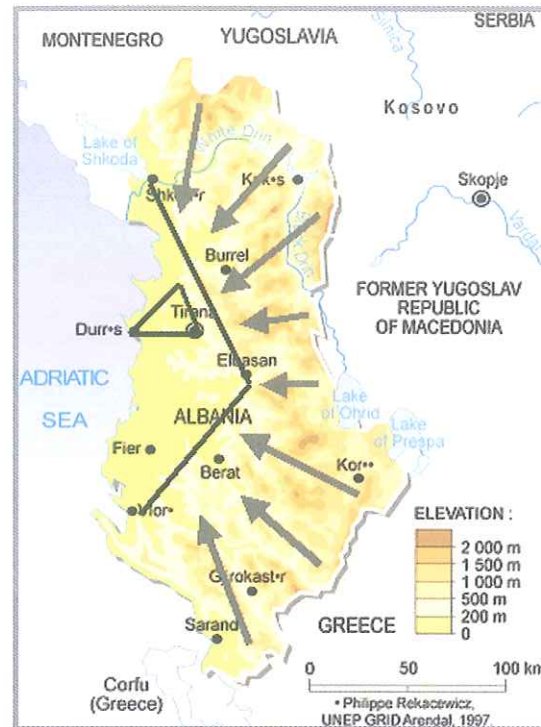
In the summer of 1990 a decree was issued giving freedom of movement and official recognition of the private sector in the construction industry.

Symbolically, this act may be compared to opening the dike of a huge lake without having made plans or taken any measures to channel the deluge of water accumulated in the lake in the right direction to avoid mass flooding.

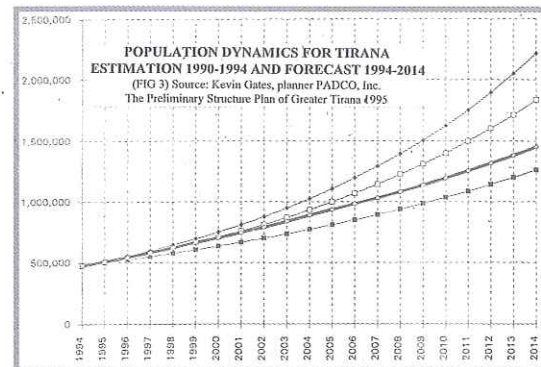
The stringent controls and restrictive policies against urbanization and the freedom of movement for people for several decades during the communist regime, were abolished without consideration being given to what should be done to deal with the extraordinarily high demand for housing and employment, or how to cope with the aspirations of the people for a better life.

The collapse of the centralist economy and of the scheme of subsidies for the unproductive regions of the country had created a hopeless situation for the local population.

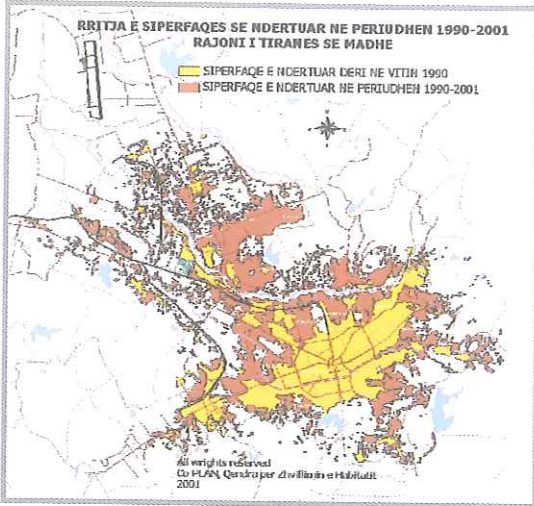
Unemployed, isolated and far from the attention of the central government authorities, people had no alternative but to seek a better life in the more developed regions of the country: The western Lowlands (i.e. the coastal region between Shkoder, Tirana and Vlora) and in particular, the region around the capital city (the area of Tirana, Durrës and Fushe Kruja), which offered the best opportunities at



Viti	Urbanizimi	Ritmi
1945	= 20%	
	45 vjet =	15%
1990	= 35%	= 0.33/vit
	11 vjet =	17%
2001	= 52%	= 0.64/vit



Complex map & diagrama of existing and projected dynamic population growth rate in Tirana from 1994 to 2014



Increase of built surface during period 1990-2001



*Flat buildings on construction near Park of Tirana,
January 2003*

least to find work and to live amore normal life, especially for children and young people.

The uncontrolled and unplanned migration was not considered a priority by the central and local government. The administrative divisions, in particular the municipality of the capital of Tirana, were not able to adapt to these changes.

In addition to this, the sudden rise in the urban population of Tirana turned an important part of the rural population into city-dwellers, without giving them time to adapt to the change.

The Municipality was faced with an unusual mixture of population from the various rural areas of Albania, a melting pot of mimi-cultures and professions which were substantially different from the rest of the urban population.

The rural population migrated in Tirana, mostly comes from Tropoja, Skrapar, Diber, Kukes, Mat, Mirdita, Puka, Tepelena, Gramsh, Librazhd, Korce, Malesi e Madhe, etc.

Since 1990, the population of the Tirana municipality has almost doubled, and the region of the Greater Tirana has tripled. The population of Tirana was estimated to have been about 374,000 in 1990 and since then it is thought to have increased by 250,000 that are extended over an additional 200 ha. The rate of land development captures an average of about 200 ha a year, mainly in constructions that are made without building per-

missions. The increase rate of Tirana's population is one of the highest in the world, by 5-7 percent a year, 2 percent of which comes as a result of the natural growth (the ratio of births/deaths) and 3-5 percent from mechanical growth (the ratio of newcomers to leavers from the city).

On 1945, only 20% of the population lived in the cities. During the 45 years of communism, the urban population increased with 15%, so on 1990, 35% of the population lived in urban areas. After 1990, the urban population is increased with 0,33% each year, that means 17% during 11 years.

The approximate calculations indicate that the Greater Tirana area could probably be the shelter of about 1 million people in 2005 and, if right policies of urban development fail to be put in place, in 2015 this number could probably be 1,5 million.

Construction industry

The construction industry became one of the most powerful and successful businesses during the transition period. The moves of population from rural areas towards main cities, their great housing needs and the creation of a rich stratum that prefers more than one house led to an unseen thrive of residential housing market, whose construction accounted for nearly 60 percent of total constructions. In the meantime, other objects such as private schools and kindergartens, health centers, objects of cult and especially factories, industrial workshops and commercial objects were built.

Over 3,000 development firms operate across the country and their licensing is growing. Development is currently one of the primary sectors of economy, which yields 15-20 percent of the gross domestic product.

Foreign firms that exercise their private activity mainly in infrastructure housing projects and production of aggregate materials occupy a considerable part as well.

At the beginning of transition, the construction sector used to build objects of a poor quality as concerns facades and inner finishing touches, but in time, due to the introduction of new building materials and techniques, higher demands about quality and, above all, a sharpening of competition, the building quality and technology have gone increasingly towards perfection.

Post-communist architecture (after 1991)

Retrospective

The communist regime of the time needed architecture to secure a pragmatic solution of the technique-related issues of society such as housing and the construction of buildings and public facilities, etc., but, at the same time, the regime needed it to construct the image of a "strong socialist and independent state."

Architects were held in isolation from the world experience, contemporary techniques, means and other materials, and were oriented to follow the new ideolo-

gy of socialist architecture. The spirit of such architecture should be both as simple as possible and at the lowest costs possible, often violating the values of the proper architecture.

Communist dictatorship held architects under tight control and condemned severely every sign of modernism, however small, and every tendency to freedom in their creative process that might cause problems to the ideology of the regime in power. This situation went on for long decades until the wind of change began to blow in Albania.

The identity crisis with Architecture (1990-1993)

Political and economic changes that took place at the beginning of the 1990s were rapid and dramatic and caught architects unprepared who for years in succession were producing usually a rigid, standardized and occasionally even primitive architecture, if some objects of public importance are excluded.

Post-Communist architecture in Albania, including that in Tirana, passed across a deep crisis of identity especially in the first years of change. The situation went on deteriorating because architecture was never considered a priority vis-à-vis to the emergent country's problems. What is more concerning, the privatization of land, its fragmentation, its partial restitution to its owners and especially the difficult economic situation of the country made impossible the existence of financial means for the construction of new

serious objects or for paying the important profession of an architect.

So architecture often ended up in the hands of anonymous people who, by intending to settle their own problems at the lowest costs possible, ignored the architect's profession and preferred the invention of the so-called "informal architecture" by gradually investing without referring to any architect, which in some way resulted in driving architects out of play for a period of time.

This is one of the most difficult periods in Albanian architecture, especially for architecture in Tirana. In these circumstances many architects emigrated abroad and many others were forced to change profession to survive. The National Institute of Architecture (also known as Institute Nr. 1) failed, and the successive reforms practically not only did not come to help its reorganization, but led to its final close.

The same happened with Public Bureaus of Architectural Designs. For those architects who were more brave, private activity remained the only solution, but a lot of others moved to Town Planning Offices, which though reorganized, remained public or, as mentioned above, adapted themselves to the market economy in architecture-related fields such as production and sale of building materials, etc.

In short, years 1991 to 1993 were the years of an identity crisis of Albanian architecture, but at the same time they

mark the beginning of a new era for the architecture of Tirana.

On their part, architects proved to be too incapable and selfish to organize themselves in protection of their own interests, even though their Association was the first NGO created in the country. Even though this NGO appears today to be reorganized, it has been unable so far to become a reference institution in the field of architecture. Meantime, the legislation related to architecture does not represent the new interests.

Revival of Architecture

The reorganization and reformation of architecture began spontaneously because authorities proved to be unable to draw up a pragmatic strategy for this purpose.

The period of 1992-1995 saw a growing drift toward the creation of private workshops in Tirana where architects, but also specialists of other construction fields, organized themselves in small private consulting firms based on a very pragmatic practice. The fact that Tirana accounts almost 70 percent of the country's architects was one factor, yet another factor was that the mentality and the opportunities of such business in Tirana were greater than in other cities of the country. The performance of private sector marks a turning point in architecture, too. In the meantime, many architects were able to become well acquainted with international architecture because of their exposure abroad. The first steps of the 1990s were difficult, and in most

cases the applied architecture was too modest, dealing with building materials and techniques that were too outdated in their conceptualization.

During 1996, the architect's profession experienced a sort of reawakening as many people who invested in the speculative pyramid investments schemes began to make investment projects that required architectonic designs and ideas. These projects were often large and exaggerated and though in most cases they were never materialized, they indirectly influenced to the employment and the practice of architecture professionals who finally had a chance to exercise their creative skills.

In spite of the economic downfall caused by the pyramid schemes, architectural projects that were launched during 1995-96 had a positive effect for architecture, mainly in Tirana. In the absence of a consolidated bank system in the country, many domestic businessmen and investors (ordinary individuals as well) thought it better to invest in real estates and especially in the construction for housing purposes. It gave architecture in Tirana a new impulse, especially in the city's center, where an investment boom has taken place in recent years, mainly in multistoried buildings, encouraged also by the presence of the infrastructure of the Tirana downtown area.

Architectonic style

Though this investment boom was attended by progress both in construction

terms and architectural style, in the technique of using building materials, etc., it bears stressing that Albanian architecture, the one in Tirana included, is still far from creating an identity or style typical of its own. This is so perhaps because architects that deal with it still belong mostly to the generation of so called old school, which is in contrast to that of the free market.

In spite of some occasional interesting attempts such as in the cases of the Infosoft Tower, the Sky Tower (alias the Vodafone Tower), the two "Twin" Towers near the boulevard "Martyrs of Nation", the Drini Tower (near the city Clock tower) as well as a series of other multi-storied buildings, a sort of rigidity is still felt about them and such objects often seem to have serious problems in terms of the urban layout. The construction according to the three-pilaster system combined with brickwork is still in use, the facades are too simple and the windows small, which proves of an architecture of the very functionalistic style.

In fact, what is even more interesting than the very objects in point is the discussion whether we should build higher or should be limited to 5-6 stories as before.

Further the debate extends to the values of traditional dwelling house of local architecture with adobes, which is often replaced with high buildings under development.

The logic of the new economic system and the absence of the basic infrastruc-

ture in the newly-developed areas of the city have encouraged a vertical architecture, though many high buildings lack important elements such as emergency staircases, minimum distances for their sunning or calamity emergencies such as earthquakes, fire, etc. Most importantly, no one today can speak with certainty what's the seismic strength of the new developments.

In spite of the complicated, inherited problems or the ones created during the last decade, a new architecture is being cultivated in Tirana which promises this city to be soon considered one of European architectonic breakthroughs.

In recent years, thus, objects of architectural values have been built, among which we can single out the Catholic Complex in Tirana (St. Paul's Cathedral and the Diocese headquarters Durrës-Tiranë), a simple architecture with post-modern tendencies. Interesting products of a Tiranas architecture can be noticed through network of newly rehabilitated, reorganized or reconstructed secondary and high schools under the project Tirana 2000 financed by the OSFA Project Soros and the Albanian Government, among which we can mention Red School, Vasil Shanto school, Emin Duraku school, the building of the Ministry of Education, etc.

A series of smaller objects, too, such as mansions and restaurants, together with some reconstructions, represent an interesting architecture, among which we can single out the architecture of



Flat buildings on construction in the side and near the main boulevard of Tirana, January 2003



Cathedral of Saint Paul, constructed on 2000 in the side of Lana river near the boulevard "Martyrs of Nation", built in the homage of first pilgrimage of Saint Paul in Illyria in the year 52 AD

buildings as "Real Park", "Vila Goldi", motion picture theaters such Millennium 1 and 2, Vila 35 (in front of the Albanian RTV), etc.

Refurbishing-related interventions account for a special place in the architecture of this decade, as is the case of the Complex of the Ministries, the Hotel Tirana at the center of the city, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice,

the Polytechnic University, the Parliament, etc.

Of interest is also the rehabilitation made on the facades and architecture of buildings located on the main streets of the city, which for all the controversy raised as concerns their colors and copyright issues, have provided Tirana with a new image and a modernist, quasi-sur-realistic architecture which is gradually



Sky Tower, built on year 2000, one of the new modern symbols of business and financial centers



New building of Restaurant "Juvenilia" constructed on 2002 in the south entrance of Park of Tirana



Refurbishment of the building of Cinema "Millennium 2" constructed on 2001 in the side of the walls of Toptani castle-house



New building of eight year elementary school "Qazim Turdiu" located in the North outskirts of Tirana funded by OSFA Soros Foundation.



Reconstruction of eight year elementary school "Sabaudin Gabrani" located in the west part of the ring of Tirana funded by OSFA Soros Foundation



Reconstruction and of eight year elementary school "Shkolla e Kuqe" funded by OSFA Soros Foundation



Views of the reconstructed, re-innovated, or/and "returned to identity" of central governmental and public buildings



Views of the re-innovated facades in the Str. of Durres and Str. of Elbasan

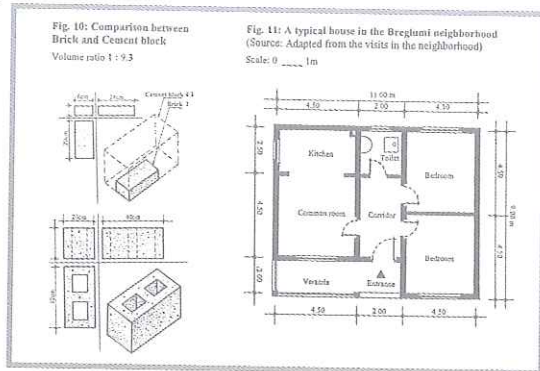
becoming the symbol of the city by successfully merging the informal style with that of the formal architecture.

In conclusion, post-Communist architecture in Tirana can be classified into two main groups:

(i) *Informal architecture* – in which shapes of a spontaneous architecture stand out in the form of annexes to existing buildings or of additions of floors to them; of illegal buildings in private land or in public land in the form of squatting, which around the center of the city have business purposes, and in outskirts (Bathore) mainly housing purposes.

Because of the low economic level, the architecture of the typical informal dwelling house consists in the one that is usually known as the “Elbasani model”. This housing typology develops in the logic of the low-cost architecture and self-employment. The architecture develops as a single-storey building in a plot measuring 80-100 m², with costs capturing around \$10-15.000 in total. Such an object has a prospect to be raised two or three stories higher or annexes can be attached to it depending on the economic level of the investing family and the constructive capacity of the object.

On the other hand, the architecture of informal business objects ranges from sin-



Typical plan lay out of illegal houses / flats
constructed in suburbs of Tirana and Bathore

gle-storey buildings (mainly in the form of kiosks) to solid objects of 2-3 and sometimes 4 stories, depending on the characteristics of the ground, financial resources and business demands. The building materials that are used by the formal architecture generally include wood, bricks, concrete pilasters and beams, the usual red-tiled roofs and occasionally reinforced concrete slabs. Often the attic is used to accommodate housing functions.

(ii) *Formal architecture* – which includes legal developments for housing, business or industry functions. The housing architecture finds expression chiefly in individual multistoried objects in the forms of towers of 8-12 or more stories, as is the case of the towers constructed downtown, especially in the “Bllok” area, chiefly by domestic investors.

Another form of the housing architecture in Tirana is the complexes of apartment buildings chiefly made by foreign investors as is the case of Gintash or Caravan firms (Laprakë), Hawaii (Laprakë, Selitë, Don Bosko) YY International (near

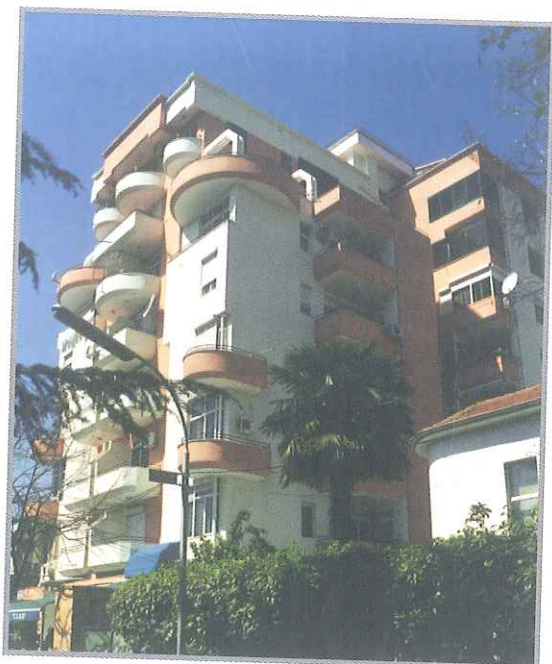
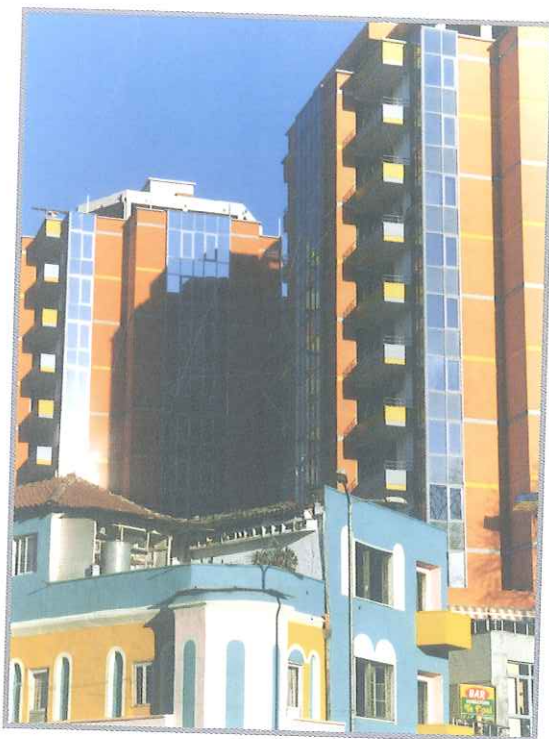
the Airdrome) Hoxholli (a domestic investor) near the “Shqipëria Sot” Exhibition, etc. These complexes are more complete in terms of commercial and social services, but their quality often leaves much to be desired, especially in those designed for average and low-income families.

Architecture designed for business purposes includes a series of objects of victual service (bars, restaurants), recreation and tourism (Kartodrom, Chateau Linza) or accommodation and other services (Hotel Rogner, Hotel Sheraton, the headquarters of Infosoft, the headquarters of Wolsvagen, Dardania Bank, Albanian-American Bank, including other objects of the same character such as the building of TV Klan or the Catholic Cathedral, etc.) as well as a number of small hotels scattered about the city (Diplomati, Mondial, Palma, Europa, Vjosa, Nirvana, President, etc.). The quality of architecture in these objects shows a significant improvement and in many cases contemporary innovative elements are noticed.

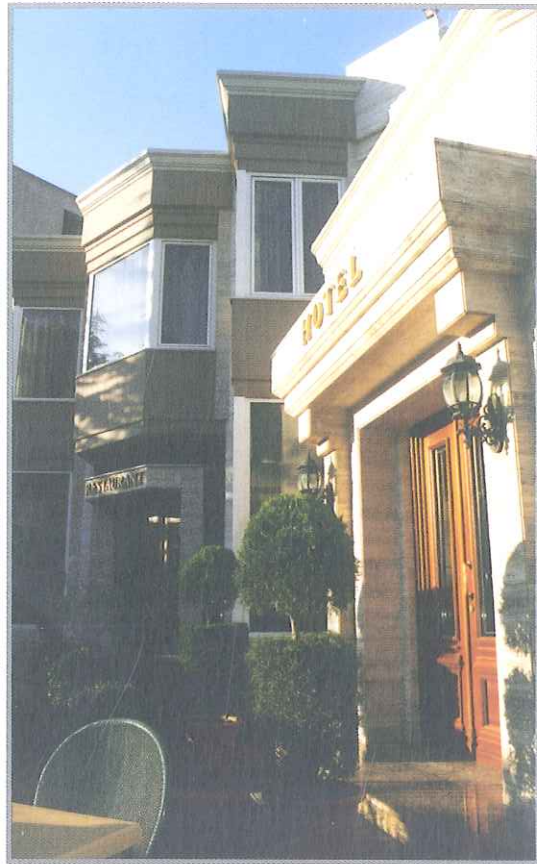
Likewise, an interesting thrive is visible with industrial architecture, chiefly along the expressway that connects Tirana with Durrës and the airport. A series of objects of industrial or administrative functions that bear interesting architectonic values are found especially along the segment Tirana-Vora, such as a number of car exhibition halls (Mercedes, Opel, Kia); premises of light and food-processing industry (Olim); shops of building materials; and furniture/interior decoration workshops.



Flat buildings designed and implemented by Albanian investors



Flat buildings designed and implemented by Albanian investors




New hotels in Tirana



New industrial buildings

KOMPLEKS BANIMI DHE QENDER SOCIAL-TREGETARE
RRUGA E DIBRES TIRANE




INVESTITOR
HALILI Sh.p.k.

PROJEKTI
STUDIO V.B. TIRANE

ZBATIM PUNIMESH
HALILI Sh.p.k. Tirane Ing. SPARTAK HASANATAJI

ARMITICY VLADIMIR BUREZI
KONSTRUKTOR Ing. NIKO LAKO Ing. RUBEN ALITE
VENDIM I KRRT TIRANE No.19 DT.15-03-2002

AFATI I NDERTIMIT 30 Muaj



OBJEKT KREJATIV 3D + planimetri "MESON TALLA"

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Views of the design projects of the current construction works in Tirana, on March 2003

6. POSSIBLE SCENARIOS FOR TIRANA'S URBANISTIC DEVELOPMENT

Now the main dilemma for everybody is: how will Tirana develop in the future?

In order to be as near as possible to what can happen, the authors have thought to divide this challenge in two phases: the near future and the distant future, where a 50-year period is foreseen.

The near future Action Plans

Referring to the current tendencies, Tirana's development is being oriented in two main directions:

(i) Densifying the city's center

(ii) Widening the city's periphery and creating new suburban zones.

If central and local governments will anticipate development with concrete plans, strategies of sustainable development and investments, the inflow of population to Tirana will be balanced to the figure of 50 percent of the country's population; otherwise at least two thirds of the country's population will be installed chaotically in the capital. Tirana Municipality is developing recently the Terms of Reference for a New City Plan.



Aerial photo of Tirana of the year 1999

The Draft of the "Future Urban Plan of Tirana" include:

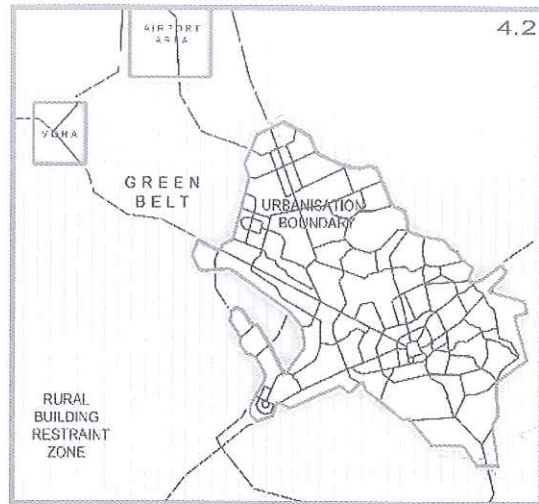
The provision of legal alternatives and the integration of developments performed to date as the two most cardinal directions of a common strategy of the central government and the local one of Tirana. The aim is that by settling the pressing problems of infrastructure, the settling of social issues such as poverty, unemployment, housing, etc., could be facilitated and a positive development scenario could be reached.

In fact, the main interest of authorities and specialized institutions in recent years has been focused just on developing a new regulatory a plan for the city of Tirana.

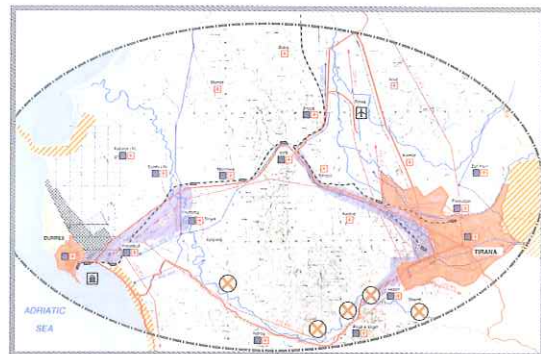
The most significant initiatives focused on the region of the Greater Tirana and its outskirts that have been taken in consideration for drawing up the *ToR of the "Future Urban Plan of Tirana"* include:

1. The study of Strategic Programming and Planning of the Greater Tirana's Infrastructure or, in short, "*The Strategic Plan for the Greater Tirana*" undertaken in the framework of "The Urban Land Management Program" in the Ministry of Territory Adjustment and Tourism that is financed through a World Bank credit and assisted by PADCO (USA).

To this end this same company that is a consulting one, with international experience in this field, in 1995 carried out a preliminary study, financed by USAID, to the advantage of the same Ministry. The study that is known as "The Prelim-



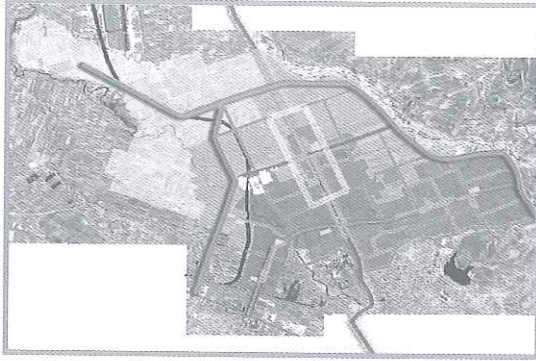
Strategic Plan of Greater Tirana by M.A.T.T. and P.A.D.C.O.



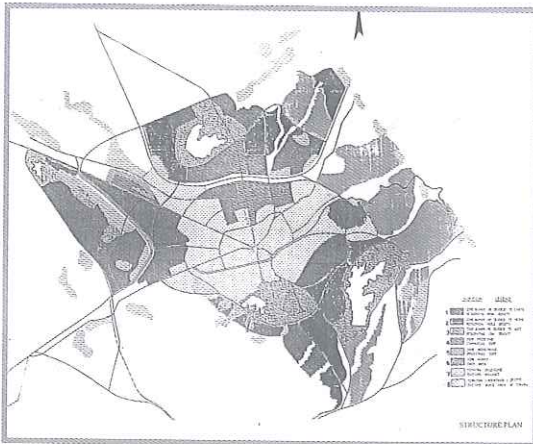
Regional Study of the Tirana Durres Corridor by G.T.Z.

inary Plan of the Greater Tirana Structures" takes into account the "Study of Suburban Area of the Tirana Region" prepared by National Planning Institute, NPI.

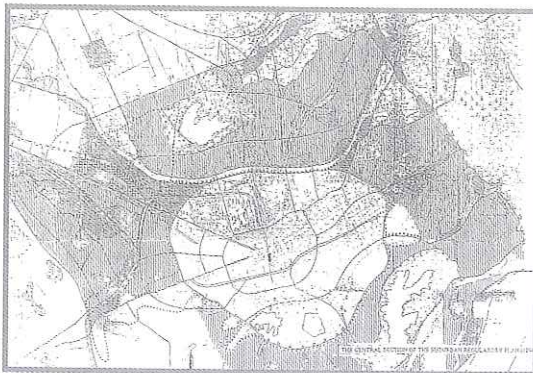
2. "*The Regional Study of Tirana-Durres Corridor*" undertaken by the Albanian Government through NPI, which later was complemented with a plan that was drawn up with the assistance of GTZ,



Strategic Plan of Kamez Municipality



Plan of the structures financed by World Bank and USAID year 1995



Study of urban zone from NPI

German Cooperation Organization that covers mainly the territories of communes and municipalities in the rural area between Durrës and Tirana, excluding these two cities.

3. *The Study of the Transport Scheme in Tirana*", developed by the Project Management Unit for the Reconstruction of the Port of Durrës", financed in 1993 by the World Bank, a study that proposes a road network scheme for the city of Tirana. This scheme has been integrated in the Strategic Plan of the Greater Tirana as well.

4. *"The Strategic Plan for the Urban Development of the Kamza Municipality"* managed by CO-PLAN, and is technically assisted by IHS Rotterdam, Holland. This plan elaborates on the Strategic Plan of the Greater Tirana with regard to the Municipality of Kamza, which borders the Municipality of Tirana and with which it shares many social, urban and economic functions.

5. *"The Study of Tirana City Development"*, a project of Municipality of Tirana developed by the Austrian consulting company "Regional Consulting" financed by the Austrian Government in 1995.

6. *"The Zoning Regulation of the Tirana City"* developed by experts of the Urban Institute (USA) in the framework of the "Urban Housing and Development Project" financed by USAID.

7. *The Results of Census and Registration of Houses*, realized by INSTAT.

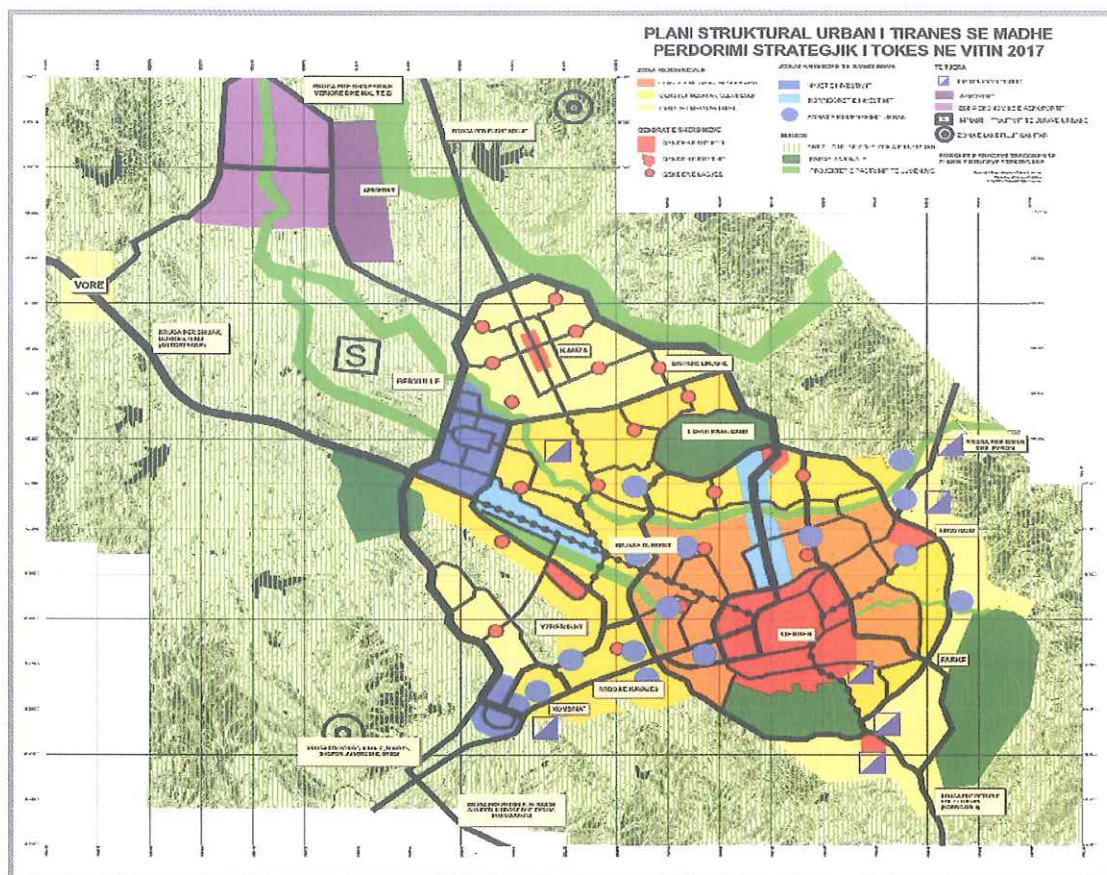
8. The necessary data needed for this Task will be provided by NPI.

Data on the Urban Development Strategic Plan of the Greater Tirana Area, 2002

From all the studies listed above, carried out from 1994 and today, the most significant is "The Strategic Plan for the Greater Tirana" which constitutes a full set of documents including the complexity of the numerous social-economical issues and questions involved. This study takes into consideration land use principles as well as future activities, infrastructure needed for different future indispensable elements for normal develop-

ment, what represents so far, a real innovative urban research work for Tirana and Albania.

The Plan provides for an assessment of the Greater Tirana area for 15 years until 2017. The Plan is not a regulatory planning instrument but rather a vision for guiding and coordinating the development at regional level, a vision that will be elaborated further through detailed regulatory plans that will be drawn up by individual local government agencies.



Strategic Plan of Greater Tirana. Land use strategy until 2017

The Plan provides for the main infrastructure, particularly the one of roads' system. It foresees the functional zoning or the main structures of land use. It further provides the financial analysis of development and determines the costs and ways of coverage. This is accompanied by an analysis of the estate market, but contemporary forms of planning, including the strategic, action and legalization ones are also laid out.

The Plan puts forward a range of legal improvements as well. The roads' network is one of the main components of this Plan. The city's center will be enlarged so as to encompass the whole space within the city's second ring road (the existing one). At the same time, it provides for the preservation of the third and fourth ring roads, outside of which the constructions are prohibited and which are considered as a green belt zone. The airport and Vora's zones, instead, will be important zones for the growth of economic and business activities.

This Plan provides for the development of a number of road categories for the facilitation of the traffic and transport.

The first category includes the ringways:

It comprises the two main ring roads whose centers, unlike from so far, will be different (displaced).

1. The ring road (lined with blue in the map) - will be in essence the completion of the third ring road, but it comprises more zones than what the 1985 Plan had

provided for. West, its first segments has been built by now. North it will include Paskuqan down to the border with Bathore (Kamez Municipality). East it will include the areas around the Kodra e Priftit and the Lake of Farke where many informal developments of recent years have taken place. South it will include Selite, the Park and the Tirana Lake. Other territories can be included into other municipalities that are thought to be created.

2. The Orbital (lined with red in the map) - will be another ring road, whose center avoids the Skenderbej Square. In fact, by beginning east of Tirana with Kombinati quarter and its suburbs down to the newly-developed areas in the Kamez Municipality north, this fourth ringway aims at covering all the existing zones and also those created in recent years. In this way the connection can be made with the west-bound Tirana-Durres road, the north-bound Tirana-Shkoder road corridor, and with the southeast-bound Tirana-Elbasan road by avoiding the unnecessary traffic influx into the city's center which is currently the case.

The second category is the tangents:

The new tangential most important roads proposed to be developed include:

1. The segment that passes from north to Babrru, Allias, Rruga Bardhyl, Berryli, Rruga Ali Demi, Farke, down to the intersection, south, with the Elbasani road.

2. North it begins with the Zall-Herri road, intersects the road to Kamze and

later branches in the direction of both Berxull and the expressway to Durres. The last branching passes towards Yzberisht and terminates in Kombinat.

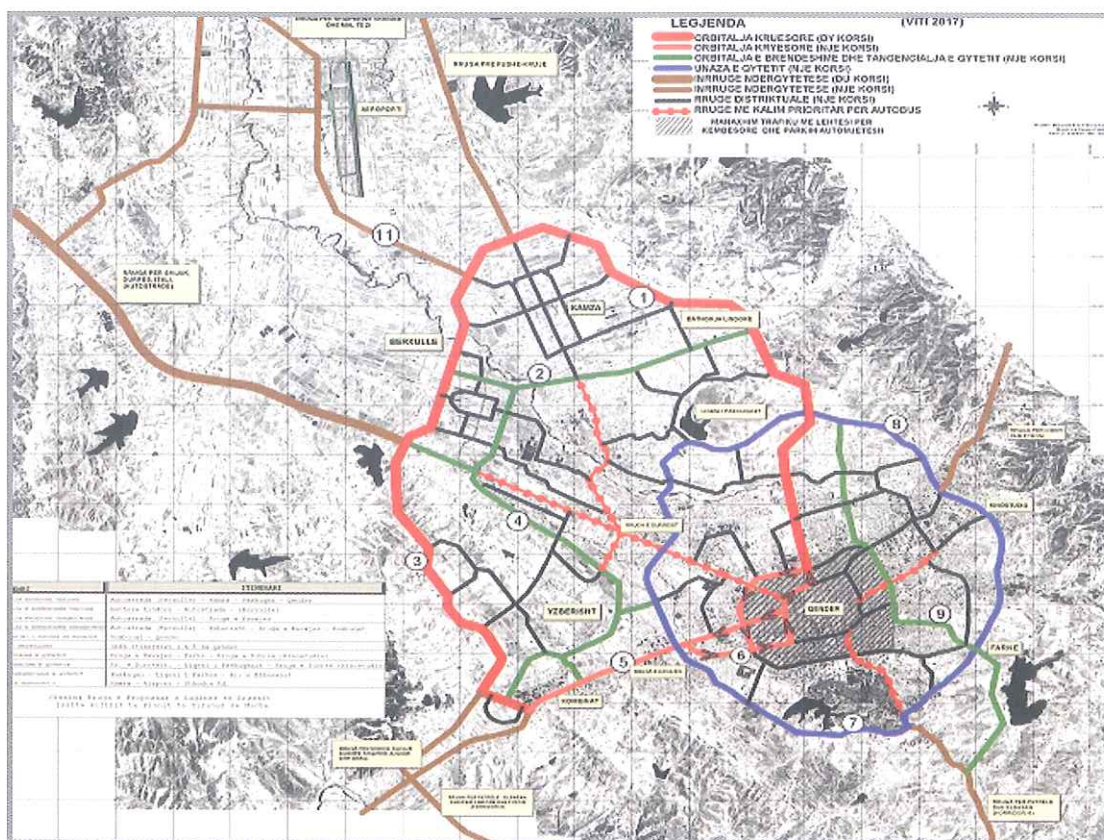
The third category includes those that are called district roads and are the main roads to penetrate from the ringways into the main quarters/areas of the city.

The category of particular roads:

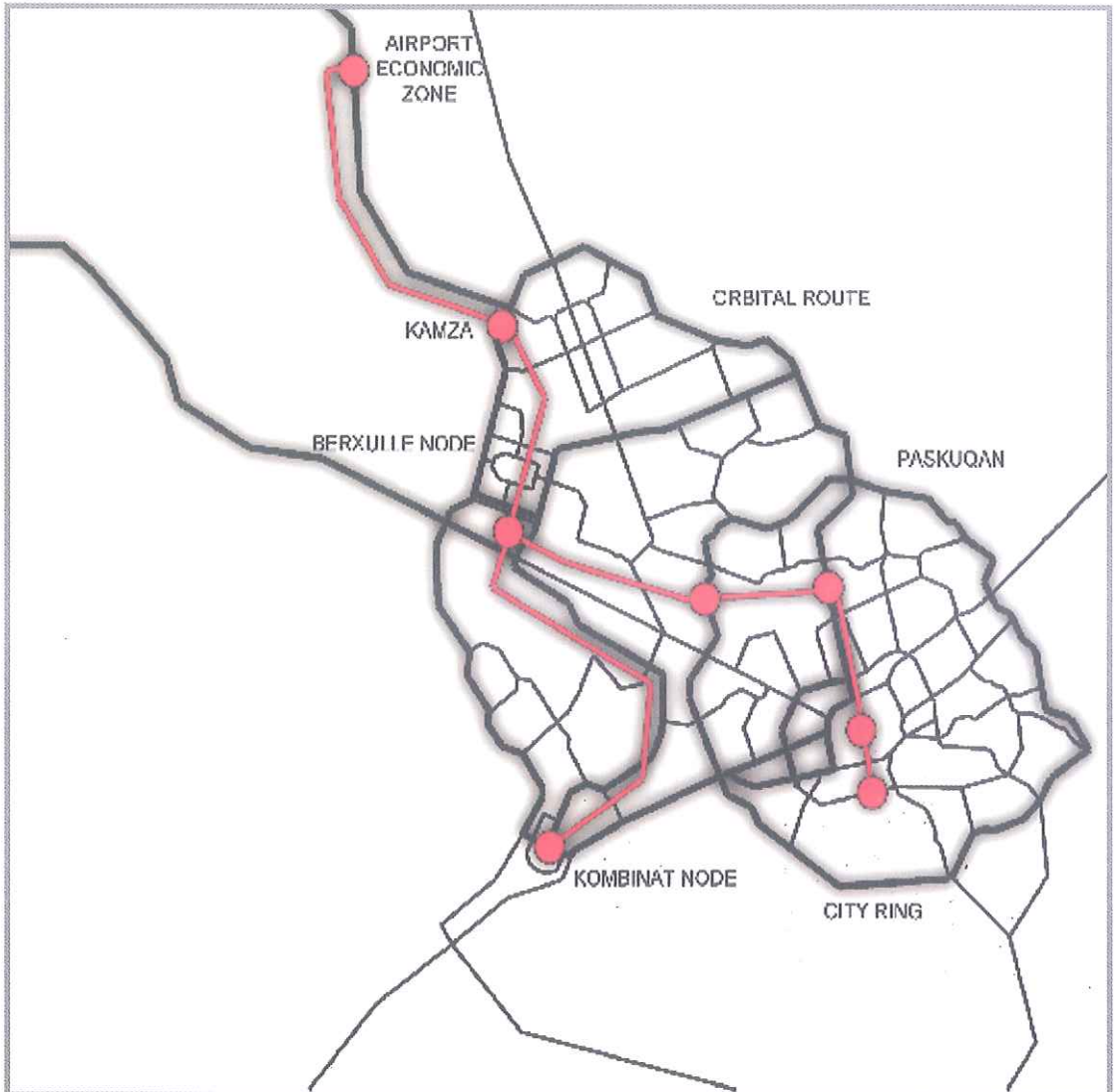
1. Roads are classified into roads of 1 and 2 lanes (each lane having two tracks) depending on the traffic and importance. From such a scheme, through the elon-

gation of the city's boulevard north towards Paskuqan, east of the Kamez Municipality (along the Terkuza River) and the north corridor, a shorter alternative connection is created with the Tirana airport and which, farther, in the northeast direction it approaches the south part of the airport where it meets the north expressway.

2. The priority roads for the public transportation through bus lines such as Porcelan-Road Bardhyl, Sauk-Un/known Warrior Monument, Cafe Flora - Coca-Cola Factory, Hill of Kamez - Yzberisht.



Structural Plan of the Greater Tirana. System of main roads.



Proposed tram itineraries

3. Rruga e Kavajes and a number of other main roads in the western part of the city's center become roads of a compulsory direction of movement for vehicles.

Apart from the special transport bus lines which intend to reduce the private traffic, the building of two public transport lines is planned using tram tracks (fast trains) that will connect the airport with Kamez down to Berzulle where they diverge in two main directions:

1. The tramway that continues to Yzberisht and terminates in Kombinat.

2. The tramway that continues along the existing Durres-Tirana railway from Berxulli to the present-day railway station down the boulevard that terminates in the University Square Nene Tereza.

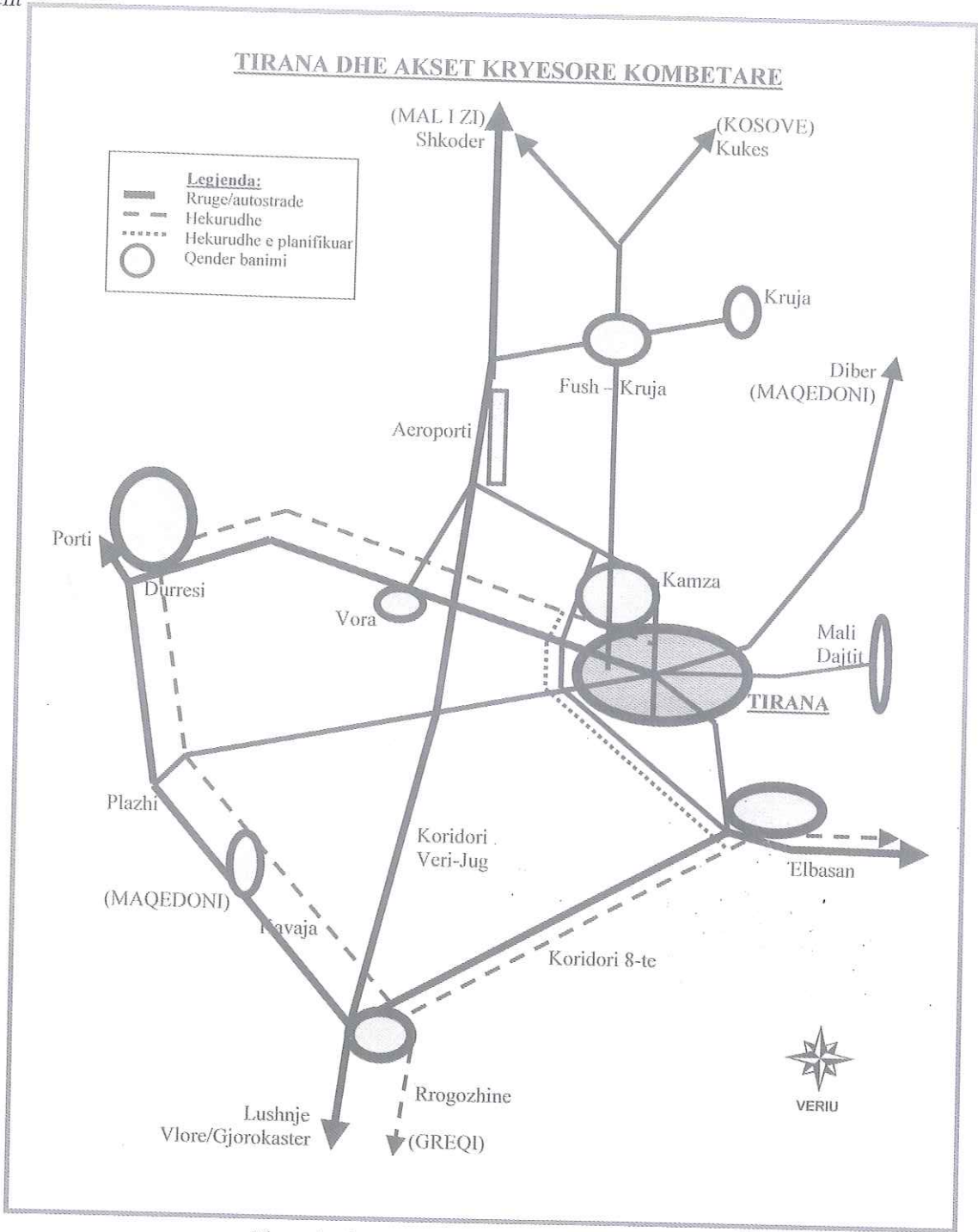
The main economic and business centers are thought to be in Berxulle (the business administration) and Kombinat, in the area along the Durres expressway, and in the north elongation of the boulevard (multistoried buildings) from the present-day railway station to Paskuqan. This also includes the economic areas of the airport (the exhibition zone) and Vora. Further, some development and investment joints have been envisaged to spread across the whole structure of the city.

The same holds true for the center. Besides the traditional central zone within the second ringway, many other decentralized centers are planned that will serve individual zones/neighborhoods.

The main green spaces and suburban parks will be those close to the Tirana Lake south, the Paskuqani Lake north, Dajti Mountain east and the intersection of the Durres expressway with the Orbital east.

The main part of the city inside the third ring road (except for Paskuqan and some other areas near the Dajti Mountain in which mansions are to be built) is thought to develop as a high density zone. The southern part of Kamez Municipality, Yzberisht, Kombinat, Kombinati i Autotraktoreve, Kodra e Priftit, Allias, Paskuqan, etc., will grow to an average density. And the main part of Kamez Municipality, the eastern elongation of Kombinat, and the eastern extension of the city towards Dajti will develop, instead, to a low density.

Urban waste dumping and processing facility will be built east of Kombinat. While the sewage one will be east of Berxulli. Individual projects have been provided for the purification and systemization of the Lana, Tirana and Terkuza Rivers.



Tirana in the main national and international axes

The Municipality of Tirana

The current administration of the Tirana Municipality headed by the Mayor Edi Rama have given undeniable proofs that managing this urban complex reality is not impossible, and in doing so they have reawakened the formerly-feeble confidence *"that this country is impossible to be built"*. The strategy of the municipal administration for cultivating a new image of Tirana through an aggressive multistoried architecture with modern shapes and such materials as duralumin and glass is expected to have a significant impact on the image and layout of the city, which presently is one of the most interesting cities in Europe in terms of its dynamics of development.

The awarding of an International Prize to the Mayor of Tirana for his contribution to the improvement of the living conditions in the city and the hosting of the routine international conference of ENHR, the prestigious European Network of Housing Studies is one proof that Tirana has already begun to draw international attention for its tiny but showing results in both architectonic and urban development. This is another proof that shows how architecture and town planning can play a key role in the moral and economic revival of a city and beyond, of a nation.

Starting from 2000, important urban operations have been undertaken that are completely changing the image of the Albanian capital and have drawn the attention of the metropolitan public opinion,



View of the demolition of illegal kiosks and constructions in the sides of Lana



*View of the Lana river sides rehabilitated soon
after demolition of illegal constructions,
March 2003*

foreign institutions that operate in our country, and the Western press.

The following points are worthy to mention:

1 - Tearing down buildings without permissions in the Tirana city's downtown, especially those in "Parc YOUTH" and both banks of the Lana River;

2 - Rehabilitating and painting the facades of building on the main streets;

3 - Launching the process of illegalizing the illicit constructions;

4 - Widening and illuminating the main streets of the city, particularly widening and rehabilitating the avenues that are parallel to the Lana River;

5 - Returning the landscaping; building numerous flower gardens and landscaping the ramps of the Lana River;

6 - Reconstructing the historical and monumental Complex of Ministries;

7 - The involvement of inhabitants and communities in the process of improving the city (applied for the first time) is noteworthy, even though this activity has had its cost because of the misunderstandings and difficulties on account of differences in mindsets, etc.).

Of worth to mention is also the tearing down of buildings on Lana River by the business community, which spared the Municipality a fund of \$2 million. It's exhilarating that a healthy public debate is opened in Tirana, which even though it has discouraged or obstructed the realization of certain ideas, on the other hand it has significantly improved democracy



Refurbishment of facades in the main roads of Tirana



Park Rinia



Playground Park in Str. of Elbasan



Park in near House of Parliament



Small Park near the Guard of the Republic

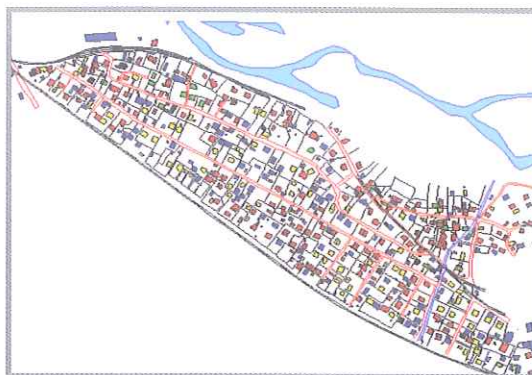


Park Rinia



Park in the side of the President office

Parks in Tirana



The map of rehabilitation project in "Breglumas" dwelling, 1997



Road construction according to urban plan in cooperation with "Breglumas" community



Refurbishment of public spaces in the so called Block "1 May", where community contribution was 20 % of total project cost. (from up to down situation before, during and after the project)



Installation of energy infrastructure in "Breglumas" where 95% of the community has paid the financial contribution.

*Architecture & Urban
Development
Future*



New pavements and lightings



and participation in decision-making and has increased the chances for a long-term stability.

Tirana Municipality's goal is to prepare a vision of development that is flexible and adaptable to the rapid changes in the city rather than to develop a rigid regulatory plan which would take at least 3-5 years to be drawn up, while the city evolves with dramatic paces.



To achieve this end, work is underway in 3 or 4 main directions that involve the preparation of some speedy action plans which not only would provide solution to the most pressing problems of Tirana, but would also make up the core of the future regulatory plan of the city.

With these action plans it is possible to move concurrently by planning to implementing. This is so because, at least so far, the development in Tirana marches faster than planification, while the medium-term and long-term solutions that are treated quite well in the Strategic Plan of the Greater Tirana can be elaborated on later.

Action Plans

Some of the action plans on which the Municipality is working and which are forming *the basis of the city's new regulatory plan* are:

Action Plan 1

The identification of the central zone of the city, which is being placed under a regime of control or check with regard to new constructions. This zone includes the



Views of Tirana within the ring of the city



Views of Tirana within the ring of the city



View of Tirana within ring of the city

area that is within the city's existing ring road, the urban space along the boulevard from the railway station to the University, and the city's suburban park around the artificial lake. In this zone, special attention will be attached to the improvement and protection of objects of historical or architectural values, which are specified one by one in cooperation with the Institute of Monuments of Culture.

This zone, however, cannot be absolutely prohibited from constructing new buildings, especially in case of locations with geographical values and high economic potentials for the development of the city. But these kinds of development sites are being defined in the plan as of now by clearly identifying the urbanistic conditions such as: size of ground, exploitation coefficient, height, main volumes, material, construction deadlines, etc.

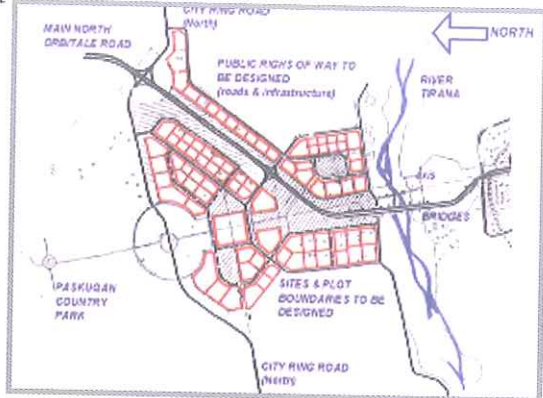
In the meantime, as far as the center is concerned, criteria for limiting the height of buildings will be established. This will avoid the possibility of abuse both by administration and by investors by providing a maximal public transparency and more human standards for the

center. Because of the importance that such building sites present, their architectonic and urbanistic elaboration will be made in open competitions. Naturally, the possibility of adaptations or change of functions of the buildings in the central zone cannot be excluded, which is to be made according to a process carefully monitored. The underlying concept "Return to Identity" project is a concrete example that can be used in other zones of city's center.

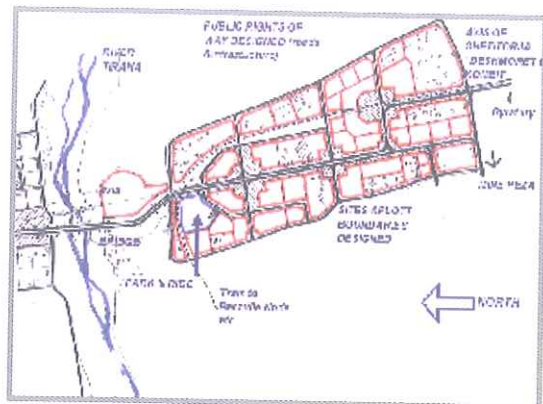
Action Plan 2

Since tightening measures will be enforced in the central zone in order to avoid pressures on the part of builders and investors dealing with intensive objects, it is reasonable and necessary to assure a legal alternative for this sector that is vital for city's economy, which, for the sake of truth, is now being considered a partner in Tirana's development.

To this end, proposals have been put forward about widening the city's center by starting the elongation of the boulevard beyond the existing railway station in the north direction of Paskuqani and Kamza hills. This is an axis that has



Construction location of north corridor
Action Pan I



Construction location of north corridor
Action Pan II



Panoramic view of Kavaja street



Panoramic view of Elbasan street

long been thought as a short cut to the Rinas airport and has been reaffirmed as such by domestic and foreign specialists that are working for the planning of developments in Tirana.

Luckily, the area along the railway track of the station is almost undeveloped. The Municipality aims to use a pure business logic in favor of the public interest by encouraging private business, through fiscal facilities, to invest in building there mixed multistoried objects for housing and administrative and business purposes, including the building of infrastructure. Obviously, the need arises here to create joint structures of Municipality and that private business that deals only with

the development of these zones under the supervision of the government, seeking to ease the bureaucratic procedures of development in this zone.

Action Plan 3

A - Opening roadways, the main branches of the city's road network, especially the main ring roads and radial roads,

B - Improvement of urban spaces around the water basins (lakes) and the rivers of Lana and Tirana, including urban systemization, landscaping and furnishing.

C - Opening and continuing the new ring road from Road of Durrës down to



View of refurbished road along Lana river



Panoramic views of Tirana North-East including Lana river

along the bank of the Tirana River to avoid the heavy traffic by creating a short cut from the eastern part of the existing ring road.

D- Opening a new road connecting area of Bërryli with Road of Elbasan, at Sauk area, would ease, for the time being, the heavy traffic and the disturbing pollution until a later phase, when a bypass ring road towards Elbasani through the Erzeni valley will be built. This would help the upgrading of infrastructure in depressive suburban zones and regardless of the very high costs, as compared to the needs and for the urgency's sake they would seem not so high.

Action Plan 4

Planning, infrastructure upgrading and conditional legalizing of unlicensed buildings in the city's outskirts, at least in pilot zones, in order to create the basic legislation, the experience and the proper model of work that later will help the policy-making for all the city.

This difficult process both in social and political respect will, in fact, serve

significantly the integration of population and the reduction of social problems, especially criminality and unemployment. It will also encourage additional investment by dwellers themselves in upgrading dwelling houses and infrastructure and, at the same time, it will definitely clarify which of the objects are in irreconcilable conflict with the law and accordingly clash with public interest (such as, for example, the opening of the ring road) and, as such, should be torn down once for all, and which are to be legalized conditionally by being paid for the damages sustained, payment which in case of property violation will go in favor of the legitimate owner whether public or private. Most importantly, this process requires political maturity on the part of administration and local elects in taking important economic decisions such as sale or lease of land.

Action Plan 5

Drawing up relevant town planning regulations for implementing the plan, which should not be merely a fine drawing, but above all a legal document with

clear-cut acts and articles to detail the procedures, guidelines, norms and standards. This necessarily requires the complete reformation of the town planning legislation as a process that should go side by side with the development of the city. The new building code of regulations of Tirana can serve as good starting point for the new packet of laws on Town Planning which the country needs.

In conclusion, it bears stressing that Tirana Municipality authorities have realized that developing a regulatory plan cannot be absolutized, as this plan won't be able to resolve automatically all the complicated problems of Tirana, except for it will raise transparency and will guide better the municipality administration in the process of outlining a clear vision for the city's development by considerably improving the logic of development in the hope that distortions similar to those we have witnessed so far will be minimized and prevented.

The drafting of this regulatory plan as a process and in partnership with many specialized institutions regardless of the differences that might exist is likely to be efficient and not prone to raise contestations or create obstructions and urban chaos as it's been the case so far. Let us hope for a positive change in the future.

The interested actors that will also participate in drawing up the Regulatory Plan of Tirana and all attached regulations include:

- The Municipality of Tirana

- The Ministry of Territory Adjustment and Tourism

- The National Planning Institute, NPI

- The Institute of Monuments of Culture

- The Town Planning and Architecture Department, the Faculty of Civil Engineering, the Polytechnic University

- The Association of Architects of Albania

- The Association of the Builders of Albania

- Co-Plan-The Institute for Habitat Development

The main directions of urban growth for the metropolitan area

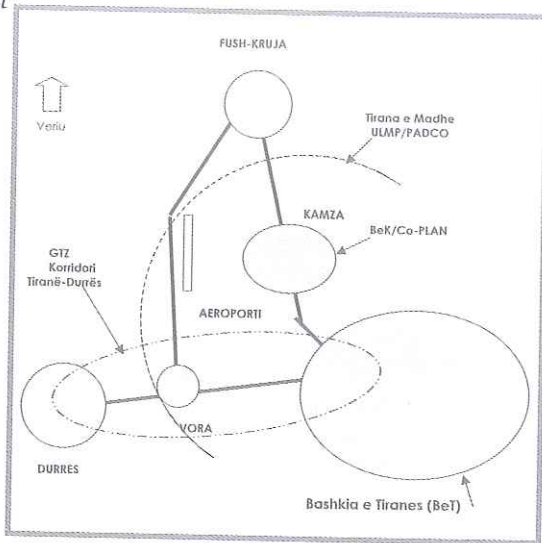
The most recent urban developments in the country have already turned the metropolitan area Durrës-Tiranë-Fushë Krujë into a reality, in which two poles stand out:

- The Tirana-Durrës pole, which features the greatest concentration of industrial developments,

- The pole of Kamza that houses thousands of arrivals

This region consists of the main pole of development in the country and includes 5 main municipalities: Tirana, Durrës, Kamëz, Vorë and Fushë Krujë as well as a number of communes and villages that interact closely with one another especially in the social and economic respect.

During the last ten years, the urban population in this triangular area has in-



Durres-Tirane - Fushekruje Metropolitan scheme

creased by about 45 percent. During the same period, the density of population in the Tirana district has increased by about 40 percent, and in the Durrës district by about 43 percent.

In spite of the deep evolution of this zone, the local government has remained in the previous stages both institutionally and by the method of governing. All this multitude of administrative units of the metropolis is under the umbrella of two counties and two prefectures.

The need for a new authority of urban planning and managing

The fragmentation of governing in the metropolitan area is clashing with the harmonious development in it. It is necessary to create new structures that will assure a better governing and a more fruitful exploitation of financial and material recourses.

It is obvious that the metropolitan area has urgent needs for a unified administration structure that could better coordinate and organize territorial development problems of urban planning and development as well as environmental issues. Local government and town planning authorities have not provided for it in their decentralization strategy and current legislation. So far local authorities of administrative units involved in this new urban mega-unit have seen this conception as if it were against the trends of decentralizing the government and do not value the importance of such reorganization. In fact, the point here is not about decentralization but about a typical experience of the metropolises in most developed countries.

The goal is to avoid the negative effects that arise when development is seen strictly within the limits of the local government units, and when the central authorities find it impossible to carry out coordination at the regional or metropolitan levels.

Possible scenario of development in the distant future

Tirana experience to date and world experience prompt us into thinking that a possible development scenario in the distant future will evolve more or less as follows:

1. Further Urbanization — the center of the Tirana city will be increasingly densified by every passing day due to the conversion of low houses into multistoried



View from the open public debates organised in the frame of Urban Forum organised in the premises of Tirana International Hotel.

buildings. Also, this will be encouraged because the most complete infrastructure is located in the city's center, inasmuch as alternative zones infrastructurally equipped not do yet exist elsewhere. This will stimulate further both investors and buyers of apartments/shops. This process will last at least for another 15-20 years with paces that will tend to be slower.

2. Development of suburban area. If authorities will not intervene in time, such problems as difficult parking, dense traffic, air pollution, absence of public spaces and, above all, a degradation of houses because of a lack of culture and laws of maintenance of the group and community property, will deteriorate the situation in city's center to the extent that many people will not prefer to live in that zone. High-income families will move to the landscaped suburbs of the city in search of tranquility and clean air. In order for this category of population to lower the costs of infrastructure and feel themselves as more secure as possible, they will become self-organized in residential areas of suburban mansions similar to the development model of American cities. Very soon this way of living and comfort provided by the suburbs will be copied by low-income population strata by stimulating market demands for individual suburban homes. In the meantime, due to the degradation of conditions in the city's center, the prices of houses will be going to fall increasingly. This situation will encourage the move of the poor strata from the city's outskirts to the city's center, while rich and prosper families will

increasingly move towards the suburbs. This kind of development will stimulate the upgrading of infrastructure in the suburbs, but also a kind of class division of population, while social problems and criminality in the city's center might become dangerous if clear-cut preventive policies are not applied. In the daytime the center might be a dynamic and noisy setting because of the business, but when the working hours are over, it'll risk to change into an empty and frightful place from which everybody wants to leave. This may happen for a period of 20-30 years beginning from the end of the decade we've just entered.

3. Reurbanization - one of the biggest consequences of suburbanization will be the increase of the distance work-home and consequently the traffic. (High-income strata live in the suburbs but work in the downtown area where they have their main businesses and administration offices, while the low-income strata live in the downtown area but they will have to work in the outskirts where the main work enterprises and industries will be located). With the increase of the economic level, when everyone will seek to have his own car, this situation will go deteriorating. The situation will deteriorate further if authorities fail both to take measures and to stimulate a good public transport and to open the main roadways of the city's network. Commuting homework at least twice a day will stir a great traffic in fixed times of the day (morning, noon and afternoon when working hours end), a blockage and loss of time



Aerial photo Tirana of year 2000, provided by GEOCONSULT, Edmond Leka

of 2-4 hours a day. This will prompt the business and high-income strata to want to turn back to the center by rehabilitating apartments downtown. This is thought to raise the demands and prices of downtown houses and will result again in a displacement of low-income families towards the suburbs, while the center will again be dominated by high-income families. In this moment it is thought that the phenomenon known as "gentrification" will occur, which means a renovation and total upgrading of the downtown plus a change in the social structure. This scenario perhaps will

evolve by the middle of the present century.

In spite of scenarios mention above, the future of Tirana is a challenge that depends on the stability and political security in the country and region and, above all, the role of its citizens, the role of private business and the leadership of the public administration that will be elected to lead. Tirana is in with a good chance of becoming a competitive city in the Balkans, creating opportunities for domestic and foreign business, and providing better services for its dwellers and

visitors. Favorable geographic position, climate, its being in the vicinity of natural and human resources can all give a great impetus forward to the development if these advantages will be used by an aggressive, flexible and intelligent public

administration which, in time, will have increasingly more powers and financial means available to assure its citizens and the whole Albania that "this country will make it.

Arch. Urb. *BESNIK ALIAJ*
MA in Urban Management

Arch. KEIDA LULO



PART TWO

Archaeological Evidence in Tirana District

History of Tirana City

Traditional Culture of Tirana

Cultural life in Tirana

Tirana as a center of Fine Arts

Tourism in Tirana and Nearby

ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE IN TIRANA DISTRICT

The Tirana District territory encompasses the field of Tirana and the chain of hills and mountains that surround it on all sides. Favorable climatic conditions for habitation have enabled dwelling in it since the beginning of humankind. This can be demonstrated by the archaeological findings of "Rrëza e Dajtit" and Cave of Pëllumbas that belongs to the Paleolithic era (early Stone Age). This region continued to be inhabited during the period of the new Stone Age, the Metal Ages and constantly during the entire historical era. This can be evidenced by the castles and the ruins of various monuments and the archaeological findings that have been preserved to the present days. We are listing below the archaeological sites according to their chronological order.

Rrëza e Dajtit (Dajti Foot).

This designation was introduced into Albanian Archaeology at the beginning of the 20th century, when the Austrian geologist B. Richthofen discovered in the vicinity of the present-day stone quarry certain flint tools which date to the early

Paleolithic (30,000-10,000 years ago). Nearly a century later, artifacts of this era were also found at Cave of Pellumbas. So we can assert with certainty that the suburb of Tirana is one of the earliest inhabited regions in Albania.

Cave of Pellumbas

Shpella e Pullumbasit (The Cave of Pullumbas) or Shpella e Zezë (The Black Cave), as the natives call it today, is located 2 km northeast of the village Pullumbas on the left bank of Erzeni River, where the valley becomes very narrow and forms the gorge of Skorana. The cave



View of the entrance of the Pellumbas pre-historical cave



Karstic evolution of the inside natural treasure of Pellumbas pre-historical cave

is situated on the steep side of the Pullumbasi Mountain at an elevation of 300 m above sea level. The rock forms a big shelter that comes gradually diminishing to form an entrance measuring 14 m long by 10-12 m high. Retaining this size, the cave proceeds elongating in the shape of a 70-80 m long tunnel. Further the cave becomes wider by forming an abundant setting in the shape of a room with a very high ceiling in the form of a vault measuring 15-20 m high. After this setting, which is also very much suitable as a dwelling place, the cave evolves in the form of two long corridors, one in the east-west direction measuring 140-150 m long, and one in the north-east direction measuring 110-120 m long.

In the central setting, especially in the long corridor, and in the many ramifications and the inner settings of the cave, during millions of years of karstic evolution known as stalactites and stalagmites that can surprise one with their variety and beauty have been formed to create a place of a rare beauty.

The value and interest of Cave of Pellumbas take importance in that it has been converted and used for habitation since the beginnings of humankind about 30,000 years ago what is supported also by the the presence of archaeological materials relating to the Paleolithic, Neolithic, Chalcolithic, Bronze and Iron ages. They make a totally new evidence in terms of these ages and belong to a region completely unknown before and therefore their value increases.

The duration of habitation in Cave of Pullumbas and its location at a central area never unknown before gives it precedence to become an object for archaeological excavations. In addition to the interest it presents as a karstic cave, it might fairly well be turned to a tourist site, a natural museum of a pre-historic dwelling place that would increase the values of the Great Natural Park of Dajti so as to become a preferred site to be visited by everybody.

The Castle of Dorsi

This is a well-fortified protourban center established atop one of the highest elevations in the chain of hills separated from the Kërraba Mountains, about 20 km southwest of Tirana.

To erect the castle, a plain of rocky surface has been selected, much longer than wide, with nearly half of it being surrounded by a wall, while the rest of the hill being protected by a natural rock.

The wall that surrounds the castle measures about 300 m long by 2.50-3.00 m.

wide and is constructed of undressed stones and dry binding. In one side of the wall is an entrance in the shape of a corridor. Inside the wall are only a few findings, fragments of vessels of the Iron Age, 9th-4th centuries B.C., to which the building of the surrounding walls dates.

These kinds of fortified habitations function for the protection of the whole inhabitants of the area in case of attacks by other tribes.

The Castle of Persqop or The castle of Vila, as it is otherwise known, is erected atop of the Vila Mountain, about 1 km. east of the Castle of Petrela. From the castle, a fragment of the wall is preserved measuring about 30 m long by 6 m high, made of quadratic blocks of great and average sizes, with dry binding. In the middle of its side is a counterfort to strengthen the wall. In the eastern side of the castle a monumental grave has been discovered, unique in the territory of the Central Albania. The founding of this small urban center belongs to the general thrive of life in Illyria in the 3d and 2d centuries B.C.

In the Vila Mountain we also find traces of a fortification typical of the late Antiquity period of the 4th century A.D., which takes a wider space than the previous one.

The Castle of Petrela.

This Castle of the late Antiquity and the Middle Ages is erected on a rocky hill measuring 400 m high, southeast of the

city of Tirana, on the left bank of the Erzeni River, with a dominating position over the whole region. After the abandonment of the Castle of Vila, it's very likely that the inhabitants might have preferred this one as more suitable for dwelling.

In its present-day state, the Castle of Petrela is surrounded by a wall measuring 100 m long, with two round turrets on the less protected side of the hill, and with a small gate between them. In the inner part are two cisterns, the traces of two dwelling settings and a rectangular turret at the central place. In addition to the castle that is built on the topmost part of the hill, a curved wall surrounds the less protected part of its eastern slope. This wall contains a gate that is located at the edge of the wall.

The earliest traces appear to belong to the period when cisterns and fountains were built, that is the 3d century B.C., while the first fortification of the hilltop might have been made by the beginning of the Middle Ages. The Castle of Petrela, or Petrula, as the written sources refer to it, was refortified in the 9th century and was turned into a stronghold during the war between the Normans and the Byzantines. Petrela's fortification took the form of a genuine feudal castle during the reign of Topias. In this time, a semi-circular turret was built. It seems that the outer surrounding wall dates to this period too. The entrance to the castle was made through climbing a flight of stone stairs placed outside the wall that terminated in a landing before the gate. The entrance corridor formed two rectangu-



Prominent view of castle of Petrela

lar turns and was covered by arches. After each turn, two flights of stairs followed with 4-5 steps that led to castle's courtyard.

Of special interest in terms of the architecture of the castle is the semicircular turret of the northeastern border that was used during the fights. In its present-day condition the turret measures 12.80 m high and is made up of two stories divided by wood floors. The second story is covered by a spherical cap of brickwork.

On the roof there has also been a third story of wood construction. Equipped with battlements for placing the barrels of small guns and other weapons, the second floor was the main setting for fighting. At the times of the war against the Ottoman invaders, Petrela served as a pre-fortress of Kruja and was included in Scanderbeg's defense system. In the 19th century and the first part of the 20th century, Petrela was mentioned for its grinding mills and various handicrafts.

The Castle of Dajti is situated in the western side of the Dajti Mountain at an elevation of 1200 m above sea level from where a very wide territory in the western and southwestern directions could be observed. The fortification has the shape of a triangle that is surrounded by a wall of stones and mortar measuring 1.50-2.30 m thick that is greatly damaged. From its workmanship the Castle of Dajti can be dated to the 4th century A.D.

The Castle of Tujan is located near the village of Tujan on a thick-sloped hill close to the valley of the Tirana River that dominates the roadway leading to Dibër. The walls of the castle are constructed in harmony with the terrain, are made of

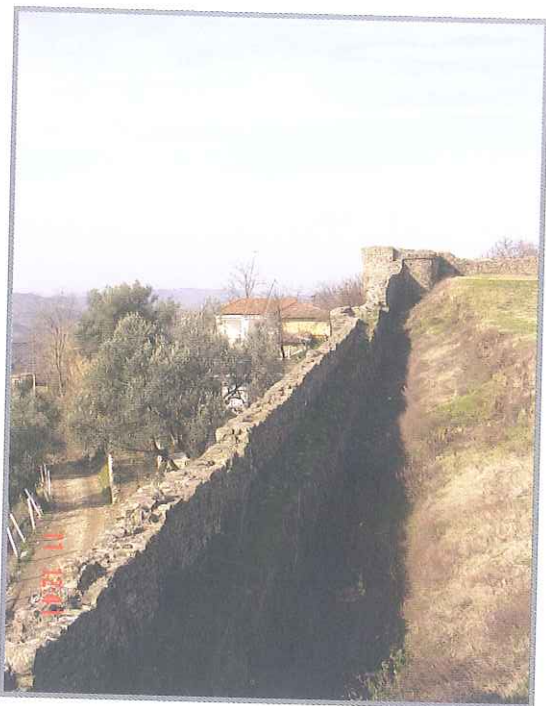
middle-sized stones bound with mortar and surround a space of about 190 m long by 160 m wide. Within the walls, traces of abodes and a cistern are still preserved. From the fragments of the utensils found and of the workmanship of masonry the castle dates to the 4th-6th centuries A.D.

The Church of Tirana.

In the 1970s, during the construction of a block of buildings in front of the Institute of Physical Culture (where offices of the Tirana Monuments' Workshop are today), the ruins of a dwelling house laid with mosaics were discovered. The diggings that were being made in the part that had escaped damaging revealed the walls of a dwelling house dating to the



Mosaic of the paleochristian church located near the actual centre of Tirana, III century AC



Fragment of walls of Preza castle



Fragment of tower of Preza castle

2d-3d centuries A.D. and which in the 4th century was converted to a building of cult. It is a one-naved church made up of the naos, the narthex and the apses. The naos, 8 m wide by 11.5 m long, has the floor laid with mosaics of geometrical motifs, while the narthex, for as far as it is possible to judge from the preserved fragments, is laid with mosaics of geometrical motifs, symbols of cult and animal figures.

During the conversion of the building to church, they have used for its modification bricks with datable crosses that date to the times of the Emperor Constantine (the first part of the 4th century A.D.). The accessory bays in the north side of the building have been changed to accommodate other functions.

The Castle of Preza.

The castle is built on the topmost part of the hill that has a dominating position over the field of Tirana, simultaneously controlling the roads of economic and military importance that connect Durrës with Kruja and Lezha and the road that connects it with Petrela.

From the written records the Castle of Preza is mentioned by Marin Barleti in his work "The History of Scanderbeg". During the 19th and 20th centuries it was visited by some foreign researchers.

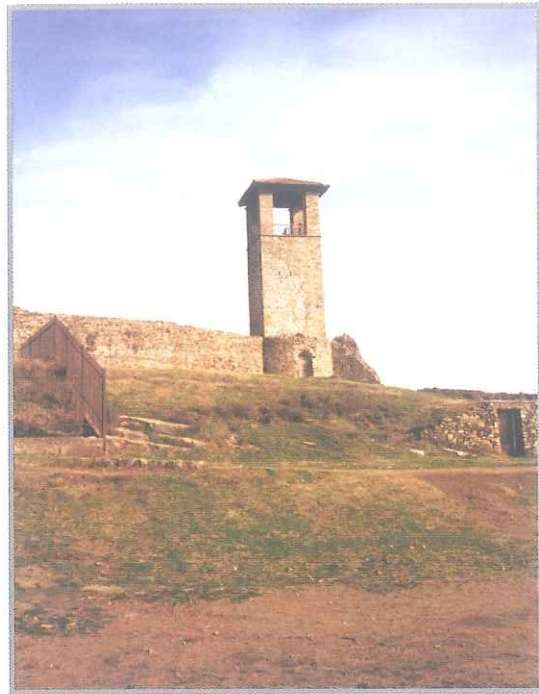
The castle has a rectangular plan and is of a normal size (80 meters wide by 50). In the four corners it is protected by four circular turrets. Another rectangular tur-

ret is erected in the southern side to protect better the entrance to the castle. Just above the entrance a mosque has been built, and in the inner courtyard is a big water cistern.

The prevailing opinion is that the castle has been erected in the 15th century. The surrounding walls that date mostly to this period, today present different heights. The greatest height is that of the west wall that measures 6.40 m. high. The corner turrets that have been 6-7 m. higher than the surrounding walls and have been covered by roofs are also of the same period. Behind the two-winged gate, a corridor measuring 4.5 m long and that is covered with a stony arch proceeds inwards and leads to the castle's courtyard.

In various periods, additional partial rebuilding and widening has been made to the castle. Thus we can mention the rebuilding of the damaged walls, the building of the mosque and finally the building of the Clock Tower (the beginning of the 19th century).

The Castle of Ndroqi. It is erected in the homonymous village on a hill 378 m high in the left side of the Erzeni valley. The hill ends in a flat top about 300 long by 150 m wide, whose surface is surrounded by walls. Two types of workmanship can be spotted in the walls' construction, one dating to the late Antiquity and one to the Middle Ages, in expectation of a more exact date. The constructions of various periods, however, both attest to



Watch tower of Preza castle



The peak of the hill were there ruins of Ndroqi castle

the duration of its function and to the role the castle has played in controlling the roadway coming from Durrës.

The Castle of Lalmi. This castle too has been erected in the period of the late Antiquity and the Middle Ages on a hill that is located 2 km west of the Kombinati area. From the hilltop wall encirclement that has an elliptical shape measuring 100 m by 50, some discontinued fragments of wall have remained.



Ancient horse statuette found in Baldushk in the road to and from Tirana, dedicated to protection of travellers

The Castle of Lalmi dominates the view in the direction of the roads that passed from the Erzeni valley to Petrela and the field of Tirana.

The Castle of Shën Gjergji (Saint George) is located on the eastern side of the Dajti Mountain near the homonymous village. It is located on a small plain created upstream of Erzeni, where the natural pathway to Qafa (neck of a mountain) of Priskës becomes narrow. The castle has a rectangular shape measuring 100 m by

40. Inside the walls are traces of dwellings and archaeological findings that date to the 4th to 6th centuries B.C. The Castle of Shën Gjergji used to protect and control the road branch that passed from Qafa e Priskës and Neck of Tujanit to Shën Gjergji, from where it led to Elbasan, Mati and farther on, Dibër.

Baldushk. The valley of the Zhullina River, a branch of the Erzeni River south-east of Tirana, forms a singular geographical area that is known by the name of Baldushk, the chief village's name. The travelers coming from Dyrrachion used to go to Vrap, in Baldushk, through Qafa e Kumonës, from there to Skampa (Elbasan) and then farther on to east. That this roadway has been functioning in ancient times is demonstrated by the findings, in the village Koçaj (the Baldushk region), of a ruined ancient dwelling house of the 1st century A.D. and of two sculptures that represent a composition of humans and horses. Below them is an inscription in Latin dedicated to the Dioscuri (Castor and Pollux). These sculptural accomplishments were dedicated to the protection of travelers.

Vrap. The village of Vrap south of Tirana, bordering Elbasani district, has entered the history of Albanian Archaeology for the finding of the Treasure of Vrap discovered fortuitously in 1902. The treasure contained 9 gold Byzantine dishes weighing 3.044 kg, 30 silver dishes weighing 1.043 kg, some ornamented belt accessories, some rods and some half-treated gold items weighing 2.371 kg. A cup

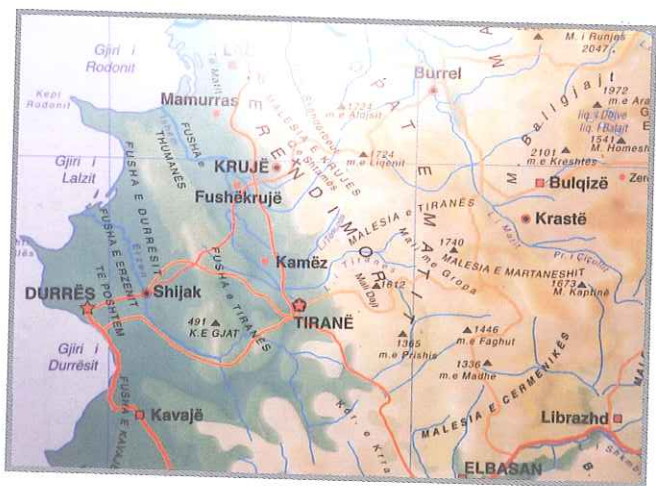
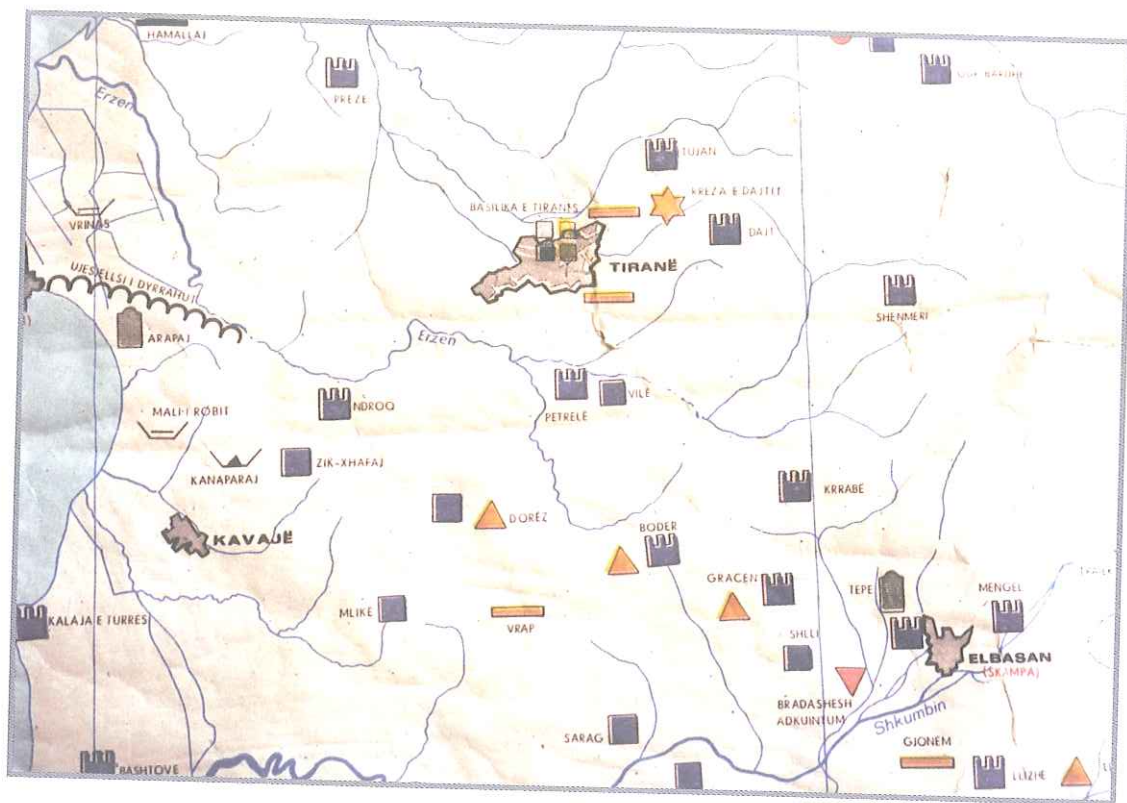
that was sent to Istanbul and another that was sold in Trieste also belong to this treasure. In 1917, 39 objects of this treasure ended in the treasury of the Metropolitan Museum of New York where they are still to the present days.

The treasure of Vrap must have been war spoils captured by the Bulgarian invaders around 680. Then they have been brought secretly to the village of Vrap in unknown circumstances.

Prof. MUZAFER KORKUTI



Overall view of the basement and mosaic of the paleochristian church located near the actual centre of Tirana, III century AC



TIRANA

A BRIEF HISTORIC OVERVIEW

1. Birth of a city - the legend and the history

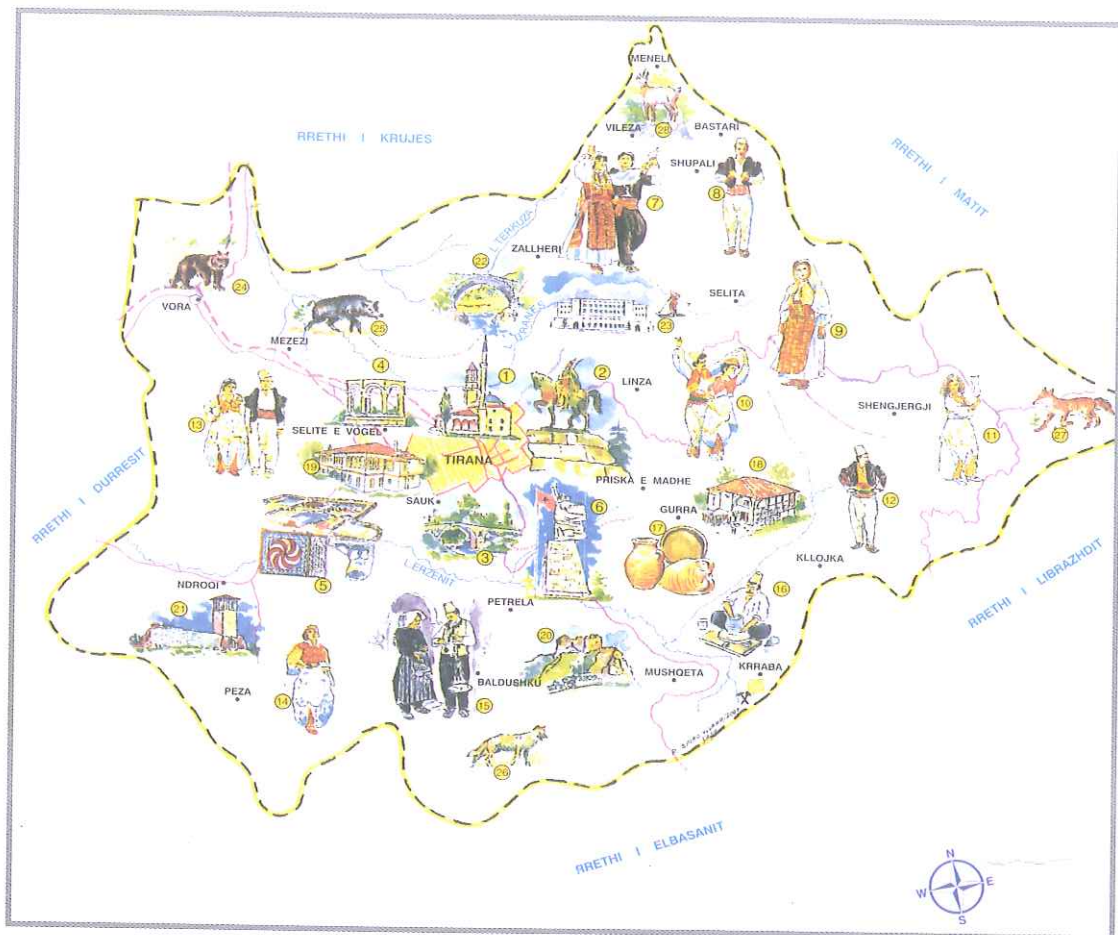
Tirana is a relatively new city, compared to other cities in the Republic of Albania, such as: Shkoder, Durres, Lezhe, Berat, Vlore, etc., all of which have a history of over 2,000 years. Tirana took the view of a city only in the 17th century, whereas as a village it has a much older history.

There have been quite several legends on the founding of the city of Tirana published during these last two centuries. These legends revolve round the figure of Sulejman Pasha Bargjini, an Albanian military feudal, who served the Ottoman Empire. He was from the village of Bargjin, now extinct, whose ruins remained visible all through the last century in the vicinity of Tirana River, in the northeastern part of the city. Having becoming very powerful because of his military career – the legend carries on – Sulejman Pasha started to develop the fertile plain that now is the capital city of Albania. In this fertile plain, during that time there was also a small village, with about 15 houses,

by the name of Tirana, close to the village of Bargjin. In this village, Sulejman Pasha built a mosque, an inn, a bakery,



Map of Albania



Traditional Cultural Map of Tirana district

and a *hamam* (Turkish bath), this way building the nucleus of a future town.

The buildings mentioned in the legend existed along with the tomb of Sulejman Pasha Bargjini in the center of Tirana until World War II. The year 1023 was engraved in the portal of the mosque, which is equivalent to the Gregorian year 1614. Both the mosque, once labeled *The Old Mosque*, and Sulejman Pasha Bargjini's tomb no longer exist today. Both of them were demolished in the course of the

fighting for the liberation of the capital between the partisan forces and the Nazi army. Today in the place of the former ruins, a monument has been erected to the memory of the "Partisan".

There is some controversy surrounding the origin of Tirana's name that lurks in these legends. One of them has it that the name of the town was simply the continuation of the village that existed before (J. G. von Hahn). According to another myth, Sulejman Pasha Bargjini was

the one to give Tirana its name in memory of all the military victories he scored as leader of the Turkish armies against Teheran or Tehran, Iran's capital (A. Degrand). Last, there exists a local folk etymology, which ties the name *Tirane* with *tjerr ane*; *tjerr mendafsh*, meaning to *spin silk* (O. Myderrizi).

Legends tell the truth only in the case of the four objects built by Sulejman Pasha Bargjini, because his last name, Bargjini, shows that he was not from the village of Mullet (as it is said in one of the legend's versions), located southeast of the capital. He was instead from the village of Bargjin, northeast of Tirana. Neither is the origin of Tirana's name related to Iran's Teheran, or the folk etymology *tjerr ane* grounded, since the town's present name is found in historical documentary sources since two and a half centuries ago, even before the events mentioned in the legends took place.

The name of Tirana is encountered for the very first time, as it is used today (Tirane), to describe the place of origin of two Albanian immigrants, settled in Venice, in the year 1372, in the registry of a notary public, called Vassallo. One of them is registered by the name of Villino from Tirana, while the other, named Leo, also from Tirana, was a sailor (*mari-narios*) by profession, who was a resident of the parish of St. Mark's in the city of Lagoons (Arch. St. Ven. Registry C. I. b. 221). Almost half a century later, the name of another Albanian, called Petrus from Tirana, is found in the registry of a notary public called Bernardus, in Ven-

ice, in 1418. This person was a resident of St. Procul's parish in Venice. Besides his name, we find another name, that of a woman, called Maria from Albania, who was probably his wife (Arch. St. Ven. Pri. I. C. 182, C.I. b.24). In the 15th century, the name of Tirana is found again in the work of the Venetian historian M.A Sabellico in the year 1478, as the name of a field, lying a thousand steps away from Kruja.

In the early 16th century, the name is found for the second time as the name of a field in the work of the Albanian humanist Marin Barleti, published in the



Monument of Sulejman Pasha Bargjini,
the founder of Tirana

years 1508–1510, in the forms of Great Tirana (*Tyranna Maior*) and Small Tirana (*Tyranna Minor*), sometimes even in a simpler way, Tirana (*Tyranna*), without it being classified as a field, or as a living place. The name crops up as the name of a field (*le pianure della Tiranna*) again in the work of an anonymous writer in the year 1570. Finally, the name is mentioned to characterize a famous field in the report of the Venetian Ambassador Lorenzo Bernardo, who in the year 1591 traveled through it all the way to Istanbul. He calls the field “the great and famous field of Scanderbeg, said to be Tirana” (*campagna grande famosa di Scanderbeg, detta Tirana*).

The historic documentary sources on Sulejman Pasha Bargjini are scarce. He is mentioned in the early 17th century as the governor of Baghdad, nominated by the Grand Vezir of Albanian origin, called Mere Hysen Pasha, whose duty was to suppress the Iraqi mutineers, while the occupation of Teheran by him is a made-up legend. Later, according to J.G. von Hahn, Sulejman Pasha Bargjini was appointed Sandjakbey of Oher [Ohrid]. He had under his jurisdiction Kruje and Petrele, including also Bargjin village which is situated between the two. Nevertheless, the birth of Tirana as a city was not caused by Sulejman Pasha’s whim, but was an outcome of the growth of the region, which spread all over the lowlands of coastal Albania at the end of the 16th century, even though at a slow pace. Thanks to this economic growth, the need arose for having a trade and handicraft center develop in this region, too. The two

closest administrative centers, Kruja and Petrele, were situated on the edge of the lowland region and built on rugged hill-tops, far from the natural communication routes. Therefore, it needed a center at the heart of its lowland.

The fact that by the end of the 16th century, this territory was used as a crossroads for the caravans that passed through it, which gradually became more frequent, made it the best place to build the city. Three caravan routes passed through the Tirana plain, which linked the west with the east and the northeast with the south. Two of them set out from Durres and Kavaje. The first, after passing through Shijak, followed the corridor of Vore, close to the present-day Durres road. The other traversed the Ndroqi corridor in the vicinity of the present-day Kavaje road. Both these routes continued to run further, splitting in two directions; one running through Berrari, Tujan, Vendeshe, and Murrizi towards Mat and Diber; the other through Priske and Shengjergj towards Martanesh and Cermenike. The third road came from the north, from Shkoder and Lezhe and Fushe-Kruja, which after running through the plain continued in the direction of the Kerraba highlands and descended to the Shkumbin Valley, where it was linked with the historic Egnatia road. The presentation of these three routes in the map shows that they met like today at the center of Tirana, in the place which Sulejman Pasha Bargjini chose to develop. The construction of the inn, the bakery, and the *hamam* shows that he saw that part of the city as a suitable place to build a local

market. Meanwhile, the mosque religiously sanctioned the tutelage over the new city, according to the norms of the Ottoman Islamic Empire.

2. The rapid growth of a city

Documentary sources on the history of Tirana in the first century of its foundation as a city are likewise very fragmentary. However, from the indirect data we have, we might say that the factors that determined its foundation as a city, determined also its rapid growth. Half a century later, Tirana had become according to the Turkish terminology a *kasaba*, a town in the true sense of the word and also a *sheher*, a center of an administrative unit. This is what the Turkish historian and traveler, Evlia Celebi, who visited Tirana almost half a century later, in 1662 wrote. In his well-known book "The book of Travels" (*Sejjahat-namesi*) he writes exactly the following: "From there (Elbasan - K.F), we passed the highlands of Kerraba with great difficulty and many vicissitudes and after nine hours arrived in the Tirana *kasaba*. It is a province under the jurisdiction of Oher *Sandjak* (district). It is a *kaza* of 150 *akce* (Turkish currency). The residential part of the city is situated on a large plain. *It has mosques, inns, hamams, a covered bazaar and a market place. The vineyards and the orchards are countless. All the roofs are covered with tiles.*" This shows that after less than 50 years of its existence, the city had progressed greatly. The shops, the inns, and the *hamams*, which the Turkish traveler describes in plural speak of the importance that the city had assumed, its frequent visits by foreign travelers, and

the cultural civil life of its inhabitants, who, apart from many *hamams*, had also countless orchards. Apart from the weekly farming produce market, Tirana had also its covered bazaar, which was a real urban market.

The rapid growth of Tirana in the later decades is described also by a table drafted in the early 18th century with the number of the population of the cities of coastal Albania. According to this table, Tirana with Varosh (*Tirana col Borgo*) in 1703, that is, 90 years after its foundation, had 500 households with 4,000 inhabitants. This means that after less than a century of existence, Tirana had reached the size of Kruje, had exceeded that of Durres, which together with its suburbs had 400 households that year with 4,000 inhabitants, and had left behind Petrele, which had been marking time with only a total of 150 households and about 440 inhabitants. Further on, in the mid 18th century, with 6,000 inhabitants, Tirana held second place after Elbasan among the cities of Central Albania. Gradually, with the growth of its population and its economy, Tirana's role in the political life of the country also grew, hence also the fund of its documentary sources.

3. Ambitions to rule "Tirana Pashalik"

In the middle of the 18th century, Tirana was ruled by the descendants and the heirs of the person who founded the city, Sulejman Pasha Bargjini. But the prosperous revenues from the Tirana's economy drew the covetousness of the Imperial court and the neighboring feudals. Because of these revenues, in the second

quarter of the 18th century, the Sultan changed the status of the Tirana region from *zeamet*, that is, a from a military feud it used to be, into a *maliqane*, that is, into an economic feud and handed it over to his mother, the *valide sultan* [Sultan's first wife] to rule it. The revenues from the *maliqane* came to the *valide sultan* through the *zabits* [police], or the functionaries or she lent to the businesses (*mukata*). However, with the rampant degeneration of the imperial administration, nobody was capable of preventing the misuses of the functionaries and the entrepreneurs of the *maliqane*. The popular discontent assumed the form of an armed uprising against the imperial administration and the neighboring feudals, who tried to lay their hands on Tirana to appropriate its revenues. The armed attacks that the feudals undertook spread the anarchy that had gripped the whole of Albania also to the Tirana district.

Apparently the population vented their discontent against the imperial power by taking up arms and joining the ranks of the armed insurgents, which broke out in Central Albania in the 50s of the 17th century. The uprising must have been a very serious one, since in 1757 it was suppressed by the minister of war of the Ottoman Empire Ismail Pasha together with the army of the four Pashas. The uprising was stamped out. The ruler of Tirana Sulejman Pasha Bargjini or Bargjinolli, a predecessor of the founder of the city fled, but the popular anger did not relent. Neither did the process that had spread to all the regions of the country to save the local economies from the fiscal plun-

der committed by Istanbul officials and to dissociate themselves from the imperial power come to an end. This political process with a particular content, which led to the creation of autonomous Pashaliks in the Tirana territory developed in very complicated circumstances, because the city found itself under the attacks of the Toptani family offspring of Kruje.

The person who firmly developed a particular policy in the territory of Tirana was Ibrahim Bey Bargjini, the son of Sulejman Pasha Bargjini. In the early 60s, Ibrahim Bey Bargjini had weak positions compared to the Toptani family, who during the uprising of the 50s had kept the side of the Sultan and had occupied Tirana. However, with the support of the civil population and the alliance that he had formed in 1767 with two powerful rulers – Mehmet Pasha Bushatlli of Shkoder and Ibrahim Pasha Alltuni of Kavaje – Ibrahim Pasha Bargjini succeeded in capturing Tirana overnight in the same year. In response to that, the Toptanis allied with the Caushollis of Shkoder, the Begollis from Peje [Pec], the Gjonmarkus from Mirdite, and a number of local beys who had under their rule Lezhe, Ishmi, Preze, Petrele, and in particular, they allied with the *Vali* of Rumelia, the highest authority of the Sublime Porte in the Central Balkans.

The two opposing alignments represented two political tendencies, which dominated in Albania during the 18th and the beginning of the 19th century. The alliance of the Bargjinollis and the Bushatllis represented the Albanian feudal forces in

opposition to the Ottoman imperial centralism, which were in the process of developing feudal autonomist tendencies. Their rivals, including the Toptanis, represented the Albanian feudal forces, which felt economically weak to rule without the support of the central Ottoman power. Following Ibrahim Bey Bargjini's comeback as the ruler of Tirana, his relations with the Sublime Porte were aggravated. Because of that, Barghinolli's new governing style, which was in opposition to Istanbul's will, marked the transformation of the Tirana territory from an imperial administrative unit into an autonomous feudal possession, or as the expression was then, into an autonomous feudal "Pashalik."

It is understandable that the advent to power of Ibrahim Bargjinolli aggravated also the Toptanis of Kruje. Their efforts to lay hands on the city continued for almost 70 years on end, sometimes successful and sometimes not, but always fraught with damages for the citizens. The history of these efforts is long and complicated. Infuriated with their defeat in Tirana, the Toptanis decided to take their anger out on the citizens. For this purpose, they set out their armed gangs against Tirana. These gangs began to pester the city frequently, looting the bazaar, ransacking the houses, and kidnapping its people, whom they set free only after they received ransoms from their families.

The damage incurred to the city by the Toptanis gave rise to major protests by its population, but the Sublime Porte start-

ed to take action only when it saw that the Toptanis began to appropriate the revenues they drew from the *mukata* and from the state taxes. In 1768, on the eve of the Russian-Turkish war, the Porte issued a decree on the internment of the whole Bargjinolli family and the two Kruje chieftains, Tahir Aga Toptani and Ismail Aga Toptani. Both families feigned repentance and asked pardon, but still calm was not restored. In fact when the Russian-Turkish war broke out (1768), Ibrahim Bey Bargjini refused to obey the Sultan's order to go to the Danube front. Thus he came out openly against the Sultan.

The Toptanis made use of this circumstance and in 1770 they occupied Tirana for the second time. Next year with the intervention of Mehmet Pasha Bushatlli, Bargjinolli was pardoned. On instructions by the Sultan's wife Zenepe, the Toptanis fled Tirana in haste and were forced to reconcile themselves with Bargjinolli. For his part, Bargjinolli took advantage of this reconciliation to perfidiously do away with his enemies. On a day in September 1771, the two Kruje chieftains, Tahir Aga Toptani and Ismail Aga Toptani, uncle and nephew, accompanied by 70 braves, came to visit Bargjinolli to resolve a dispute. But in the course of their talks held at Bargjinolli's house, the Tirana forces suddenly fell on the two Kruja chieftains and their braves. In the end, the two Toptani beys and a large number of their braves were killed, while the others were taken captives. Thus the relations between Kruje and Tirana were aggravated again.

After the end of the Russian-Turkish war and Kurcuk Kairnargy Peace was signed in June 1774, the Sublime Porte turned its attention to Mehmet Pasha Bushatlli, who had been maintaining an independent stand. Since the old rivals of Bushatlli, the Begollis and the Caushollis, had been weakened by now, the Porte incited Ahmet Kurt Pasha, the energetic ruler of Berat, against the Shkodër Vezir. The reason for their quarrel was the question of the *mukata* of Durres, whose concession the Sultan's first wife transferred from the Bushatllis to Kurt Pasha. The war between them did not take long to break out. Initially it seemed as if Bushatlli had superiority, because he defeated the forces of Berat ruler in Kavajë, but in the bloody clash that ensued between them in Peqin, Bushatlli and his allies - one of them being also Ibrahim Bey Bargjinolli - were badly defeated. On 13 September 1775, the armies of Ahmet Kurt Pasha entered Tirana, while Bargjinolli left hastily for Shkodër.

Bargjinolli stayed in Shkodër for almost four years, for as long as Tirana remained under the rule of Ahmet Kurt Pasha. In Shkodër, Bargjinolli stood loyal to the Bushatllis and after the death of Mehmet Pasha Bushatlli, Bargjinolli married his daughter to Mehmet's descendant, Kara Mahmud Bushatlli. By means of this connection, Bargjinolli followed Bushatlli also in the military actions he undertook during the next years. The campaign launched by Bushatlli in 1779 against Ahmet Kurt Pasha made Bargjinolli's return to Tirana easier. In April accompanied by his braves and also by the 200

knights that Bushatlli gave him, along with 500 infantry troops from Lezhe, Bargjinolli left Shkodër. In the vicinity of Tirana - as the Venetian consul in Durres said - Bargjinolli was received by all the old men and the people of Tirana (*tutti li vecchiardi il popolo unito*) who on 5 April accompanied Bargjinolli to the city with grandeur. The Venetian Consul adds that the rank and file people set fire to the households of his rival beys.

Once the armies of Bushatlli left Central Albania, the Toptanis began to launch new attacks on Tirana, creating insecurity in the city and damaging the trade movement. After the threats sent to them by Bushatlli, the Toptanis agreed to stop their misdeeds and reconcile with Bargjinolli. But their truce lasted only for four months. Once they learnt that Istanbul was preparing to subjugate Shkodër, they attacked Tirana again with their gangs. The city defended itself, but the attack was very furious and only thanks to the succor that came to it from Shkodër, Tirana managed to escape total destruction. One month later, in November 1779, the Porte dismissed Kara Mahmud Bushatlli and his allies, among who was also Bargjinolli. Neither Bushatlli nor his allies accepted their dismissal. In those circumstances, the Porte sent a large expedition against Shkodër and the other rebel chiefs at the end of 1779. The duty to subdue Tirana fell on Ahmet Kurt Pasha from Berat and Adem Aga Toptani.

The resistance against the pro-government forces in Tirana was extraordinary. When Ahmet Kurt Pasha came close to

the city, he called on Bargjinolli to leave of his own free will and find shelter in Mat to spare the citizens the bloodshed. Bargjinolli refused. Although Tirana had no castle and not any naturally protected position, it still put up resistance. According to the report sent by Albherghetti, the Venetian consul in Durres then, over 6,000 soldiers fought under the command of Ibrahim Bey Bargjini. They were among the bravest and "determined rather to die than accept to be fall under Kurt Pasha's rule." But in the end, after two and a half months of encirclement, when they ran out of all the food reserves, Bargjinolli and his friends left for Shkoder, Ahmet Kurt Pasha entered Tirana and the Toptanis took the city for the third time, even though again for a brief period. After six weeks, thanks to the agreement that Shkoder signed with Istanbul, the Toptanis left Tirana. The city was placed under the rule of Bargjinolli again.

This time the calm period lasted five years. In 1785 the situation worsened when Bushatlli decided to attack Montenegro, contrary to the orders of Sultan. In this situation rife in dangers for Tirana, the alliance of Bargjinolli with Bushatlli became stronger. On 20 March 1785, Kara Mahmud, whose wife had passed away some months earlier, married Bargjinolli's second daughter, making the latter his father in law for the second time. As expected, the deterioration of relations between Bushatlli and Istanbul gave heart to their adversaries, Ahmet Kurt Pasha from Berat and Mustafa Aga Toptani from Kruja. However the energetic Bushatlli was the first to attack. In

July, immediately after he concluded his campaign against Montenegro, he undertook together with Bargjinolli, a campaign against his dangerous rival Ahmet Kurt Pasha, whose army was badly defeated on a day in August in the vicinity of Peqin. After the threats he received from Istanbul, Bushatlli interrupted his actions against Berat but next year in 1787, he resumed again his attacks on Ahmet Kurt Pasha. Then the Sultan declared Bushatlli "*fermanli*" (traitor) and ordered all the rulers of Albania to place themselves and their troops under the orders of the *Vali* of *Rumeli* against Shkoder. Bargjinolli again refused to obey the Sultan's order.

Because of scarce information, it is not clear how the government forces captured Bargjinolli and sent him to Istanbul, where he was sent to jail. In November 1787, Kara Mahmud Bushatlli routed the government forces of the *Vali* of *Rumeli*. The son of Ibrahim Bey Bargjini, Kahreman Bargjinolli, drove away Mustafa Aga Toptani with the help of the citizens and declared Himself ruler of Tirana. It was precisely during those days, in early 1788, when Kahreman Bargjini came to power and his father Ibrahim Bey Bargjini was executed in prison in Istanbul as an enemy of the Ottoman Empire and as "An accomplice of the great rebel in Shkoder." With the murder of Ibrahim Bey Bargjini is closed in some way also the history of the "Tirana Pashalik," while the history of the city continues to be perturbed also for some other 30 or more years, until Tirana was placed under the yoke of Tanzimat.

Ibrahim Bey Bargjinolli was doubtlessly a feudal ruler who was imbued in the Ottoman feudal milieu. However, he should be singled out from the list of ordinary rulers that Tirana produced in the past. He was not a docile ruler to the central Turkish power. This is a feature that dominated in his activity from the beginning to the end. In his political activity, he relied not on the feudal-military order, now gone, but on the new social forces that emerged and developed with the development of the market economy. The consistent hostile stand he adopted on the feudals lined up on the side of the Sublime Porte and the alliances he signed with his opponents in the central Ottoman power show that the policy of Ibrahim Bey Bargjini was not forced by changing circumstances but a consistent policy. If we were to penetrate into the roots of this policy, we will discover the same process that we see in the activity of his allies, the Bushatllis. This is a process that led to the ever greater weakening of the Ottoman central power in the Albanian territories and the ever greater strengthening of the autonomous pashaliks in these regions. But if the problem of a certain pashalik in the region of Tirana remains still an open issue, we cannot however deny the fact that in this territory, during the rule of Ibrahim Bey Bargjinolli this process became very active.

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With the death of Ibrahim Bey Bargjinolli, Tirana's power was inherited by his eldest son, Kahreman Bey Bargjinolli,

who as, events showed, had inherited from his father only the power, but not his qualities as an energetic ruler. Apart from the power, he inherited from his father the alliance with Kara Mahmud Bushatlli, who was also his brother-in-law. He also inherited the hostility with the Toptanis, who thought that after the death of Ibrahim Bey, it would be easier for them to occupy Tirana. In 1788, Mustafa Pasha Toptani, who had the constant support of the central Ottoman power, occupied Tirana again, but Kahreman Bey with the assistance of his brother in law, Kara Mahmud Bushatlli, took the city again after some months and re-established his rule. In the meantime, Tirana was anxious less than Mustafa Pasha Toptani embarked on his revengeful acts again, who to the surprise of all, asked for reconciliation with Kahreman Bey.

The reconciliation took place in Tirana in the house of Kahreman Bey Bargjinolli. At the invitation of Mustafa Pasha Toptani, Bargjinolli returned the visit to Kruje. On 13 August 1788, while Bargjinolli and his suite were the hosts of Mustafa Pasha Toptani in the Kruje castle, he attacked them perfidiously, doing short work of every one of them. After the murder of Kahreman Pasha, his brother Ahmet Bey Bargjinolli became the ruler (later called Ahmet Pasha), who had no sons, but only four girls. *So Ahmet Pasha was the last male descendant of the heirs of the founder of Tirana, Sulejman Pasha Bargjini.*

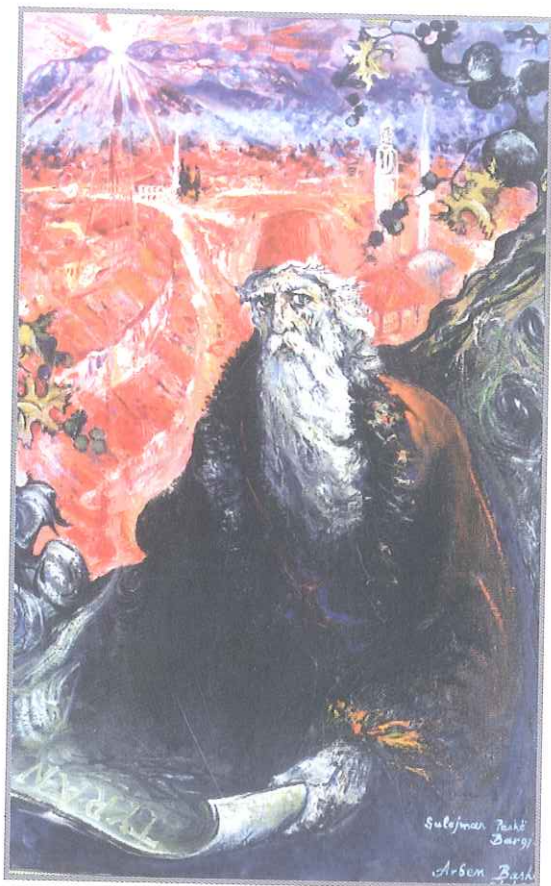
Mustafa Pasha continued his attempts to capture Tirana and after many difficul-

ties in 1793 he managed to become its owner, but again lost it very shortly. One year later, Molla Bey, an opponent of the Toptanis appeared in Tirana. Even though he was a descendant from the female line of the Tirana founder, he envied the power of Ahmet Pasha. In 1794, Molla Bey, besides others, laid the foundations of the mosque that exists even today in the center of Tirana and which bears the name of his son, Haxhi Etehem Bey. However, later the building of the mosque was interrupted because of the resurgence of the feudal conflicts after the murder of Kara Mahmud Bushatlli in September 1796, during his expedition against Montenegro. The alliance of Bargjinolli with Shkoder continued also with Ibrahim Pasha Bushatlli, the descendant of Kara Mahmud Pasha. Still Tirana did not find any rest. By the end of the 18th century, the place of Mustafa Toptani was taken by his brother, Kapllan Bey, who was more cunning than him.

Before attacking Tirana, Kapllan Bey Toptani tried to isolate Bargjinolli and his traditional allies, but he failed. The Bushatllis of Shkoder remained the opponents of the Toptanis. In compensation for the support he gave to Bargjinolli against the intentions of the Toptanis, Ibrahim Pasha Bushatlli began to appropriate the revenues coming from the taxes that from the Tirana *mukata*. Tirana was under double pressure, that of Bushatllis and the Toptanis. Ahmet Pasha was unable to face this double pressure. Fearing the Toptanis more, Ahmet Pasha Bargjinolli made many concessions to his father-in-

law, Ibrahim Pasha Bushatlli. But with his appetite to appropriate all the revenues coming from Tirana, Bushatlli caused discontent among the local population. Molla Bey became the spokesperson of the popular discontent. Therefore Ibrahim Bushatlli invited Molla Bey to Shkoder and liquidated him physically. It was precisely at the time when the relations between Bargjinolli and Bushatlli were at their worst that Ahmet Pasha Bargjinolli died.

Having no male descendants of his own, Bushatlli sent as Tirana as governor one of his commanders. Tirana's gentry refused to accept Bushatlli's envoy and drove him back. The ties between Tirana and Shkoder were greatly exacerbated. The fear of a punitive expedition from Shkoder forced the Tirana gentry to enter into talks with their old opponents, the Toptanis of Kruje. The agreement was sanctioned with the marriage of the four girls of Ahmet Pasha Bargjinolli to the four, out of the five, sons of Kapllan Pasha Toptani. Enraged, Ibrahim Pasha Bushatlli attacked Tirana in January 1810 with a punitive expedition composed of highlanders from Malesia e Madhe, called *The Lekas*. Tirana put up an armed resistance against this expedition that in the popular tradition was called "Lufta e Lekeve" (The battle of the Lekas). However, the Tirana forces were badly defeated in Laprake, leaving behind 200 dead citizens, and some 120 dead from the highlanders of Bushatlli. The city was looted for three days in a row. Nevertheless, being unable to keep the angry citi-



Sulejman Pasha Bargjini having the first dream of founding Tirana, painted by Arben Basha.

zens under his yoke, Bushatlli withdrew his armies and returned to Shkoder, where after some days (in February 1810) he died from an infection. The unrests that erupted in Shkoder after the death of Ibrahim Pasha Bushatlli enabled Kapllan Pasha Toptani, in alliance with Ali Pasha Tepelena, to lay his hands on Tirana in 1811 or 1812. Thus after 60 years of wars and clashes, the Toptanis of Kruje realized their aspiration to finally (with a brief interruption in the 20s) become the lords of Tirana.

Despite this, the calm was still not restored in Tirana. The forceful occupation of Tirana led to the protest by the displeased population, headed always by Haxhi Etehem Bey. At the same time, the thirst of Kapllan Pasha to extend his occupation beyond Kruje and Tirana caused concern also among the feudals of the neighboring regions. As a result of this, a strong coalition against the Toptanis was formed with the allies of the Bushatllis of Shkoder, including also the son-in-law of Kapllan Pasha, Ibrahim Bey Alltuni from Kavaje. In response, Kapllan Pasha continued to strengthen his links with Istanbul, without denying his support for Ali Pasha Tepelena. He managed to arrest through a surprise attack the ruler of Kavaje. However, in this confrontation, Kapllan Pasha was the loser. His daughter, who was also the wife of Ibrahim Bey Alltuni, poisoned her father in early 1819 to save her husband.

After the death of Kapllan Pasha, his son Abdurrahman Bey Toptani was appointed the governor of Tirana. In the early years of his rule, the struggle of the Toptanis with their rivals became very fierce. Abdurrahman Pasha undertook expeditions to defeat his powerful opponents. He occupied Kavajë and Durrës, but did not succeed in defeating his rivals, because they fled and took refuge in Shkoder. In the meantime, squabbles broke out among the Toptani's brothers over the revenues coming from the concession of the *mukata*, which weakened their power. His two main rivals, Haxhi Etehem Bey and Ibrahim Bey Alltuni, who with the assistance of Mustafa Pa-

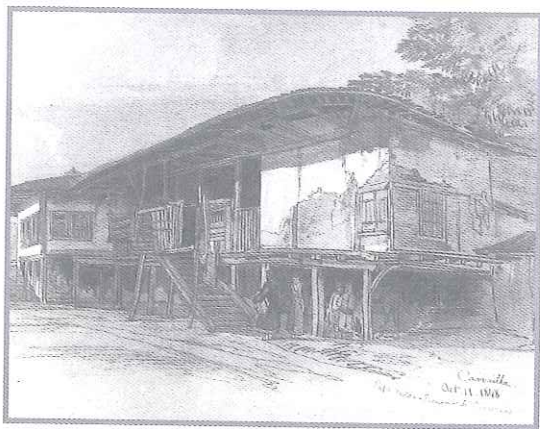
sha Bushatlli kept mounting attacks on Tirana for five months on end, exploited this circumstance. *Finally, in May 1820, torn apart from these attacks, Tirana fell in the hands of Haxhi Etehem Bey, who by now had completed the building of the mosque that has his name along with the clock tower next to it.*

Tirana again did not escape such attacks, but the difference was that now the attacks were mounted by the Top-tanis. Tirana resisted such attacks up to 1831 when the Turkish government launched its final expedition against Mustafa Pasha Bushatlli. With the siege of Shkoder launched by the Turkish

armies, Haxhi Etehem Bey was left without the support of Mustafa Pasha Bushatlli. This circumstance was exploited by Abdurrahman Bey Toptani, who took the side of the Sultan, capturing Tirana again with the support of the central government in Istanbul. Haxhi Etehem Bey, convinced that with the liquidation of Ali Pasha Tepelena and Mustafa Pasha Bushatlli, the Istanbul Government had consolidated its power in this part, did not oppose Tirana's occupation by Abdurrahman Bey Toptani, in fact he reconciled with it. The state administration was established in Tirana. After that, all the conflicts and the feudal fights in this territory came to an end.

4. The economic life in the 18th-19th centuries

The feudal struggles waged during the 18th and the first quarter of the 19th century inflicted major material and human damages on Tirana. Because of the looting, the raids, and acts of revenge, the number of the population which had increased in the 18th century, began to decrease. The Austrian traveler J. Muller, who visited Tirana in the early 40s of the 19th century, writes that from 1,000 households and 727 shops that the city had had before 1830, at the time of his visit, the largest part of them were vacant. "The city, which is spread out over a large area, for the moment is without any trade and industry presents a sad view," J. Muller wrote. Even the French



Inn in Tirana, painted by Eduard Lear on 1848

author Amy Boué, who passed through Albania in 1839, writes about Tirana, saying that it had about 300 households. This is a very small figure, which made the Austrian consul, who knew Albania better, to correct this fact provided by the French traveler.

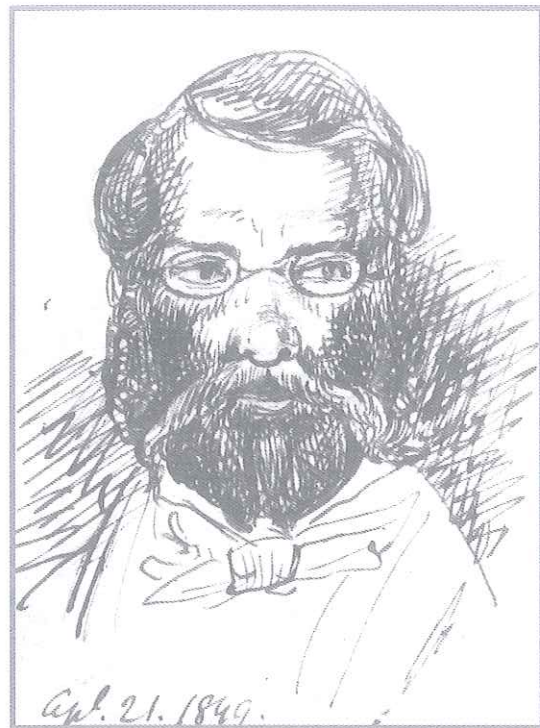
The two decades of Tirana's rule by Abdurrahman Bey Toptani (years 30-40 of the 19th century) coincided with the period of the implementation of the centralizing reforms of a political, administrative, financial, juridical, and military character, known by the name of *Tanzimat*, which the Ottoman Empire began to implement during these years. However, the implementation of these reforms in Albania took place at a later phase. This transition period, when the degraded system of the Pashaliks was not yet totally abolished and when the system of the new bureaucratic administrative governing of Tanzimat was not yet consolidated, was characterized by a marked absence of public order and juridical power, which left room for arbitrariness and anarchy. On the other hand, the rule of Tirana by Abdurrahman Bey Toptani coincided with the booming of the laws of the market in the economy of the region, which applied also to the farming land and its produce. *As a result, as early as the 30s of the 19th century, with the inclusion of the farming land in the economy of this region, its price began to go up constantly.* Both these factors, namely lack of legal order and development of the market economy reinforced the tendency to collect as much farming land as possible, not only through purchase acts, which often were fictitious, but especially through their open appropriation.

Just like in the whole Albanian territory, in Tirana's territory, too, this trend was utilized by the ruling circles, which were represented mainly by the descen-

dants of Kapllan Pasha Toptani. His five sons tried not only to legalize the state properties (*mirie*) plundered by his father, but also to increase them through appropriations or new purchases from Tirana to Breg Mat. Nevertheless, not all his sons became big landowners. Some of them were enriched by engaging also in commercial activities. The one who became much richer than the others was his second son, Abdurrahman Bey, who made use of the post he had for a long time as Tirana governor. In these circumstances, the Toptani brothers' differentiation began in terms of properties. However the new climate that *Tanzimat* introduced, which looked towards the future and not the past, appealed also to Abdurrahman. He realized that his rule could not be secure if he continued the revenge tactic of his predecessors. He proved himself to be more liberal.

As we said, he agreed to reconcile with his most important enemy, Haxhi Etehem Bey, and even made him his son-in-law. Unlike the arbitrary actions he undertook in area of land properties in the countryside, he tried to restore some order in the life and economy of Tirana. In these circumstances, the city began to grow quickly and together with it, the economy also grew. Handicrafts developed further, trade boomed. Reports from this time show that there were a large number of craftsmen in the city of Tirana.

These craftsmen had long since formed their own guild made up of seven Muslim crafts called *Esnafi i Terezis* and an-



Autoportret of Eduard Lear, famous painter who visited Tirana on 1848

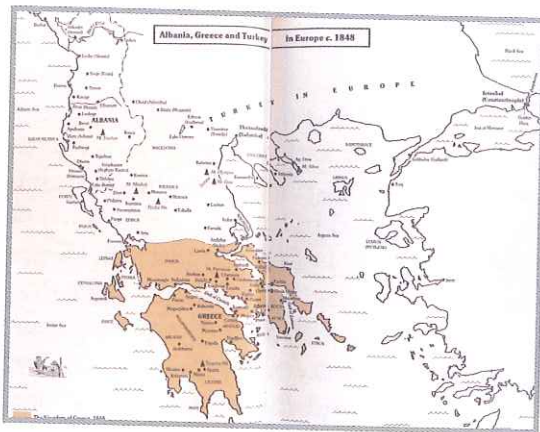
other powerful guild called *Esnafi i Tabakeve*. In the meantime, in the codex of Saint **Procopius Church** it is said that the Orthodox community with 100 households had five guilds. Along with them grew also the trade bourgeoisie. In Tirana there were at that time, big merchant families, which had set up their agencies not only in other regions of the Ottoman Empire, but also in foreign states. Two of the largest merchant firms in Tirana were that of Haxhi Selman Beshiri and that of Ali Tabaku, which had set up agencies in various countries like in Venice, Thessaloniki, and Egypt and had established trade links with other European states.

However the *further economic boom*, which brought about the enrichment of many merchant families was hindered by the country's backwardness, the uncertain political order, the feudal anachronism legislation, and the lack of communication routes. At that time, in Tirana the enriched bourgeoisie took the initiative to improve the communication routes. Thus for example, the *guild of tabaks* built the bridge at the entry to Shengjergj road (today Ali Demi road), which remains even today intact; the *Guild of Terzis*, built a bridge over Lana river at the entrance to Elbasan road, which over 70 years ago was destroyed to be replaced by a new bridge, which also replaced by the bridge that exists even today. The most important building was however the construction of the bridge over Erzen river, west of Tirana, in the mid 19th century, by the large commercial firm "*Beshiri*". This bridge facilitated the transportation of goods between Tirana and Durres Harbor. The bridge was built with great expenses and even with

human sacrifices, because the Beshiri family finished it only after several of its offspring got killed along the way.

Other constructions were built at that time in the city such as mosques and mesjides (popular mosques). Some of the former mosques were ornamented with artistic paintings. With the expenses of Abdurahhman Bey Toptani, it was possible among others to restore in 1844 also the Old Mosque, built in 1614 by Sulejman Pasha Bargjini, who wanted to show that he was the descendant of the founder of Tirana. The mosque, which does not exist today was also ornamented with paintings.

In 1856, Austrian Emperor Franz Joseph funded the building of the Catholic Church in Tirana devoted to Virgin Mary. Later, in 1874, with the help of the Christian believers, the Orthodox community of the city built the church dedicated to evangelization of Virgin Mary, which was also embellished with artistic paintings.



Location of Tirana in the Map of Western Balkans of the year 1848

5. Rapid administration, social, and cultural development

With the stabilization of the political situation, during the second half of the 19th century, Tirana underwent a rapid administrative, social, and cultural development. It broke away from the Oher *Sandjak* and the Manastiri *vilayet*, strengthening its administrative links as a *kaza* with the Durres *Sandjak* of Shkoder *vilayet*.

It looked as if by now Tirana had healed the wounds caused by the former

feudal wars. This can be seen in the writing of Albanologist Hahn, who visited the city in 1850. He does not speak about ruins and abandoned buildings any more. He wrote, "The city of Tirana and its plain left me a very good impression. The local inhabitants are very hard-working. The fields, the orchards, and the gardens are very well tilled and planted and surrounded by fences, the people are well dressed and clean." In 1863, 13 years later, Hahn visited Tirana again and wrote, "It left me the same good impression that it had left me the first time in 1850."

The social life in Tirana also differed from that of many other cities of Albania. Despite the four-century old rule of the Ottomans, the Turkish oriental customs and its fanaticism had not yet struck deep roots in Tirana. In the middle of the 19th century, Albanologist Hahn was impressed with the fact that women were present in the city's market place. In every place in Albania, rural women went to the city market places, wrote Hahn, but in Tirana "what draws my attention as something that I have not seen in any other place is the fact that the Muslim women (of the cities - K.F.) dressed in city clothes, among whom also some young girls, sat in the steps of the mosques or along their walls and sold used clothes and goods."

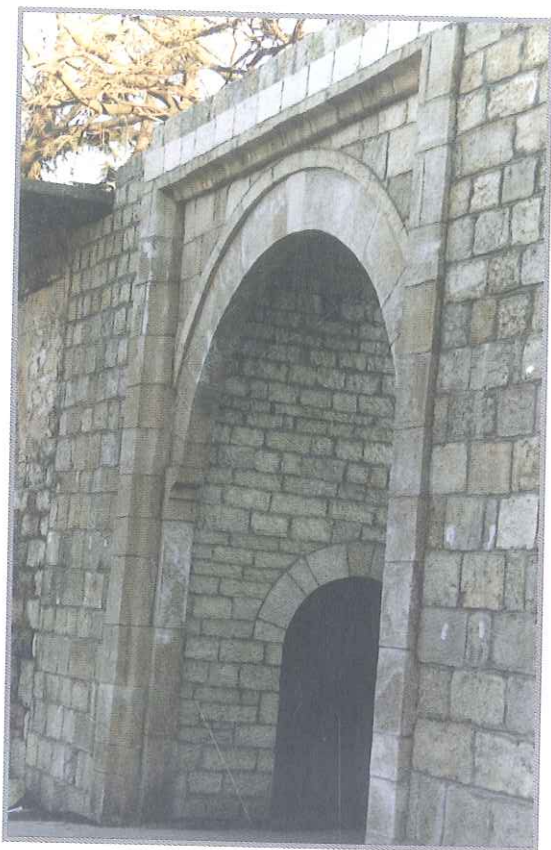
Nevertheless from the social and cultural aspect, Tirana was still a backward city. It did not have a modern education, but only some Madressas, which taught the Koran. In order to educate their chil-

dren, the rich families sent them to the schools of the large cities of the Empire such as Manastir, Thessaloniki, and Istanbul and after their graduation their children came back home. In some cases, they began to frequent also Western schools. As far as is known, the first student to study in the West was Seit Sermedin Toptani, the third son of Abdurrahman Bey Toptani.



View of the walls of Toptani castle house.

In the 40s, *Seit-Sermedini* (In the Ottoman documents his name is Mehmet Seit-Sermedin), after studying initially in Istanbul, continued his high school in Venice, where he took part together with Pashko Vasa in the liberation revolution against the Austrian bondage. In 1849, he returned to Istanbul and was appointed (after winning the competition) secretary to the Imperial Divan. In 1854, he went to Paris as secretary in the Ottoman Empire Embassy, where he expanded his cultural and scientific background. One and a half year later, he returned to Tirana, then went back to Istanbul, as secretary to the Imperial Divan. In 1858, he



The portal entrances of Toptani castle house

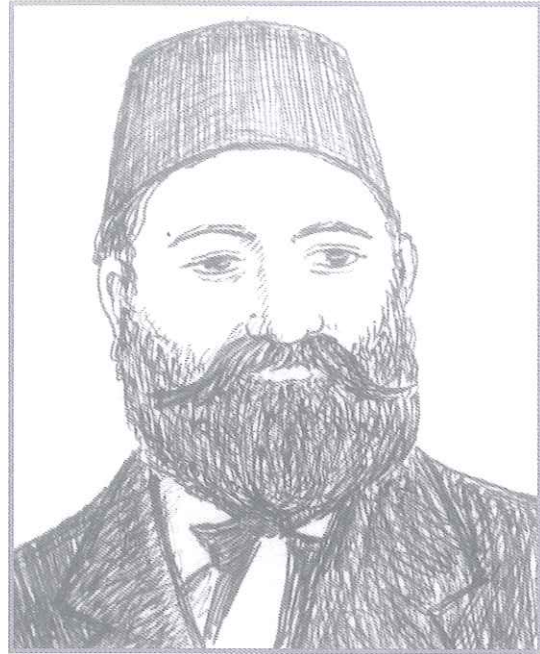
sent two petitions to the Turkish Government. In one of them, he demanded the opening of a modern high school in Tirana, saying that he would pay from his own expenses for its construction. In the other, he asked to build a telegraphic line, also with his own expenses, which would link Tirana with Shkoder. Later he was sent to exile in Caucasus until the end of the 60s. After he returned to Istanbul, he took part in the meetings organized there together with Konstandin Kristoforidhi, Hoxha Tahsini, Jani Vreto, Sami Frashëri, Ismail Qemali, Pashko Vasa, and others to compile a national alphabet of the Al-

banian language and to disseminate Albanian literature.

In 1877, Seit Toptani became member of the "Istanbul Committee" (Committee for the Protection of the Rights of the Albanian Nation), which under the presidency of Abdyl Frasheri organized some months later the resistance against the Treaty of Saint Stefano and the founding of the Albanian League of Prizren (1878). Then Seit was again interned to Caucasus, where he died in 1897. Seit formed a very close friendship with Abdyl Frasheri with whom they became cousins-in-law.

While Seit Toptani contributed to the history of the League of Prizren as member of the Istanbul Committee, his cousin, Sami Bey Toptani (son of Haxhi Mehmet Pasha, first son of Kapllan Pasha Toptani) took part as representative of Tirana in the founding of the *League of Prizren* in June 1878. *The inhabitants of Tirana in general were in solidarity with the program of the patriotic organization of Prizren.* After the suppression of the League (1881) in Tirana, like everywhere else, the movement developed mainly in the field of Albanian culture. The Ottoman administration banned the teaching of Albanian there. However it was taught secretly. Thus Tirana remained, as in the past, without any Albanian school, but only with Turkish schools and a Greek school, which was set up in 1872. This situation continued also later. According to the Turkish Yearbook of 1897, Tirana as a *kaza* had about 27 primary schools, a public city school, and a Madressa which all taught in Turkish.

In the meantime the population of Tirana continued to grow. The data that we have on its population are various, because no regular censuses were taken. Nevertheless none of them mentions less than 12,000 inhabitants. In 1854, Hahn wrote about Tirana that it had 2,000 households. In 1857, Hecquard mentioned about 20,000 residents; in 1873, Isambert also mentioned the same figure of 20,000 inhabitants; in 1880, Sami Frasheri wrote in *Kamusulalam* that it had 17,000 inhabitants; in 1901, Degrand recounted that Tirana had 25,000 inhabitants, while in



Said Toptani painted by A. Buza

the same year Galanti wrote that it had 12,000 inhabitants. In 1905, Barbarich wrote that Tirana was a city with 17,000 inhabitants; in 1907, Ippen also referred to 17,000 inhabitants, while according to the Turkish census of 1911, Tirana had 15,000 inhabitants.

We find more detailed information about Tirana's situation by the end of the 19th century. In its chapter on the Shkoder vilayet, the Turkish Yearbook of 1897 speaks also about Tirana, saying that it had 638 shops, 31 inns, 25 bakeries, 15 ovens for baking tiles, one oil processing factory, 37 coffee houses and bars, two *hamams*, and one pharmacy. In the city of Tirana, there was also the seat of the branch of the Ottoman Agricultural Bank (*Ziraat bankasi*).

In the field of industry, Tirana stood out for the production of silk and the manufacturing of beautiful silk cloths. Another important product in the city was oil. According to Turkish statistics, in Tirana district, there were almost 140,000 registered olive trees, whose products were processed in 407 primitive oil-processing mills and in a new factory. Tirana district was one of the few districts of Albania where imports were more or less balanced with the exports.

6. Renaissance and Independence

In the last decade of the 19th century, Albanian books and newspapers, which were published outside the borders of the

Ottoman Empire, began to be distributed in Tirana. In early 20th century, the movement spread greatly and was led by the two sons of Seit Toptani, Murat and Refik, who opposed the Ottoman administration. They opposed even their cousin *Esad Pasha Toptani*, the descendant of the third son of Kapllan Pasha, who was a blind tool of the Sultan and who plundered and maltreated the civil population. The ranks of the patriot activists swelled with new militants who came from the broad strata of the civil population.

The first Albanian school was opened in 1902, having Filip Ashiku as its teacher. Students from the three religions attend-



A group of Tirana patriots and iluminists, from left to right: Mustafa Drita (Mara), Beqir Luga, Jusuf Elezi, Qamil Biçaku, Hafiz Ibrahim Dalliu, Emrulla Struga, Mahmut Fortuzi (photo from book Tirana city, published by A. Bakiu, on 1998)

ed this school. Mustafa Mara was one of the outstanding militants of the war for national liberation, who courageously distributed the Albanian newspaper *Drita*, which was published in Sophia by Shahin Kolonja, and for this reason until he died in 1948, his last nickname became Mara-Drita. *Reshit Luman Petrela* was passionately linked with the Albanian national question and until he died he kept Albanian books and newspapers by his side. Other pioneers who worked undauntedly to spread the platform of the national struggle were *Ali Kukaleshi*, *Xhafer Stermasi*, *Mahumd Fortuzi*, *Hasan Bakiu*, and in particular, *Hafez Ibrahim Dalliu*, who became one of the most popular figures of the patriotic movement in Tirana. With their efforts, as well as the contribution of hundreds of their friends, the national movement was spread in Tirana in struggle against the Ottoman administration and their local stooges.

In particular, they had to face the Young Turks, who under the slogan of the war against the absolutism of Sultan Hamit and their promises for a democratic Ottoman empire, tried to win over the population masses. These fanatical Ottomans, who were guided by the extremist Islam and headed by their ideologist Sultan Haxhi Aliu, in Tirana were led by the integralist Mufti Musa Qazimi and were disguised as democrats. They propagated the idea of the Constitution and, in this context, the struggle against the beys, whom they identified with the bearers of the Albanian national movement. Through deceits and frauds, they managed tem-

porarily to win over part of the city bourgeoisie and many peasants of the Tirana district.

The confrontation between the patriots and the Young Turks was further aggravated after the victory of the Young Turks in July 1908, which brought to power their party "*Ittihad ve Terakki*." On the next day of the proclamation of the Constitution, which formally guaranteed all the peoples of the Empire their freedom and national culture, the patriots of Tirana decided to introduce the teaching of the Albanian language to all the schools of the city (10 city schools). The "*Bashkimi*" club was immediately formed to promote the national Albanian question. However, after a while, the "*Ittihatcis*" as the Young Turks were called in Tirana, that is, the members of the "*Ittihad ve Terakki*" Party, together with the government authorities waged a very fierce struggle against the Albanian national question. They cursed the Albanian letters, punished the Albanian patriots as enemies and people sold out to the beys, and finally resorted also to terror. This terror reached its highest peak during the expeditions of the Turkish general Shefqet Turgut Pasha, who in the spring of 1919, at the head of 80 battalions, trampled underfoot and set fire to Albania. The battalions of Shefqet Turgut Pasha entered also in Tirana, declared a state of siege and launched a wave of terror that Tirana had never seen.

Under the pretext of collecting the weapons, they looted and raided the

houses of the Albanian patriots, according to the lists that the *Ittihatcis* had drafted, and arrested hundreds of people from the city and the villages of Tirana. Many of these patriots, in whose houses they found letters, books, and newspapers in Albanian, were tied hand and foot in the presence of their children and women and their co-citizens, beaten black and blue in the middle of the streets, insulted with very bad words, threatened to be killed, taken in that condition all over the streets of Tirana, and then were forced to clean the streets and the squares of the city. After some days, 22 citizens and 40 villagers were sent to Elbasan to be tried by the extraordinary military tribunal set up in that city. The tribunal gave them very heavy sentences only for having kept books and newspapers in Albanian. *Ibrahim Dalliu, Mustafa Mara, Mahmut Fortuzi, and others were each sentenced to 10 years of jail. Refik Fortuzi was sentenced to 15 years in jail in absentia, because he was found in possession of the book by Sami Frasheri "Shqiperia c'ka qene, c'eshte, dhe c'do të jetë" [Albania, what it was, what it is and what it is going to be].*

Terror reined also after the departure of the so-called "peaceful" army of Shefqet Turgut Pasha. Despite the terror, the fight of the citizens of Tirana for their national rights assumed greater proportions. The great uprisings that broke out all over Albania in 1911 and 1912 had an impact also on Tirana. In the summer of 1912, the Tirana citizens formed two units of insurgents, one of which operated in the vicinity of Kruje and the other

in the vicinity of Durres. They clashed with the Turkish army. Meanwhile, the *First Balkan War* broke out in October 1912. Those Balkan states that had formed an alliance to fight the Turkish armies — Serbia, Greece, Bulgaria, and Montenegro — began to enter also the territory of Albania. The Montenegrin armies were pinned down at the Shkoder gate, while the Serb armies, which were passing through Kosova entered also in the northeastern regions of Albania and descended to the south, in the direction of Tirana and Durres. At the same time, the Greek armies coming from the south began to march through Chameria, encircled Ioannina, and headed towards the southern regions of present-day Albania.

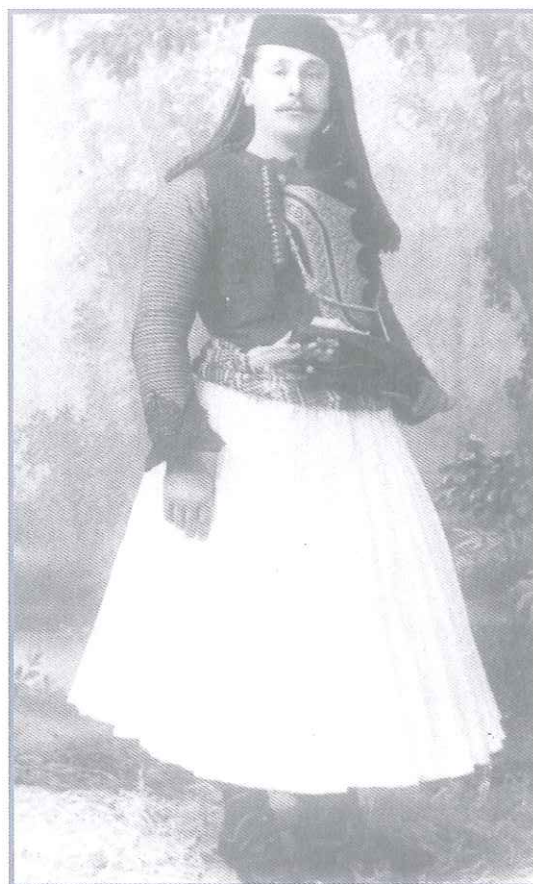
At the time when these events were unfurling, in November 1912, a group of patriots headed by Ismail Qemali, had sent word to all the cities and regions of Albania, to urgently elect and send their delegates to Vlore to take part in the national congress that would decide on the fate of Albania and proclaim its *National Independence*. But in the city of Tirana, time was pressing because the Serb armies had occupied Kruje on 25 November and were at its doors. In the face of the great pressure brought to bear by the Serb armies, on 26 November 1912, three days after Tirana had sent its delegates (Abdi Toptani and Murat Toptani) to the *National Convention of Vlore*, the Tirana patriots staged a rally on the square in front of the sub-prefecture (today the square before the old building of the National Library), which

was attended by a large number of people. At that rally, they decided to proclaim Tirana's independence as a sign of preliminary solidarity with the decision of the Vlore Convention (which it actually made two days later).

Tirana informed the other cities of the country of its decision, inviting them to follow on its footsteps. It also informed the command of the Serb army in Kruje not to set foot in the city of Tirana, where there was no Turkish army and where, instead of the Ottoman Imperial Flag, now the Albanian flag was flying. But when the delegates from Tirana and from all Albania proclaimed the National Independence in Vlore on 28 November, the Serb armies entered the city, imposing on it a foreign military occupation yoke.

7. 1912-1920

Despite the proclamation of independence and its recognition by the Great European Powers, just like all the cities of Albania, Tirana, too, never enjoyed its freedom and independence. The Serb military occupation continued in Tirana for some months until the borders of Albania were defined in principle. After the departure of the Serb armies, Tirana and its district could not join the Albanian Government in Vlore headed by Ismail Qemali, because Esad Pasha Toptani, an ally of the Young Turks, declared in Durres the formation of a separatist government, which was called the *Government of Central Albania*. This government had in its jurisdiction also the city of Durres.



Murat Toptani in folk dress

Apart from the shock that the Albanian patriots suffered following the cessation of Tirana from the national government of Vlore, in the autumn of 1913, Tirana was shaken also by the dramatic events that were caused by the arrival of the *muhajirs* [refugees]. The *muhajirs* were refugees from Diber, who in order to escape the savage terror of the Belgrade Government that was launched against them after the suppression of the anti-Serb uprising in September 1913, abandoned their homes without managing to take anything with them. Some of them had



Esad Pasha, photo Marubi

sought refuge in Elbasan, Durres, and some in Tirana.

In March 1914, with the advent of Prince Wied to power, as sovereign of Albania and with the appointment of Durres as its capital, both governments, that of Ismail Qemali and that of Esad Pasha Toptani resigned. But Esad Pasha did not lose power. He occupied an important position in the government of Prince Wied (as minister of interior and minister of national defense). Esad Pasha Toptani, who was stigmatized as "traitor" by the patriotic circles for having surrendered Shkoder for personal gains to the military Montenegrin forces, was accused again in March 1913 for having secret links with the Serb and Greek Gov-

ernments. By means of these links, they explained also the formation of the separatist government of Central Albania to enable Belgrade and Athens to realize their greed in northern and southern Albania. The formation of the government of Prince Wied by several landlord beys caused great popular discontent in Central Albania.

This discontent was utilized initially by the enemies of the Albanian nation, such as the remnants of the Young Turks Party in Albania and Esad Pasha Toptani himself, who continued to retain his alliance with them. The Young Turks wanted to re-establish the Ottoman rule in Albania, while Esad Pasha Toptani aimed at taking power in his hands. They used to some extent the backwardness of the low strata of the population and their religious sentiments, presenting the Christian Prince Wied as the representative of the anti-Islamic European forces and as the supporter of the hateful landlord beys. They managed to organize (also with the secret support of Esad Pasha Toptani) in May 1914 an uprising against the foreign sovereign and the Durres government. Hoping that the uprising would be stamped out, the patriotic forces, that had rallied in Durres, managed to force Esad Pasha Toptani to hand in his resignation and to flee the country. This uprising, which now was led by the Young Turks, was not suppressed. On the contrary, aided by the Serb and Greek military provocations and the complicated situation that was created after the outbreak of the First World War (4 August 1914), it extended all over Central Albania.

The dramatic events of the “anti-Wied” uprisings were very painful for Tirana. Because of the uprising, the economic situation worsened further since the relations with the Durres Port and other regions were cut off. When the uprising broke out, the *muhajirs* had not yet returned to their hearths. While the patriots were dealing with their accommodation, the savage terror of the Young Turks broke out against them. Like in all the territories where the uprising spread, the Albanian patriots were persecuted also in Tirana. Some were imprisoned, while some fled the country.

Prince Wied fled Albania on 3 September 1914. Nevertheless calm was still not restored in Tirana. Following Wied’s departure, Esad Pasha Toptani returned from his exile in October. With his settling down in Durres, the war broke out for power among the Young Turks and the Esadists [followers of Esad]. Haxhi Qamili, a peasant from Sharre village of Tirana, a fanatic of Islam, who had a fixed idea that the misfortunes of the peasants came from the country’s separation from Turkey and the beys who had left it, also joined the Young Turks’ front. The one year period of riots (May 1914–June 1915), which took the name of “an odd year in the history of Albania” came to an end with the suppression of the movement of the Young Turks by the Serb armies and with the restoration in Tirana of the power of Esad Pasha Toptani, which did not last long. Six months later, in January 1916, torn to pieces by the “odd year” and the arbitrariness of Esad

Pasha Toptani, Tirana was occupied by the Austro-Hungarian armies, along with the whole northern and central Albania.

The Serb occupation came to an end. The Austro-Hungarian military occupation was established in Tirana. With the expansion of the Austro-Hungarian occupation also to Diber, the Diber *muhajirs* returned to their homes. In January 1917, the Austro-Hungarian army softened their military occupation administration and promised to allow the revival of the Albanian state at the end of the war. It set up a *civil administration* formed of Albanian officials. Its highest administrative bodies were called directorates, had departmental functions, but were not ministerial departments and were under the constant monitoring of the military network of the Austro-Hungarian army corps, which had their central seat in Shkoder. Even though it was under the Austro-Hungarian military supervision, *the civil administration had an Albanian character.* Its officials were Albanians. The directorate of education opened Albanian



*Princ Wied arrival in Albania.
Photo Marubi*

schools in many regions. Thanks to these measures, which somewhat relieved the occupation regime, the Austro-Hungarian administration dissociated itself from the Young Turks and the Esadists. It relied on the Albanian patriots, although their most representative figure, Murat Toptani, was detained in Vienna as a "guest."

The Austro-Hungarian occupation continued until the end of the First World War, when Austro-Hungary lost the war. In October 1918, its armies pulled out of Albania. Their place in Tirana was immediately taken by the Italian armies, which had lined up on the side of the winning powers. The departure of the Austro-Hungarian armies inflicted a major financial damage to Tirana. They had issued their banknotes (coronas), which were affected by a high inflation rate and at the end of the war they were totally devaluated. Apart from that, the new situation that was created with the victory of the Entente Powers created a major political concern over the fate of the homeland. This concern stemmed from the fact that the Entente Powers aimed at implementing the *Secret Treaty of London*, which they had signed in April 1915. On the basis of this Treaty, Serbia and Greece would annex the northern and southern part of Albania. Italy would annex Vlore together with its hinterland and the Sazan Island. The remaining parts, that is, almost the whole territory of the present-day central Albania (also including Tirana), would form an Albanian principality under Rome's protectorate.

The content of the Treaty caused profound indignation in Tirana, as everywhere else in Albania. In order to face the danger, the Albanian patriots decided to convene a *national congress in Tirana on 11 January 1919*. However, Rome, which was suspicious of the anti-Italian intentions of this imitative, preceded it. With the help of some Albanian personalities linked with it (Mehmet Konica, Myfit Libohova, Fejzi Alizoti, Mehdi Frasheri, Mustafa Kruja, Preng Bidboda) – who rather preferred a whole Albania under the protectorate of Italy than a partitioned Albania under the London Treaty – lost no time in organizing a *congress in Durres* two weeks before that. Thus the initiative to convene a congress in Tirana failed. Nevertheless the Tirana patriots did not oppose the Durres government since it was against Esad Pasha Toptani. On the other hand, they were not in solidarity with it, since it upheld the platform of an Albania under the protectorate of Italy. However soon they realized that the political platform of the Durres government was opposed not only by the Albanian public, but also by the main international forces and first of all, by England and France, which did not want to leave out Yugoslavia and Greece from taking a slice from the Albanian "cake" and give all to Italy.

In these circumstances, the Albanian patriots received a positive signal from *US President W. Wilson*, who declared at the Paris Peace Conference that he would not recognize any treaty that was not signed also by the United States, hence not even the London Treaty. The Alba-

nian patriots, who were encouraged by this statement, urgently convened a *new national congress in Lushnje on 28 January 1920*. The congress proclaimed the Durres government overthrown. It decided not to recognize the London Treaty, declared that it would fight for the full independence of Albania and to preserve its territorial integrity within the borders set in 1913. In order to realize this revolutionary program, the Lushnje Congress set up a new government under the chair of *Sulejman Delvina*.

The Lushnje Congress was of decisive importance for the future of Tirana. *On 9 February 1920, the government of Sulejman Delvina decided to transfer its seat to Tirana and make it the provisional capital of Albania*. A number of political, geographic, social, and town planning factors played a role in this decision. Firstly, at that time Tirana was one of the few cities of Albania that had no foreign armies stationed there, because the Italian army had left the city some time ago. Secondly, Tirana was at the center of the homeland. Thirdly, through the port of Durres, Tirana was closer to the outside world. It was linked with telegraphic lines with almost the entire country. Fourthly, Tirana was a large city that could meet

the government needs for administrative buildings and residences for its officials. Fifth, Tirana had patriotic circles that were determined to deal with Esad Pasha Toptani's intentions, who even though in exile, was staging an armed action to occupy the city and to realize his anti-na-



Ceremony of commencement of the works of Albanian Parliament on 1920 (photo from book Tirana city, published by A. Bakiu, on 1998)

tional goals. And finally the invitation of the Tirana citizens to have the government in their midst also played a role in this decision. On the basis of this decision, on 11 February 1920, the Albanian Government together with the Supreme Council and the National Council (the Senate) entered Tirana acclaimed by its people. Tirana was now the provisional capital of Albania until January 1925 when under the Constitution, it became the permanent capital of Albania.

8. 1920-1939

With Tirana becoming the capital of Albania, its history as a city comes to an end, a history that until then was built only by its own citizens. After being chosen as the country's capital, with the establishment of the high institutions of the state, with its population coming from various regions of the country, *Tirana's history gradually began to be merged with the history of the Albanian state.* From that time onwards, everything changed in the political, economic, social, and cultural life of Tirana. It started to become the representative city of the Albanian nation with all the various regions of the country contributing in various ways to its political, economic, social, cultural areas, as well as to its urban development. How-

ever, the contribution of the ancient inhabitants of the city remained still a major contribution even hereafter.

From *the administrative point of view*, when it became the capital of the country, Tirana was still a sub-prefecture of the Durres prefecture. It became an independent prefecture only in 1922. In 1923, Tirana had 12,453 inhabitants; in 1930, about 31,000; while in 1938, over 38,000 inhabitants. With the changing of its status, Tirana started to come out of its closed cycle. Likewise, the mentality of its residents began to change. The political parties of the Albanian specter formed in Tirana in 1921 began to exert a special influence. The future political struggle among those parties and the ac-



A group of famous MPs of the first Albanian Parliament, including F.Noli and A.Zogu

cumulation in the capital of the sharp problems that worried the country influenced the more rapid development of the Tirana citizens. Two antagonistic political fronts were formed in Tirana. On the one hand, was the front of the conservative forces of the landlord beys, while on the other the liberal-democratic front. The most outstanding personalities of the Albanian nation participated in these two fronts.

The bulk of the Tirana inhabitants sided with the liberal democrats. The Tirana patriots, who had fought against the Young Turks and the Esadists, also aligned with this front. For this reason, the political fight for the overthrow of the rule of the beys and for the democratization of the country was greatly exacerbated. The democratic revolutionary organization called "*Bashkimi*" founded by Avni Rustemi (in 1922), which had the support of the broad masses of the capital, also had its seat in Tirana. The publication of this association, which was also called "*Bashkimi*" had as an executive director, the young intellectual Masar Kellici. From the ranks of the Tirana inhabitants emerged also other democratic organizations like "*Xhoka*" and others. This struggle, as is known, was crowned with the triumph of the *Democratic-Liberal revolution of June 1924*, headed by Fan Noli.

With the overthrow of the democratic government of Fan Noli (December 1924) just as for the whole of Albania, for Tirana, too, began the period of the rule of

Ahmet Zog, who in early January 1925 was proclaimed chairman of the Presidential Republic and later in October 1925, King of the Albanian Constitutional Monarchy. At the outset of the Zogite period, Tirana was a city with medieval urban features and very fragmented, where simple crafts prevailed. It did not have any modern factories. According to the official registrations made then in 1927, Tirana had a small number of factories with a low motor power (five flour mills with 13 workers). Handicrafts and manufactures (for metal processing, clothes, foodstuffs and various crafts) prevailed in the city. They were the properties of the masters who manufactured the products themselves. Some of them had one, two, or three apprentices (a total of 1321 manufacturing units and 1738 workers). Likewise there were 54 trade units with 140 apprentices (salesmen of foodstuffs, cotton cloths, woolen fabrics, and others). There were also 85 cars and 214 carriages and carts used for urban services and transport. Finally there were 65 very small units, which served as coffee bars.

The city of Tirana had also an electric central station two years later with a very limited capacity, which gradually increased. In the 30s, Tirana began little by little to change its economic composition, social life, and urban structure. In fact during this period, because of the world economic depression that affected also Albania, the development of industry was very slow. Only a few factories were built for the processing of the farming

produce, some oil and soap plants, some tobacco mills, some carpenters' workshops, brick kilns, and so on. The rate of the development of industry changed only after 1934 after the world repression was over. In 1938, Tirana had two thermo-stations (one with Albanian capital, the other with foreign capital), two large plants, and 3 small flourmills, one mechanical sawmill, one modern brick plant, six printing shops, one ice plant, one soap factory, and a number of small workshops. That year (1938) the first Albanian radio station was opened, broadcasting limited hours of programs.



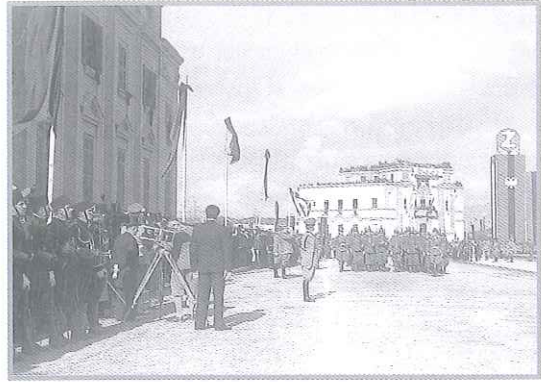
King Zog I.

In the 30s, Tirana sustained major changes in the town planning area. Regarding private dwellings, they developed in two directions, one in the territory of old Tirana, the other in the uninhabited area of what was called New Tirana. This space (New Tirana), which until then was state property, was divided in plots that were sold at favorable prices to the functionaries of the Albanian state. Modern residences with straight streets according to a town plan began to be built in this part. The buildings had to be at least two-story high. On the contrary, the old Tirana remained as it was, with very few urban changes, the place where its inhabitants used to work and live. Gradually the difference between the two Tiranas grew wider and more distinct. Nevertheless, during the 30s, a number of new private buildings were constructed. Not a single artistic work was built during those years in Tirana and not a single monument erected to any national hero, but only a bust to Major Llesh Topalli, Zog's bodyguard, who was killed in Vienna in 1930 during an assassination attempt staged against King Zog. Besides that, Tirana had no water supply and sewage system, no asphalt roads (with the exception of the big boulevard). Houses built with mud bricks and not real bricks dominated among its buildings.

In the 30s, Tirana underwent a rapid growth in its social life. In a royal decree (1937), women were forbidden to wear veils over their faces, while men black fez caps on the tops of their heads, something that they had inherited from the Ottoman

occupation. These were signs of the modernization of their life. The promoters of this progressive social movement were the young intellectuals, who had studied abroad and who had returned and settled in the capital. In particular, *after 1934, Tirana's cultural life and artistic activity boomed without any encouragement by the state.* Theater and artistic performances were organized, the network of sport clubs was expanded. This boom was reflected also in the publication of various cultural publications and, in particular, in the political, philosophical, sociological, artistic, and cultural debates published in these publications. Along with the previous publications, which appeared in Shkoder ("*Hylli i Dritës*" and "*Leka*"), and in Korce ("*Bota e Re*"), the publications published at that time in Tirana ("*Illyria*" and "*Perpjekja Shqiptare*") became important tribunes of this development.

At the same time, the social workers' movement was greatly developed. Workers and intellectuals alike joined it. They came from all over Albania, while from among the Tirana inhabitants Hasan Reci, Hamdi Shijaku, and Hamid Mezezi stood out as trade union organizers and democrat activists. In the context of the worker and student movement, the Communist ideas began to spread. The anti-fascist international movements, which were organized in the name of the Popular Front in the Western Europe, mainly in France and Spain, helped spread such ideas. Although such ideas were banned under the laws of the monarchy and per-



Festive parades on the occasion of 25 anniversary of Independence, 1937

secuted by the police, they were embraced by several circles that in the name of the working class set up communist cells, some of which were linked with the communist organizations in Korce and some with the communist organizations in Shkoder. Tirana followed with great interest the trial process held in the capital in January 1939 against the 72 "Communists" of Albania, among whom were also some intellectuals and workers from the capital.

From the first days of April 1939, the inhabitants of Tirana were the first to protest the news that Rome was preparing to launch a fascist military aggression against our country. For days on end, the youths of the capital manifested in the streets of Tirana, demanding arms to fight in Durres against the foreign invaders. But events rolled very rapidly. On 6 April, 1939, the "King of the Albanians," Ahmet Zog, fled the country together with his government. On the next day (7 April 1939), the fascist aggression began with the landing of the Italian army on the

shores of Albania. The Albanian resistance was defeated in no time by the superior fascist forces. On 8 April, 1939, the Italian fascists entered Tirana. This marked the beginning of the years of Italian fascist occupation of Tirana and of the whole Albania, which were followed by the period of the German-Hitlerite occupation.

9. April 1939-November 1944

With the occupation of Albania by fascist Italy, Albania lost its independence. Rome tried to prove that this occupation would not affect the country's independence, but would only alter the form of regime. For this purpose, the Assembly held in Tirana by Rome's officials declared on 12 April 1939 that Albania would remain a separate state, but would be united with Italy under the crown of Victor Emmanuelle III, who would be called "King of Italy and Albania and Emperor of Ethiopia". The majority of the people saw this as an act of demagogy. Thus with the Italian occupation of Albania, the public was divided in two



Arc of Triumph in Tirana

groups, into "collaborators" of fascism, who rallied the circles that accepted to serve fascist occupiers, and the group of the broad popular strata that, together with the progressive intellectuals, opposed the occupation. The Rome Government opened fronts of work, increased Italian capital investments in various fields of the economy and, in particular, built a number of public works, most of which in Tirana.

Thus in Tirana a number of workshops and industrial factories were opened. Tirana's urban view became more beautiful and the living standard somewhat ameliorated. However, these constructions did not wipe out the bitter taste left by the foreign military occupation and the imposition of the fascist ideology. Thus very soon the anti-fascist resistance began in Tirana like everywhere in the country. With the beginning of the World War II, in September 1939, and with the aggression of Germany against the Soviet Union in June 1941, the anti-fascist resistance, which initially was cut off from the anti-fascist European movements, assumed ever greater proportions and integrated into the great anti-fascist, Anglo-Soviet-American coalition.

Tirana was at the forefront of the anti-fascist resistance, both in terms of human participation and the management of this movement. The residents of the capital engaged in a national liberation war against the occupation, staging frequent demonstrations, which led to their arrests and, not rarely, to some of them being

killed by the police. The movement grew considerably after November 1941, when the former Marxist groups merged into a single party, the Communist Party of Albania (PKSh), which instead of a program of socialist revolution, approved the platform of the National Liberation Anti-fascist War (LANC) to return the homeland its independence and to establish a popular democracy. As a consequence, through this program the PKSh assumed very soon the role of the main organizer of the anti-fascist resistance inside and outside Tirana.

In order to draw the various non-Marxist patriotic forces into the anti-fascist resistance front, the PKSh organized in Peze, a village near the capital, a special conference. The Peza Conference, which was considered as the first pluralist assembly, approved a joint program of the Albanian anti-fascist political forces, the unification of the Albanian people, without distinction as to religion, region, and ideas, to fight uncompromisingly against the enemy until the liberation of the homeland and the establishment in Albania of a democratic progressive regime after the liberation.

The platform of the Peza Conference, although not approved by part of the liberal democrats, boosted the liberation struggle, which until then was waged through protests, rallies, and guerilla units in the cities and through the armed cetas [units] in the villages. From then on, large military formations began to be formed in the form of partisan battalions.

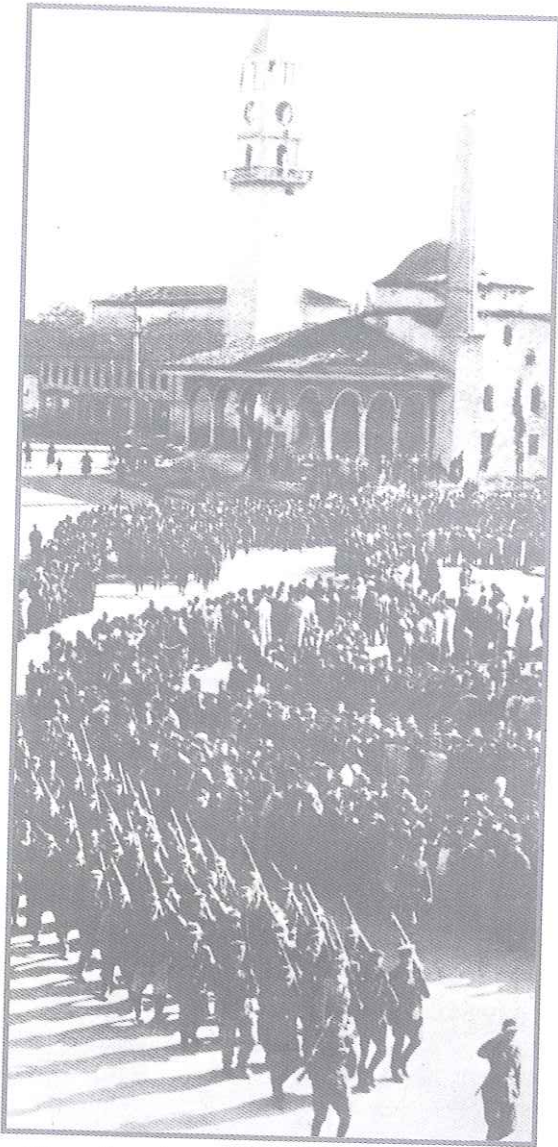
In 1942 and in 1943 the assault partisan brigades were formed and in 1944, the divisions and army corps, which were led by a single general staff, the General Staff of the Anti-fascist National Liberation War, founded in Labinot on 10 July 1943. The inhabitants of Tirana contributed to the establishment of these military formations with militants and cadres. Its anti-fascist militants like Qemal Stafa (5 May 1942), Misto Mame (6 August 1942), Vojo Kushi, Sadik Stavaleci, Xhorxhi Martini (10 October 1942,) rendered an invaluable contribution laying down their lives in the heroic struggle waged in the capital.

LANC continued to grow and expand even more during the German Hitlerite occupation. The statements of the German Hitlerite that they would recognize the independence of Albania, that the military occupation would be temporary, that it was dictated by the needs of the war against the Anglo-Soviet-American coalition, and that at the end of this war they would withdraw their armies from



View of the war for liberation of Tirana, painted by A.Buza

Albania gave very few results initially. Their efforts won over only a few of the so-called "nationalists" who, worried over the consolidation of the anti-fascist national liberation front and the PKSh leading it, thought that they would rout



*View of partisan parade on 28 November 1944
in centre of Tirana*

the partisan forces with the help of the German armies. The great operation launched by the Hitlerite command against the partisan forces during the winter of 1943–1944 failed. This defeat greatly infuriated the Germans, who launched a savage terror also against the inhabitants of Tirana. The night of 4 February 1944, when the German forces massacred in the streets of the capital 84 persons will especially go down in the collective memory. But neither the demagoguery, nor the terror yielded any results. Tirana sent its elected delegates to take part in the extraordinary congress that was held in the liberated city of Permet on 24 May 1944 and proclaimed the formation of the Anti-fascist National Liberation Committee under the chairmanship of Enver Hoxha with the attributes of a provisional government.

One of the most heroic battles of the LANC is the war for the liberation of Tirana. On 29 October 1944, three partisan divisions, led by Mehmet Shehu, whose duty was to finally liberate it, surrounded Tirana. The attack began in the evening of the same day. In the evening of the next day, almost half the capital fell in the hands of the partisans. The fighting continued with ferocity also in the coming days. The partisan forces assisted also by the people of Tirana tightened their encirclement of the German garrison in the center of the capital. The fighting for the liberation of Tirana continued in every street and, often, in every house. Fierce fighting took place also in the historic center of the capital, in the

vicinity of Sulejman Pasha Bargjini Mosque, which was completely ruined during those days. Such fighting took place also on the "Skenderbeg" Square and in the government buildings. On 5 November, the partisan forces defeated the counterattack of the Hitlerite forces. During the 19 days that the fighting for the liberation of Tirana continued, hundreds of German forces and 127 partisans were killed, while 290 other partisans wounded. Tirana, the capital of Albania, was definitely liberated on 17 November. The government headed by Enver Hoxha settled in Tirana on 28 November 1944.

10. 1945-1990

Tirana came out of the war with a population of 59,900 inhabitants, which was almost twice that of 1938. The first liberation years represent the years of the reconstruction from the damages inflicted on Tirana by the war. After its reconstruction, Tirana sustained a more rapid development than in the past. As early as 1947, Tirana started to deal with the solution of the problems that resulted from the first reforms of a socialist character that were undertaken by the Albanian Communist Party which, after getting political power, renounced the democratic program it had adopted at the Peza Conference, deciding to pursue the road of the so-called dictatorship of the proletariat. *With the implementation and then, the deepening of these reforms, Tirana underwent a very rapid economic, social, cultural, and artistic development.* As a result of these reforms, its population grew rapidly. In 1955, it had 108,200 inhabit-

ants, in 1960, it had 136,300; in 1969, it had 152,700; in 1979, it had 189,000; and in 1989, it had 238,100 inhabitants.

The first major transformations that Tirana suffered in the economic field began in 1947 with the building of the Meat and Milk Processing Plant, the Shoe Factory, and so on. In 1951, the first modern industry, the Textile Combine in Yzberisht was set up. Initially it had 5,000 workers and staff. The "Misto Mame" Wood-Processing Combine and the Dajti Hydro power-station were built in the same year. Two years later, the "Dinamo" and the "Partizani" plants for the production of metal spare parts were built. Then the Glass Factory (1957), the Porcelain Factory (1959); the Silicate Brick Kiln; the "Ali Kelmendi" Foodstuffs Combine (1960); the Auto-Tractor Combine (1966), the Polygraphist Combine (1970), and others were gradually built in Tirana. *Thanks to this growth, as early as*



Valias coal mine and processing plant

the 60s, Tirana lost its former character as a city where small handicraft production prevailed and became a modern industrial city. Tirana is the main link of the automobile and railway transport, linked with all the centers of the districts

of the republic. The railway lines link it with the coastal ports of Durres and Vlore and with important centers like Elbasan, Pogradec, Shkoder, and others. "Mother Theresa" Airport is used for its international air connections.

Tirana experienced an equally great growth also in the field of education and culture. In 1947, the two-year Pedagogical Institute was set up. In 1951, four higher institutes at the level of universities opened their doors (the Higher Institute of History-Philology, the Higher Institute of Economics, the Higher Institute of Medicine, and the Higher Agricultural Institute). Later with the reorganization of education, a number of other higher schools at the level of universities were opened (Tirana State University, the Agricultural Institute of Kamze, the Higher Institute of Arts, the Higher Military Academy, the Higher Institute of Physical Training, and so on.)

Tirana experienced the same vigorous growth also in its scientific life. In order to organize and manage this scientific life, the state set up a number of specialized institutions, which covered all the spheres of scientific and social life, as well as the exact sciences. In 1957, the State University of Tirana and the Agricultural University of Kamez took over the management of the entire scientific work. In the early 70s, almost all the government departments set up under their jurisdiction a number of scientific institutions (the Institutes of Linguistics, History, Archaeology, Popular Culture, Hydrometeorology and Nuclear Physics, Seismology, Geography, and of Art.)

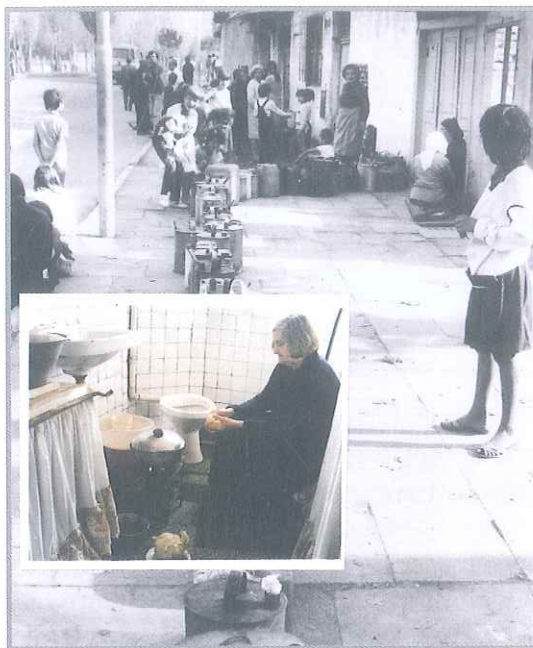
Along with the scientific activity, the *cultural and artistic life* also developed with the same pace. As of 1945, the first National Theater and the League of Writers of Albania were set up in Tirana. In 1945, Tirana inherited only one library with



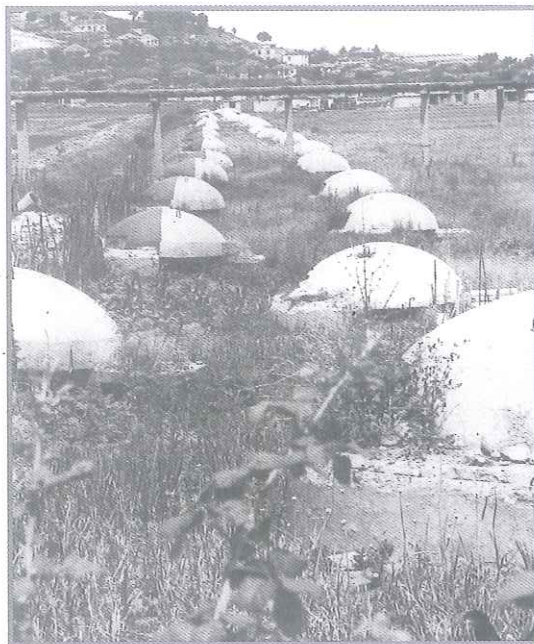
Albanian youth in Tirana main boulevard going on mission to construct rail ways, Photo Jani Ristani

12,000 volumes, while in 1990, it had 13 libraries, of which only the National Library had almost 2 million books. Right after liberation, Tirana built its Palace of Culture (called "Ali Kelmendi"). In 1960, it built its "Great Palace of Culture". The literary and artistic life, although under the state ideological discipline, kept reviving. The number of literary publications, theater performances, orchestra concerts, and Albanian song festivals kept increasing. Not only light songs, but also symphonic and opera pieces were composed. A number of monuments and busts were built in Tirana neighborhoods in memory of the outstanding personalities of Albania's history, among which the monument to our National Hero Gjergj Kastriot Skanderbeg, placed at the center of Tirana. At the same time, Tirana became the main hospital center. In 1989, it had 11 hospitals and hundreds of doctors, among whom some outstanding personalities of various branches of medicine.

Tirana's urban planning also changed its former view based on a new town-plan approved by the government. Tirana became full of building flats, usually with four to five stories that somewhat resolved the housing question. On the other hand, being very similar, these buildings had a very monotonous look from the architectural point of view. Sewage canals were built along the roads that were paved and asphalted. The center of the capital, which in the past boomed with artisan and handicraft activities, was transformed into an official and cultural center. Trade and production units



*Lines of miserables and a miserable life
(meaningful composed photo of Gani Xhengo
taken from the album Revival)*



Lines of Bunkers near Tirana



The storming of the embassies

were transferred to the neighborhoods, while the large industrial works were built in the periphery of Tirana. Besides these, the neighborhoods of the capital were filled with squares and parks. The most important work among them was the great park with the artificial lake, south of the capital.

Despite this vigorous growth, being the seat of the state apparatus, Tirana felt more than the other cities the political burden of the 45-year old Communist regime. But the political, ideological, and police pressure of the party state failed to suppress the democratic aspi-



*The police and commandos clash with students -
Decembre 1990*

rations of Tirana's inhabitants. Proofs of this are the arrests and the constant imprisonments of many citizens who were labeled "enemies of the people". This democratic spirit survived also in the ranks of the members of the PKSh, which after 1948 became the Party of Labor of Albania (PPSh). One of the most powerful manifestations of this aspiration was openly demonstrated at the conference of the party organization of Tirana in April 1956. In this conference many delegates harshly criticized the Central Committee of the Party of Labor for deviating from the promised road for the democratization of the state. Even the very savage measures taken against the dissident communists did not eradicate the aspiration of the inhabitants of the capital for democracy.

Even though not openly inveighed, the popular discontent built up, waiting to burst out at the first opportune moment. This moment came when the Berlin wall fell (1989). Very powerful movements began immediately after that event against the dictatorship, which were transformed into a great earthquake that hit Tirana in July 1999. This move came to known as "*The storming of the embassies.*" It is called so because on 2 July 1999, over 10,000 citizens rushed to the Western embassies, demanding political asylum and permission to leave the walls of the "communist prison." The PPSH and the government, incapable of coping with the wave of indignant inhabitants of the capital, gave in to their protest. This capitulation opened the way to

the deepening of the democratic movement. Some months later, in December 1990, the students and the professors of the Tirana University, backed up also by the workers of the industrial plants, forced the communist power to allow party pluralism in Albania. As a consequence, for the first time after several decades, the first opposition party was formed, which brought to an end the communist party monopoly and sanctioned the establishment of the democratic system in the country.

Thus after the triumph of political pluralism in the country (12 December 1990), the overthrow of Enver Hoxha's monument (20 February, 1991), and the first pluralistic election (31 March 1991) in Albania began the so-called period of transition and the transformation of the



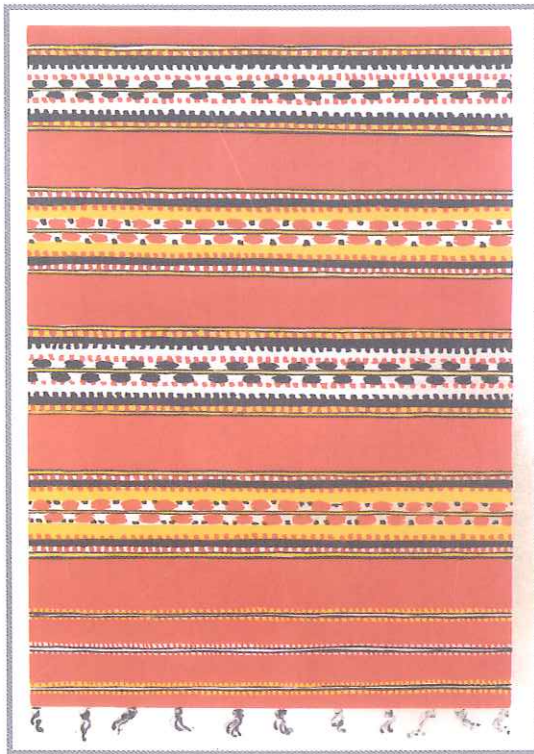
One of the rare consensual meetings between two main political parties achieved on end of 2002

regime of communist dictatorship with a state-owned economy into a democratic pluralistic system with a liberal market economy. This transition period is still underway. Therefore, it is yet too early to write about the history of current Tirana.

Prof. Dr. KRISTO FRASHERI

ASPECTS OF TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF TIRANA

Until the First World War, many Oriental traits were still alive in the profile of Tirana. Although the cleaning of towns was not covered by the government admi-



Wool Carpet from Shengjergj (Saint George) group of villages, collected and painted by Ikbale Bihiku

nistration of the time, the French Consul A. Boué in 1840 would remark, "across towns there is also cleanliness, at least as much as in south France and Italy", and as concerns the town of Tirana of 1857, another French Consul wrote, "its wide streets are lined with ditches of running water on both sides that keep the coolness and carry the garbage away." (H. Hecquard, *Historie et description de la Haute Albanie*, p. 255).

At the beginning of the 1920s, Tirana had several small marketplaces opened in many parts of the town; many Moslem cult buildings (82 mosques, 19 tekkes and a number of shrines and prayers' places); more inns than hotels; many peddlers selling along the streets of the town and many women walking along with faces covered with yashmacks, etc. At the beginning of the 1930s, Tirana was in the process of undergoing great changes and yet it was still "like a tablecloth with two faces" as a writer of the time would put it, because "You can find therein whatever you're looking for, everything is abounding. Now you're in Paris, now

you're in Anatolia" (K. Ceba -Kapa). But the pulse of life wouldn't beat with the same rhythm in all of the town's quarters.

In addition to the old native inhabitants, newcomers from various villages around the area would continually immigrate to Tirana (especially massive populations from Dibra and Kosova regions forced to come after Serbian clearance, as well as from Cameria forced from Greece government of the time) and many others would come from other districts or towns of the country. In conclusion, by this time the population of the town appeared to be very much mixed.

The busiest part of the town was, of course, the old Bazaar, which on Thursdays, that were market days, would attract a lot of people from the areas around the town. In a publication of the time this bazaar was described as one that was characterized by a movement such great



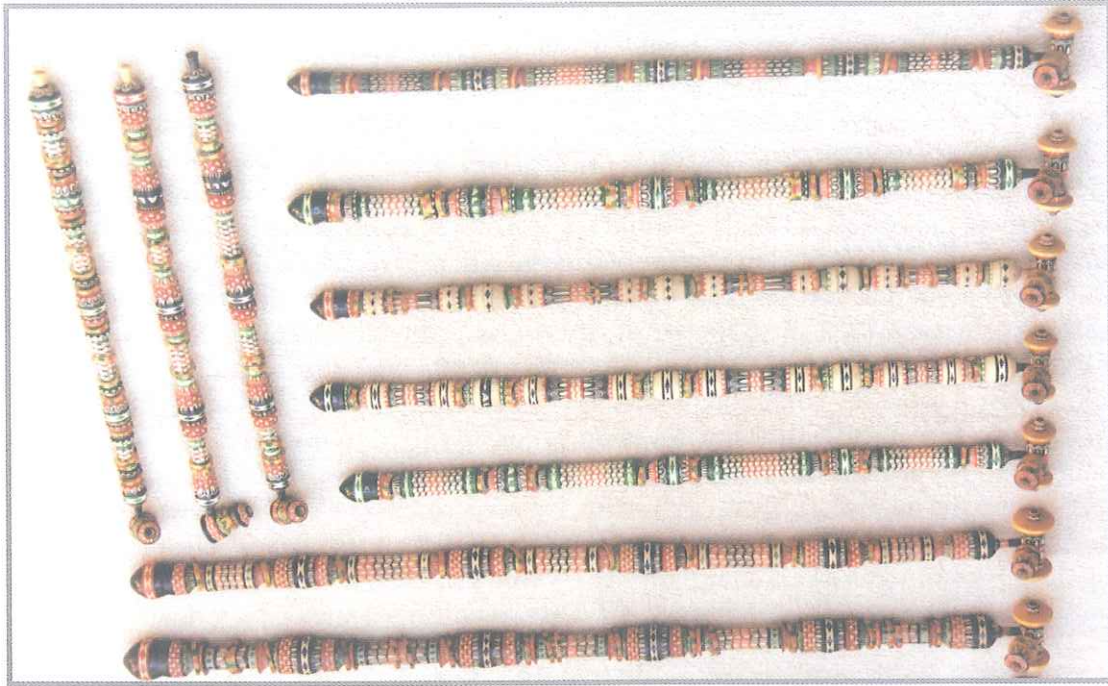
View of old bazaar

that it was impossible to be compared to any other town in Albania. (T. Selenica, 1927). It was a number of traditional productions that would attract attention in

this mart, especially in the part thereof that was called the "women's bazaar", where many city and country women would bring for sale items that they had made with their own hands, primarily thin cotton and silk fabrics, still very much sought both for their strength and beauty. Other women would sell cotton aprons and bundle cloths, square-shaped cotton headkerchiefs, or "crosses", lace-work, needlework and openwork to be attached to headkerchiefs, but would also bring woolen waistbands, multicolored socks, and felt. Lots of artisan shops were in the market such as silversmiths, embroiderers, tailors, shoe makers, leather moccasins makers, makers of white felt fezzes, etc.

Among the traditional handicrafts that resisted times longer than many other ones was the making of white *felt fezzes* for men, such as those that used to be worn in Tirana and beyond it, in the central Albania. They were taller than other types of fezzes that were prevalent in other regions of the country and would usually accompany woolen pantaloons in a man's clothing.

Another craft that used to be practiced in Tirana was the working of long wood cigarette holders and some other small items of very particular shapes, designs and colors. It was impossible to imagine an old man of Tirana wearing long white worsted pantaloons, a black wool vest and a tall fez without his wooden cigarette holder as long as 30-40 cm. At one time the inventory of these wood objects, worked on the wheel, became very rich



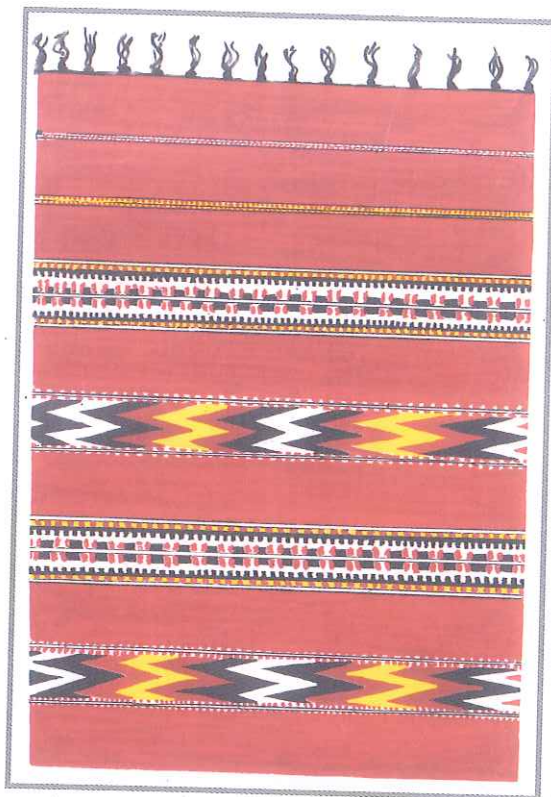
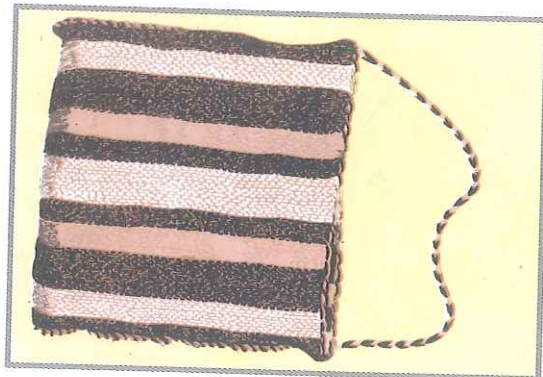
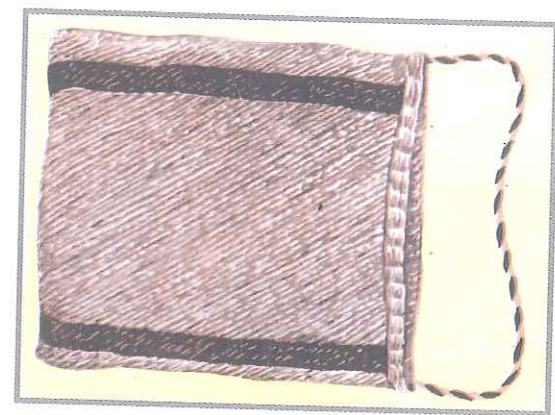
Famous Tirana long wood cigarette holders, present in antique shops, produced by masters family "Skenderi" of three generations implementing the same old artisan technology.

and multifarious, including wood boxes and bowls of various sizes, pen holders, writing sets, etc.

In the Tirana region, like in other regions of the country, there were villages where most people used to exercise a particular art which made them known in the whole area. Such one was the village of Farka situated 10-12 km southeast of Tirana, where an entire neighborhood used to deal with working clay wares (a tradition that regretfully is going towards being lost as very few skilled potters are left today). The Farka wares, mainly bowls and one or two-handled pots, were marked by a smooth granulated surface,

very harmonious shapes, discrete ornamentations only around the pot necks and were very well baked. The villagers of the areas around that used such pots firmly believed that the beans boiled in these utensils tasted very good.

Not far from Farka is the small village of *Daijas* where people used work goat wool to produce mainly rugs for the inner settings of the Tirana artisans' houses as well as saddlebags and bags. Such items were only ornamented with longitudinal stripes of various colors and had a very pleasant appearance. They were much in demand for practical reasons as well as because they were very resistant.



Two wool bags and a wool carpet from Shengjergj villages of Tirana, collected by IB

Let us last remember that Daijas is among the fewest villages in Albania where it was only men who dealt with weaving such pieces of whole goat wool which were worked only in vertical looms.

Remaining in the discourse on woolen textiles, we will speak about the region of Shëngjergji for a while, a mountainous area situated east of the Tirana city upstream of Erzeni River. This region was rich in mountain pastures and therefore its livestock, chiefly in sheep and goats, was thriving and its yield of wool was very good. With the wool of their livestock women of the region used to produce worsted for making winter garments and other household stuff such as bedclothes, pillows, bags, etc. Among a wide range of woolen items, small-sized Shëngjergji rugs stand out as an article that was ever-present in the dowry of every young woman to be married. What is striking about them is their extremely particular and joyous appearance thanks to their colors which are characteristic of the whole area. Their pattern is a field of a strong red color in which simple stripes and designs of white, yellow and black colors run breadthways in various combinations in their order. Their sizes measure 2 m wide by 1.30 (see fig.).

The weaving of cotton and silk fabrics in the simple house loom has been another traditional craft in the villages around Tirana and the district of Krujë.

Cotton textiles that were produced in the district of Tirana were doubtless the most beautiful among those made in Al-

bania, they had a wide range of usage for various purposes and were produced relatively easily, without much toil on the part of weavers who had good mastery of this inherited tradition. To adorn a cotton fabric, the weaver had first to manipulate the thickness of the yarn by combining the thin thread of the weft with the rather thick thread of the rims lengthwise or breadthwise of the fabric and the effects produced were breathtaking especially when light colors were used for the rims. But they would also produce fabrics in which the stripes were intertwined with simple geometric motifs. We can reasonably claim that it is in this craft that that feature of folk art about which the saying goes there are no identical copies is best proved. Thanks to their features, such cotton textiles have long resisted competition of industrial manufacture. The most common items made of such fabrics were women's combinations and men's shirts, aprons, headkerchiefs, kerchiefs used for bundles (to be tied at one's sides), pillow cases, mattress ticks, towels of daily usage and bath towels, bundle cloths of various sizes, table and hand napkins, etc.

There is a gradual shift from cotton and silk fabrics to another kind, the mixed fabrics one, which are made both of cotton and silk yarns. All what was said above about cotton fabrics holds true for the silk ones as well, but in these latter ones the transparency is greater, the decorating motifs are richer and of a greater variety and, for the rich people, certain motifs are made of gold threads. The most beautiful silk fabrics were used by rich

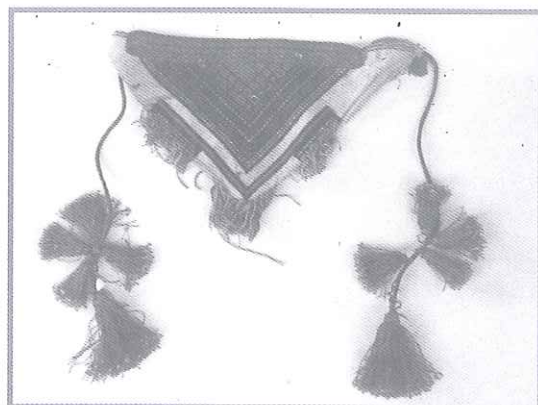
people for men and women's shirts to wear on ceremonial occasions or when simply going out of house and also for certain household outfits such as luxurious bed sheets, draperies and prayer shawls, and they were an important part in the dowries of the girls to be married.

An outline of the folk wear in the Tirana area

Almost until the First World War, in the area of Shëngjergj *men used to wear thick wool pantaloons, a shirt, a vest, a long-sleeved vest and a thick black worsted sleeveless coat on top of them* – a piece of garment that assumed an interesting appearance with that big square collar behind it that was adorned with long fringe of 30 cm in the rims and with two dense tassels on both sides of the breast. This costume was marked by a scarcity of vivid colors, which would only appear on the long striped woolen sash and the multicolored socks. Surely, the most ornamented part in this type of men's apparel was the vest or the white worsted sleeved doublet with a black braid on the sides

and certain peculiar ornaments at the sleeves from the elbow down. Men used to wear on his head a very tall white felt fez. This costume came gradually going out of use, especially among young people. With some slight changes, this costume has been preserved in the greatest part of the Tirana district as well in the city itself. Apart from this costume, there are today old men who speak of the kilted costume that has been used in the days of great festivals and especially as a bridegroom's costume. In a folk wear exhibition of the Tirana district that was opened in the Hall of Culture in Tirana in February 1983 there was exhibited such a kilted costume that was brought from the village Skrep of Shëngjergj. Another interesting garment presented in the same exhibition was a white worsted sleeved jacket for men decorated with red and green pipings that was used as a bridegroom's attire across villages of Kërraba region.

Almost all folk wear for women in the Tirana district belonged to a very well-known type in Albania such as the long



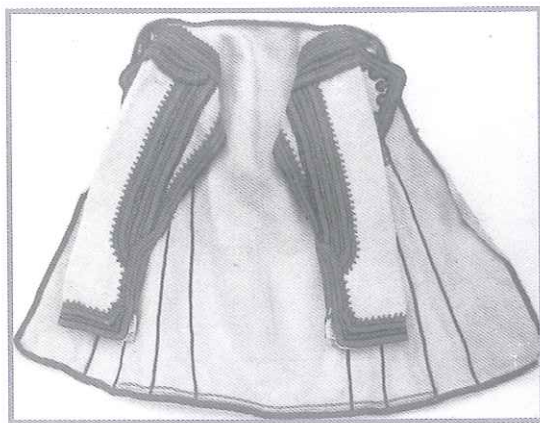
Two special woman head covers, the wool balls should stand at ears



Tirana men cloth



Women jacket from Shengjergji group of villages



Women jacket from Selita of Mountain village

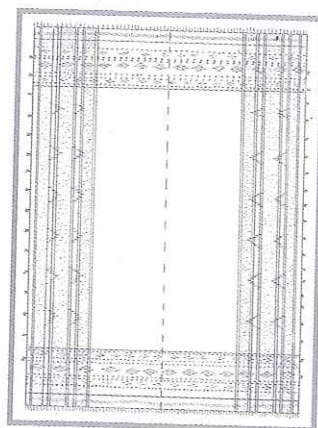
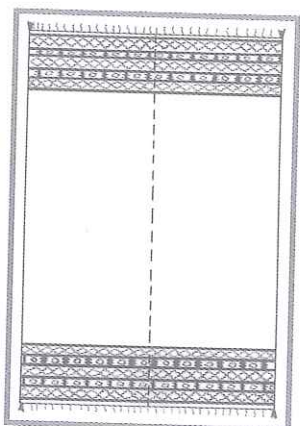




Woman cloth from Killojka village

gown of homemade fabric on which a vest or a sleeved jacket was worn, then a waistband, an apron and last a worsted doublet. This type of clothing was preserved longer both in the hilly and mountainous areas, while in the villages of rural areas it has gone of use earlier and was being replaced by chintz or black satin bloomers that were introduced into the countryside as a new influence of the

Oriental fashion coming from the city. Apart from women's costume of Shëngjergji women about which we spoke above, among the kinds of clothes that retained the style of folk dress we can mention women's clothing of Shëmri women (in Tamadhe) and that of Selita e Malit (in Bendë). They are lighter than the Shëngjergji costume and more attractive. The most obvious difference has to



Woman head covers

do with the head cover, mostly in the villages of Bendë. A woman there first wears a frontlet in the shape of a triangle that is covered with fine embroidery and is fastened with two cords whose tips end in two colorful tufts to be hanged in front of the ears, at both temples. Above the frontlet, two inches higher, was the loom cotton headkerchief measuring nearly 90 cm by 100, decorated with motifs on the four of its hems, that would hang loosely behind, on the back. For special occasions women would wear white sleeved doublets, whose sleeves were not worn, but hang loosely behind. (see the pictures)

Another somewhat more lightened version was the one that was worn across the villages of Kërraba region.

As concerns the clothing of townswomen of Tirana it was easier for the Oriental fashion to come into use, first among the richest strata of population and then in the strata of artisans and small traders. But by the mid-19th century, the ideas of the Renaissance personalities that were spreading about the country tended to arouse national feelings and make people distance themselves from the culture of the invader and preserve the national



Woman jacked form Shmri (Saint Mary) village



Woman skirt cover

identity in various aspects of life, clothing included. But not all of foreign elements could go out of use with the same ease they had come into use. The most advanced strata of urban society were the first to make such shifts as they began to follow Western fashions or, as they put it, "the French way" in their manner of dressing, which can be seen in many photos of the time. Likewise, following 1912, all parliament members, government officials of successive administrations and politicians in general would dress in "the French way". In the women's way of dressing such change was slower.

In the process of this evolution it is easy to notice that when rich population quitted using a certain fashion of dressing, it passed to the use of broad masses

but, of course, in much simplified forms, sometimes is the form of wedding clothes, or it could become, over time, very much used across villages situated in the area around the Tirana city, often with noticeable changes. So, with the passage of time, from the women's costume made up of silk bloomers, a long embroidered silk nightgown and a cloak with many gold-threaded brocades, that was very expensive, it was first the long gown and later the cloak that went out of use, while the costumes made up of bloomers, muslin shirts and vests, or sleeved vests worn above the shirts, remained.

Following the First World War, a kind of voile, namely a transparent and somewhat stiff fabric began to be imported which seems to have been very successful in the garments of ballerinas of the time. In our country, mostly in Central Albania, it was immediately put into use for brides' bloomers and was very much preferred; such bloomers were called "marble bloomers" and were accompanied by a kerchief (called "çerve") — that is a kind of bundle cloth embroidered with wires and pearls in its corners, that was to be tied to the waistband — and by a thin silk shirt and a vest. This costume is still seen to be used by many folk dance groups.

In conclusion it bears stressing that people that are seen today walking in the streets of Tirana are dressed like people in other towns and cities of the Balkans and Europe and the ones who mostly follow the foreign trends and fashions are young people.

Prof. ANDROMAQI GJERGJI

TIRANA CULTURAL LIFE

Tirana has had and still has a very rich cultural life especially following 1920, when it was selected as the country's capital. In order to get a better understanding of the cultural activities in Tirana, we have grouped them as follows:

The theater in Tirana

By its very nature, the theater is part of the corpus of the best cultural and artistic heritage of Tirana and all Albania.

Its beginnings

Although performances and theatrical groups in Albania date widely to the end of the 19th century, which coincides with the period of the National Renaissance, stirrings of an amateur movement in various types of theater can be encountered in Tirana as well. At the same time, we shouldn't lose sight of that valuable wealth of Tirana's folk culture that encompasses the well-known corpus by the name of "Folk Theater" that includes various games, ceremonials, songs, dances, wedding rituals, funerals and hospitalities, comic mimics and merry pantomimes, carnivals, shadows' theater,

puppets' theater, masked shows, etc. In this respect we can rightly claim that although Tirana is not among the ancient towns in Albania, the threads of the theater there originate from their primary forms found in the folk culture. On the basis of historical sources, it is interesting to emphasize that the matter composed for the theatrical shows of the time has been diverse in its nature, whether organized in forms properly dramatic, scenarios and librettos in which many theatrical elements were entangled and arranged within one single theme, or in other forms suitable for the stage.

In the 1930s Tirana becomes one of the main musical theatrical loci with a wide amateur movement that promised evolvment and progress. The "Tirana" theatrical society headed by Mihal Popi was an established and committed group that put on several plays — adaptations by Xhevat Serezi, dramas by F. Postoli, comedies by Molière, Kristo Floqi, plays by Kerner and Schiller, etc. At the same time, many amateur theatrical high school groups were active in Tirana.



Posters of theatre shows of the winter season 2002-2003

In April 1929, the intellectual elite of the country put forward the idea of creating an Albanian national theater, but it did not come to materialize. In 1930, a philodramatic contest was organized for the first time in Tirana in which many theatrical groups of the country took part. Gradually the establishment of a national theater was becoming a necessity. This is why the Ministry of Education opened the first Dramatic School in Albania in 1932, in which 16 boys and 12 girls participated, and which was to train the would-be artists for the theater. The "Federation of the Albanian Boyhood" that was interested in organizing theatrical activities across the country was also created with this Ministry.

Large-scale theatrical movements in the 1920s and 1930s attests to the love of Albanian people for art and, in a broader sense, for cultural identity, emancipation and progress. The cultivation of an Albanian dramaturgy that begins to take shape side by side with the growing quality and artistic demands that would spring from the literary genre proper as such, the creation of an institutional infrastructure through setting up various theatrical societies, the organization of contests, the training of would-be artists — all of these together created the grounds for a significant progress of theatrical activities in Tirana, by now a national cultural phenomenon with its own voice in the processes of the psychological development

and the emancipation of the country. Among theatrical societies of the city, many talented actors stand out such as Mihal Popi, Loro Kovaçi, Mihal Stefa, Pjetër Gjoka, etc. We must also mention the great actor of Albanian origin Aleksandër Moisiu who had expressed his sympathy and willingness to help found a national theater.

With the country's occupation by the Fascist Italy, even though the national art and culture in general saw a gradual decline, in some towns, especially in Tirana, many artistic activities were held including the remaining theatrical groups, especially vocal and concert performances, entertainment shows, etc. Meanwhile, several theatrical groups put on works by native authors that purposely aroused patriotic feelings; there were also works from the foreign drama repertoire that echoed the resistance to the invasion such as, for instance, the drama *Wilhelm Tell* by Schiller.

The more the resistance and struggle for the liberation of the country were extended and strengthened, the more the intention of developing an artistic stage movement was taking a clear shape with new ideas reflecting the frame of mind of the people that were revolted against the occupation and had already risen in a Liberating War. Various artistic genres and kinds such as songs, partisan marches, sketches, short theatrical plays, epic and humorous folk dances spread with great speed and many of them became widely known. This movement is known as the "partisan theater" (1941-1945). From the



Refurbished front view of the building of National Theatre located in the centre of Tirana

standpoint of locations, this artistic activity took place in 1) the mountains, where the units of the National Liberation Army were, 2) the city, and 3) the prisons.

Between the artistic works of a massive character that were performed in the partisan units and those performed underground in Tirana city there existed a similarity that found expression in their democratic traits, the anti-fascist spirit they conveyed, and the simple forms of communication.

On May 15, 1945, on the basis of this theater, the first *Professional Public Theater* was founded in the history of Alba-



Theatre Show "Prefekti" Comedy of Besim Levonja, played in the years '50. Main role played by actor Mihal Popi

nia from which, in 1947, the Popular Theater originated, that is the present-day National Theater. In order for the actors to be trained, the Dramatic School was opened at the Central Theater in 1944 and a contest was announced for professional actors. The school was attended by many of the first actors of the Theater that would later become its distinguished artists such as Mihal Popi, Kadri Roshi, Naim Frashëri, Besim Levonja, Drita Pëllinku, Prokop Mima, etc. The theater and the school was directed by the well-known stage producer Sokrat Mio. During the first two years of the Dramatic School,

but also later on, from the amateur movement across the towns other talented actors were recruited such as Šandër Prosi, Pjetër Gjoka, Sulejman Pitarka, Violeta Manushi, Maria Logoreci, Loro Kovaçi, etc.

During this period, in 1950, in order to further the musical and choreographic activity, the *Public Philharmonic* was founded in Tirana which included the Radio Tirana Orchestra, the Public Chorus, the Dance Group (Ballet Group) and some lyrical singers. Previously, various groups had performed their concert activities in the premises of the Popular The-



Theatre Show "Arturo Ui" of B. Brecht, played in the year 1971

ater, but with the founding of the Philharmonic, the professional nucleus was created which would later serve as a basis for the *Opera and Ballet Theater* that was founded in 1953. The Philharmonic paved the way for higher artistic demands and for establishing a policy of securing a continuous repertoire. In the first years of its existence, apart from songs and dances, the Philharmonic performed opuses of great symphonic and vocal genres by Albanian authors and especially by distinguished world authors. Most artists that made up the Philharmonic troupe came from the ranks of the

amateur movement and were selected among the most talented. But these troupes also included artists that had studied in higher artistic schools abroad such as M. Kraja, K. Antóniu, J. Truja, M. Ciko, L. Gjoka, K. Trako, M. Krantja, etc. Year after year the crew was enlarged to include other new artists trained chiefly in Eastern countries.

In 1952, the first Variety Theater was founded (the *Public Variety Theater*) which was later followed by the *Soldier's Variety Theatre*. In the meantime, the need to further develop the national ballet



Theatre Show "Revisor" of Russian N.V. Gogol, played in the years '50



Theatre Show "Fox and Vines" of Ezopus, Main role by actor Kadri Roshi played in the year 1964

made it necessary to open the first *choreographic school in Tirana* (1957) at the Opera and Ballet Theater. In the same year, the *Ensemble of Folk Songs and Dances* was set up as a central professional institution both for performing the folk art and

refining it. The expansion of stage performance institutions with the addition of the dramatic and the variety theatres made it necessary to open the first higher arts school in Albania, the "A. Moisiu" *Higher School for Actors*.



Theatre Show "Hamleti" of Shakespeare Main role by actor Naim Frasherî played in the year 1961

Towards Consolidation

During the first 10-15 years, the repertoire of professional troupes was dominated by the works of Russian-Soviet and classical authors. At the same time, more and more efforts were being put up to bring original national works on the stage. As a result, several such works during this period were accomplished such as the dramas *Halil and Hajria*, *Our Land* (1954) *The Fisherman's Family* (1955), some comedy, etc. By this time, the theater is increasingly aiming at establishing a national repertoire featuring important themes generally treated with a realistic language, though the influence of schematic perspectives, sometimes even of melodramatic manifestations is felt. In the meantime, in the repertoire of Albanian theatre outstanding works from a selected repertoire of world dramaturgy, such as *Hamlet*, *Othel-*

lo, *King Lear*, *Much Ado about Nothing*, *The Comptroller*, *Uncle Vanya*, *The Miser*, *Intrigue and Love* had been picked up and performed.

As concerns musical pieces, the *Symphony No.1* by Çesk Zadeja was composed (1956) during this time, being the first opus in this genre that was also executed with a high artistic level. Likewise, *Mrika* by P. Jakova, the first Albanian operetta, was composed and performed in 1958.

Following 1960, in the circumstances of self-isolation from the world art, the activity of professional theatrical troupes marked a significant growth, and the public interest in stage performance grew by the same extent. Thus, for example, in 1961 the Popular Theatre accomplished 137 performances with 58 thousand spectators. High figures in the number of shows and spectators also apply to the Opera and Ballet Theater, especially the Ensemble of Folk Songs and Dances, the Ensemble of the Army, the Public Variety Theatre, the Soldier's Theatre, etc. What is striking about them is a great interest in national works. For this reason, but also for ideological motives, slowly, but steadily, the repertoire of national works began to take precedence. In 1963, the Popular Theatre would rely on native authors for its repertoire with such plays as *The Prefect*, *Our Land*, *The Fisherman's Family*, *The House on the Boulevard*, *The Carnivals of Korça*, *Dr. Aleks*, *Halili and Hajria*, etc. This latter was shown for the public 212 times until 1962. During that year only, in the repertoire of theatrical troupes 13 plays were by classical authors,

among them Shakespeare, Gogol, Molière, Schiller, Lorka, etc., with such plays as *The Fox and the Grapes*, *The Moral of Mrs. Dulaska*, *The Hostess of the Inn*, *Monserat*, *The Kremlin Chimes*, etc. Whereas the Opera and Ballet Theatre, apart from some instrumental pieces, relied for its repertoire on the operettas *Mrika* and *The Springtime*, the opera *The Remembrance Flower*, and the ballets *Halili and Hajria*, and *Delina*. In the sphere of the stage performance, the composer P. Jakova created the opera *Skënderbeu*.

The opened window of media of the free world had an extraordinary impact on the public taste and artistic consciousness, a fact that in the late 1960s and early 1970s lead the Albanian art to seek new ways of expression, modern forms, and a more advanced insight into the sharpest aspects of creative forms. In music, several instrumental symphonic works were accomplished, but the ballet *The Maiden of the Mountains* (1970) with the music by N. Zoraqi and choreography by A. Aliaj was considered the greatest achievement.

The organization of the 11th Song Festival on Radio and Television made deep impressions on the audience and was later capitalized on by the party organs as a pretext to unleash a wild drive of control and to send the ideologism of art to the utmost extreme, which was profoundly felt in the 1970s onward.

In the period between the '60s and '80s, the bulk of the repertoire of all types of theaters in Tirana was met by nation-



Theatre Show "Our Land " Drama of Kole Jakova played in the year 1974

al dramaturgical and musical works. In the mid-1980s, the repertoire policy saw a slight moderation, as a more appropriate balance was set between the national dramaturgy and creation (broadly) on the one hand, and the world repertoire works on the other hand, while keeping the precedence of the former to the latter. Just at this time the struggle to give the theatre a new qualitative status, with searches of new forms against the pressure of mediocrity, became sharper. The same tendency is also seen in the Opera and Ballet Theater, the Variety Theater in Tirana, etc.

The structure of the theatrical community in Tirana

Tirana has today a network of theatres with a stable repertoire of various genres, with their premises and professional crews that perform seasonal activities, in various halls and settings. Currently the structure of the theatrical community in Tirana is like this: the National Theatre, the Opera and Ballet Theater, the Ensemble of Folk Songs and Dances, the Ensemble of the Army, the Circus, the Tirana Variety Theater, the Soldier's Variety Theater, the Puppet Theater of Tirana — all of them being theaters subsidized by

the government. Along with them, a number of private theatrical companies, various orchestras, vocal groups etc., are active in the city and operate with independent projects by applying (for financial aid) to various foundations or institutions that function in Albania. To further the evaluation and motivation of the theatrical creation, theatre festivals, May Decades, etc., have been held periodically, and today there are a number of song, music and theater festivals, etc.

Artistic profiles

The National Theater

The National Theater cuts the most prominent artistic profile. It has served and continues to serve as a real school for the qualitative growth of other theaters, as an applicable, fruitful experience that promotes the achievements of Albanian theater in general. Following 1990, the National Theater tried a wide range of new contemporary schools and styles in acting, production and scene painting; it included the banned, "modernist" authors in its repertoire such as Ionesco, Beckett, and Mrozkhek, by also trying to give new perspectives to the history, the social phenomena and the Albanian man. Such theatrical shows as *Richard III*, *Waiting for Godot*, *Fernando Kraft Has Written Me This Letter*, *The Great Magic*, *The People's Enemy*, *The Garden with Swallows*, *Quo Vadis*, etc., attest to the qualitative growth and innovation of the means of expression.

The National Theater is the greatest drama theater in Albania. Until 1990, its crew included 55 actors, 4 producers, 3

scene painters and the assistance staff. Currently the actors' troupe is reduced to 30. After a grave crisis of identity and restructuring, the National Theatre continues to maintain its status as a theater of particular importance, as one of nationwide dimensions.

The Variety Theater of Tirana

The Variety Theater of Tirana is the greatest satirical and humoristic vaudeville theater in Albania. Until 1990 it counted forty artists – actors, singers and instrumentalists. It has put on an average of 4-5 premieres a year with about 250 shows.

Its repertoire is based on a combination of short plays and the most diverse literary stage subtypes, dance and music, acting, painting and even projections, films, videotapes, etc. The Variety Theater of Tirana retains the same conspicuous folk character of humor and comic types. It is distinguished by a critical sense, contemporary spirit, the pressing topicality of the materials presented by so helping the moral perfection of society. It's not without reason that the Variety Theater has been nicknamed as "itinerant media", since it is extremely communicative and, through humor and satire, it attacks the weaknesses, vices and shortcomings of society by contributing to the promotion of the society's morality.

The Opera and Ballet Theater

It was created in November 1953 on the basis of the Philharmonic (1950). In its first years, a series of works from the periodic world literature as well as some

ballets were put on the stage. These had an impact on the professional training of artists. By the late 1950s, the creativity of Albanian composers was encouraged and as a result the first national works of the great genre were put on stage. Opera *Mrika* (1959) by Prenk Jakova is the first Albanian opera. It is distinguished by a national lyricism and coloring, motives and themes inspired by the folk music, and it paved the way for other works of more complex structures such as the opera *Gjergj Kastrioti Skënderbeu* (1968) by the same author, which features instead a strong monumentality and heroic spirit, massive chorals, pictorial scenographic solutions and a more expressive perfor-

mance of singers. In later opuses such as the opera *The Awakening* (1976) by Tonin Harapi, *The Commissar* (1974) by Nikolla Zoraqi, *The Daughter of Kaçanik* by Rauf Dhomi, etc., the way of organizing the musical, literary and choreographic matter undergoes changes and is structurally enriched by assuming a new dynamics and a contemporary language. The 1970s and 1980s mark qualitative strides forward for this troupe in creating its own national repertoire. It is worth to mention the ballets *Halili and Hajria* (1963), *The Maiden of the Mountains* (1972), *The Tenth Wound of Gjergj Elez Alia* (1963) etc. Following the 1990s, a strong drive emerges in the Opera and Ballet Theater to



Posters of the recent shows in the Academy of Arts



Opera house

cope with major world opera, to cooperate with well-known conductors and musicians from various countries, to integrate into European cultural market, etc. Today the Opera and Ballet Theater is the largest Albanian theater. Until 1990 it counted over 400 singers, instrumentalists, dancers, stage workers, etc. Today their number is reduced and many artists have emigrated to European countries.

The Puppet Theater

On October 27, 1950, the first professional puppet theater began its work in

Tirana. The first play performed on its stage was *Fatbardha*, a national piece. In its beginnings the repertoire was met with foreign works, but as domestic literature for children developed, national plays were dominant. In its shows of the 1980s, particularly in the 1990s, a revival of fantastic and wondrous elements was noticed, which came as a result of a better exploitation of the subjects of folk fairytales and legends. Until the mid-1950s, the backdrops were static, but later they became more mobile and functional and, accordingly, more expressive. Sculptural elements were also used, which helped to highlight the stage plasticity. From the fingered puppets, a shift took place in 1955 to the wired ones, a technique which today appears to be more perfect. In the 1960s, the musical accompaniment began to be performed with an accordion, not with a record player as before. Later it was replaced by a more sophisticated radio technique and recently by the superimposition of songs and words.

Schools

In 1959, within the National Theater the higher dramatic school was opened which was named after the great actor of Albanian descent Aleksandër Moisiu. In 1966 it merged with two other art branches, the music and fine arts, to create the High Institute of Arts that is the present-day Academy of Fine Arts. The Academy has served and is serving as a nursing ground for new artists; it includes three faculties (stage performance, music and fine arts). The teachers of this school have been selected among the best artists of Albanian art. Its main focus is



*"The swallow garden", drama
of B. Cikliropulos, 1988*

concentrated on mastering the stage skills by aiming at both the national experience and style and the known experience and styles of the world art. This school relies on a rich instructive source, scientific training programs, textbooks of theoretical and historical subjects, lectures, scientific studies and monographs, appropriate working conditions, a rich stock of books, graduate courses, sound and photograph libraries, archives, etc.

Critique and publications

In the first decades of the Albanian modern art, critical thinking mostly featured a reviewing character by dealing with sociological treatments. The critique today is characterized by polemical tones and a tendency to authoritative analyses of artistic components as of the theater, music, visual arts, etc.

Various authors have published monographs on outstanding authors such as A. Moisiu, Zef Jubani, Naim Frashëri, Mihal Popi, Kadri Roshi, Loro Kovaçi, Pirro Mani, Tefta Tashko Koço, Vaçe Zela, etc.

Other authors have written history textbooks on Albanian arts (about the theater, fine arts, music), studies of traditions and current artistic mainstream and tendencies, folklore, etc. Since 1961, some periodical bulletins (bimonthly) such as "Theater" and "Music" have been publishing dramas, comedies, musical works, theoretical and instructive materials; in 1980 the quarterly magazine "Stage and Screen" was founded, which used to publish articles on theoretical problems and the creative practice in theaters, film-making, opera, variety theater, etc. Critical thinking has found broad expression across the columns of the newspaper "Drita" and the magazine "Nëntori" that were organs of the Writers and Artists' League, and other press organs as well.

Following the 1990s, along with a cultural page in numerous partisan or independent papers, the critical thought has found space in other press organs such as the newspapers "Drita", "Aks" and "Ars", and periodicals such as "Studime për Artin", "Pamorart", etc.

Prof. Dr. JOSIF PAPAGJONI

Tirana as a Center of Fine Arts

It was Murad Toptani (1866–1917) from Tirana known as the first author of the modern round sculpture in the Renaissance period of Albanian Fine Arts. He has created some works of patriotic themes, in which two busts of Skanderbeg are most distinguished (1899 and 1917).

In the beginning of '30 of XX century the best artists were already gathered in Tirana but now in a more organized fashion than before in Shkodra, Korca or elsewhere establishing for the first time *a form of national art conscience*. The most important exhibition to respond to this Renaissance climate is "The First Art Exhibition" organized in Tiranë in on 25 may 1931 which was the first national exhibition in the history of national fine art. This exhibition was moderated by the association "Friends of Art", which is also the first artistic society founded in Tiranë in the same year. Two other important efforts were made in 1931 to create a pinacotheca and arts school. The former failed, but the art school was opened. These events marked Tirana as the Albanian center of fine arts and urged the

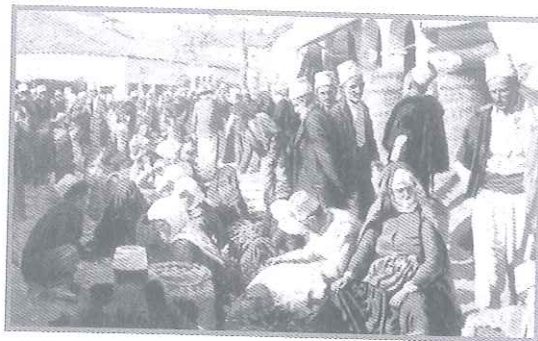


The first Bust of Scanderbeg produced by Albanian artist, Murad Toptani from Tirana



Frontpiece the catalogue of the first National Expo opened in Tirana, may 1931

painter A. Kushi to establish a "Painting Course" in 1931. One year later, on 1932, it was opened in Tiranë, the first "Painting School" of Albania which remains in the heritage of Albanian Fine Arts as the most important and successful institution ever established, nominated as "the Cradle of the Fine Art Academy". This school recruited students from all over the country. The first teachers of this School were artists O. Paskali, A. Kushi, A. Buza, the Italian M. Ridola and the renowned Renaissance poet L. Poradeci (1896-1989),



The bazaar of Tirana, painted on 1931 by Mario Ridola, one of Italian teachers of the Tirana Painting School.

specialized in Bucharest in fine arts. Between 1940s and 1970s the most well-known generation of Albanian artists such as B. Sejđini, K. Kodheli, N. Zaimi, F. Stamo, I. Kodra, Q. Grezda, Ll. Nikolla, F. Makoçi, H. Reçi, Z. Bumçi, S. Tuçi and many others, received lessons in painting at this first Fine Art School.

The international competition for erecting a monument to the National Hero Skanderbeg, organized in the auditoriums of the Tirana Painting School in 1937, has been another important activity during the Independence period. Aside from Albanian sculptors, many renowned European authors took part. The first Prize went to the well-known Croatian sculptor A. Agustinic (1900-1979), and the right of execution was given to the Italian sculptor R. Romaneli. The monument to Skanderbeg realized by Romaneli was placed at "Piazza Albania" in Rome two years after the competition, in 1939.

During the World War II (1939-1944) conditions for creation in art were restricted. Some exhibitions, however, were or-



Tirana painted by Vanxhush Mio on 1942

ganized. The most important was one of 1943, in which the best artists of the country took place. Other activities dealt mainly with personal exhibitions.

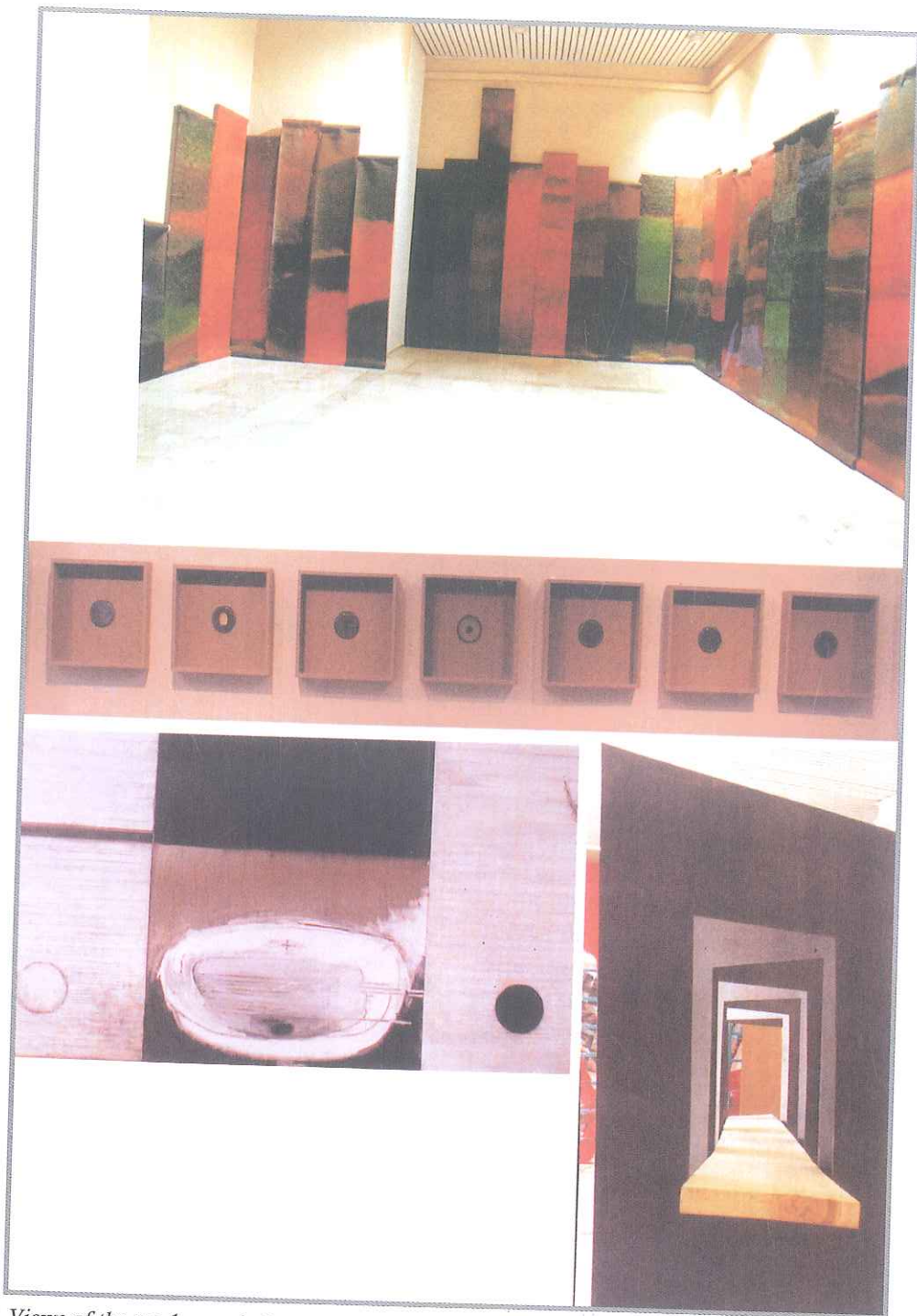
The setting up of artistic institutions in Tirana

The first activity in the area of fine arts after the Liberation of the country is the National Exhibition opened in April 1945 in Tiranë. On 1946 there was established the Artistic Middle School.

After 1945, efforts were concentrated toward setting up of art institutions. In

1954, the Art Gallery was founded and the best works of tradition and contemporary authors were presented there. 20 years later, on 1976 a new building for the National Art Gallery was constructed in the place it is today, and was enriched with a great number of works.

Painters and sculptors together with artists of stage and screen created their organization called "The League of Artists" with the intention of "uniting their efforts for the creation of the new art of socialist realism.



Views of the modern paintings exposed in the Expo Onufri '99 in the National Art Gallery



Winter in Tirana, painted by A. Buza

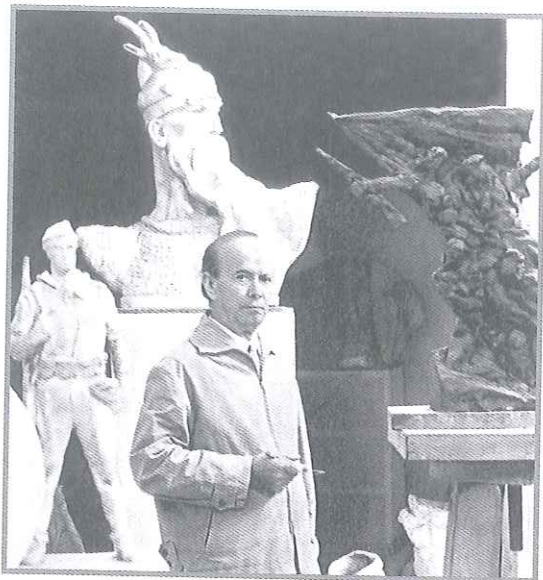
Formation

Students graduating from the Artistic Middle School in Tiranë would follow their studies at art academies in the Soviet Union and other Eastern countries. In 1960, when Albania broke with socialist camp, students returned home and in the same year the High Institute of Arts was set up (today known as the Academy of Arts). A number of national museums were founded, such as the Archaeological Museum in Tiranë, and the National Historical Museum, where many original works of art of a great value are preserved.

On 1986 it was founded the Art Studies Centre run by the Academy of Sciences. It was established also the "Centre for re-production of the Art Works"

This institutional network brought in the erection of monumental art works in Tirana such as "Monument of Scanderbeg" in the Tirana main Square, monument of "Mother Albania" erected in the cemetery of "Martyrs of the Nation" etc.

From 1945, fine arts exhibitions have been organized almost each year. Most



O. Paskali, one of the main teachers of the Tirana Painting School of 1931.

important were considered those involving anniversaries of Liberation and other national events. Likewise, many national competitions have been organized. The first competition was announced in 1948 involving the creation of a monument to Skanderbeg. Sculptor Janaq Paço (1914–1989) was the winner with his “bozzetto” which 10 years later was cast in bronze and was placed in the town of Krujë (November 28, 1959).

Monumental sculpture developed largely after the Liberation of the country. In a few years, several works were erected. Most important creations include the equestrian statue of Skanderbeg in Tiranë (1968) by authors O. Paskali, A. Mano, J. Paço;

In painting, a larger number of works were created. For the first time, almost all the genres of visual arts were devel-

oped, from easel painting and sculpture to graphics, scenography, textile, ceramics, glass and, further, mosaics and frescoes applied to some social/cultural buildings. Among this host of works, though created under a rigid censorship, works of particular artistic values were also created that have nothing to do with the so-called method of socialist realism.

The struggle for creative freedom

Though isolated from the contemporary creation in the rest of the world, time and again Albanian artists have made efforts for more creative freedom. The most obvious example of socialist realism years was the exhibition bearing the significant title “Spring 1972” opened in Tiranë. After some latent efforts shown in the exhibition of the previous year in Tiranë (1971), the second one was marked by a wider breathing. However, it was harshly censured by official critique. Those years also saw the first dissidents in Albanian painting, such as E. Gjergo, E. Hila, A. Oseku, M. Velo, etc.

Tirana Fine arts after 1990

Many personal exhibitions were opened, in which works created after different modern styles of world art were presented. In this stage, there are painters in Albania who still continue to create just like in the socialist realism years, but it's the true creators who try a particular artistic language and young artists with their artistic “thrills” tending towards a most contemporary style who set the tone for the present-day painting. Albanian artists, not long ago isolated within their own country, now stand at an interface

with the rest of the world to receive their feedback for their creations.

The Albanian artists are now organized in various societies according to their vocations, and though the League of Artists (founded in 1952) still exists, obviously now with another platform in line with the present-day creations, they go their own way. In 1993, the Te & Gi Gallery was set up in Tiranë, the first private gallery where a group of artists with progressive inclinations assemble. Other private galleries have been opened as well. The National Gallery has been adap-

ted to contemporary creativity and has succeeded in organizing exhibitions such as *Onufri dhe Marubi* in which artists from many countries of the world have also participated.

Tirana, with its natural beauty and historical importance, has been always a preferable motive of many local and foreign painters who have created hundreds of masterpieces on various themes on Tirana, the beloved centre of of Albanias all over the world.

Prof. Dr. FERID HUDHRI



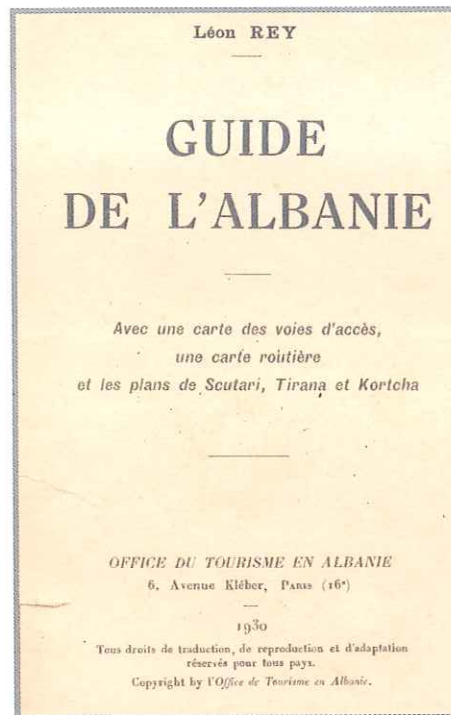
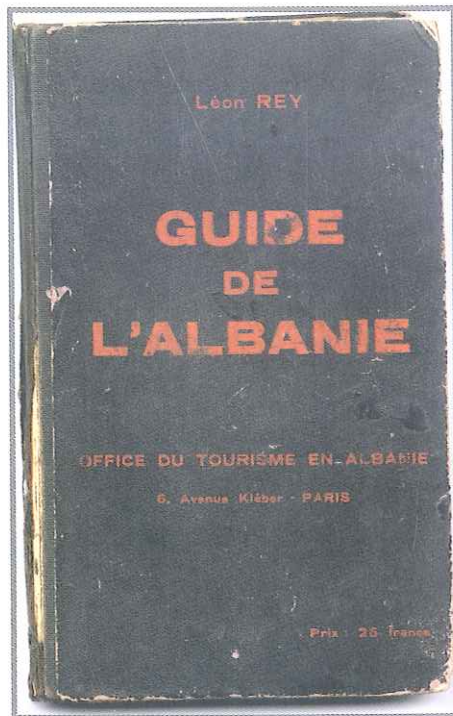
"Albania fantastica" painted by Ibrahim Kodra one of the most successful students of the Tirana Painting School of 1931.

Tourism in Tirana City and Nearby

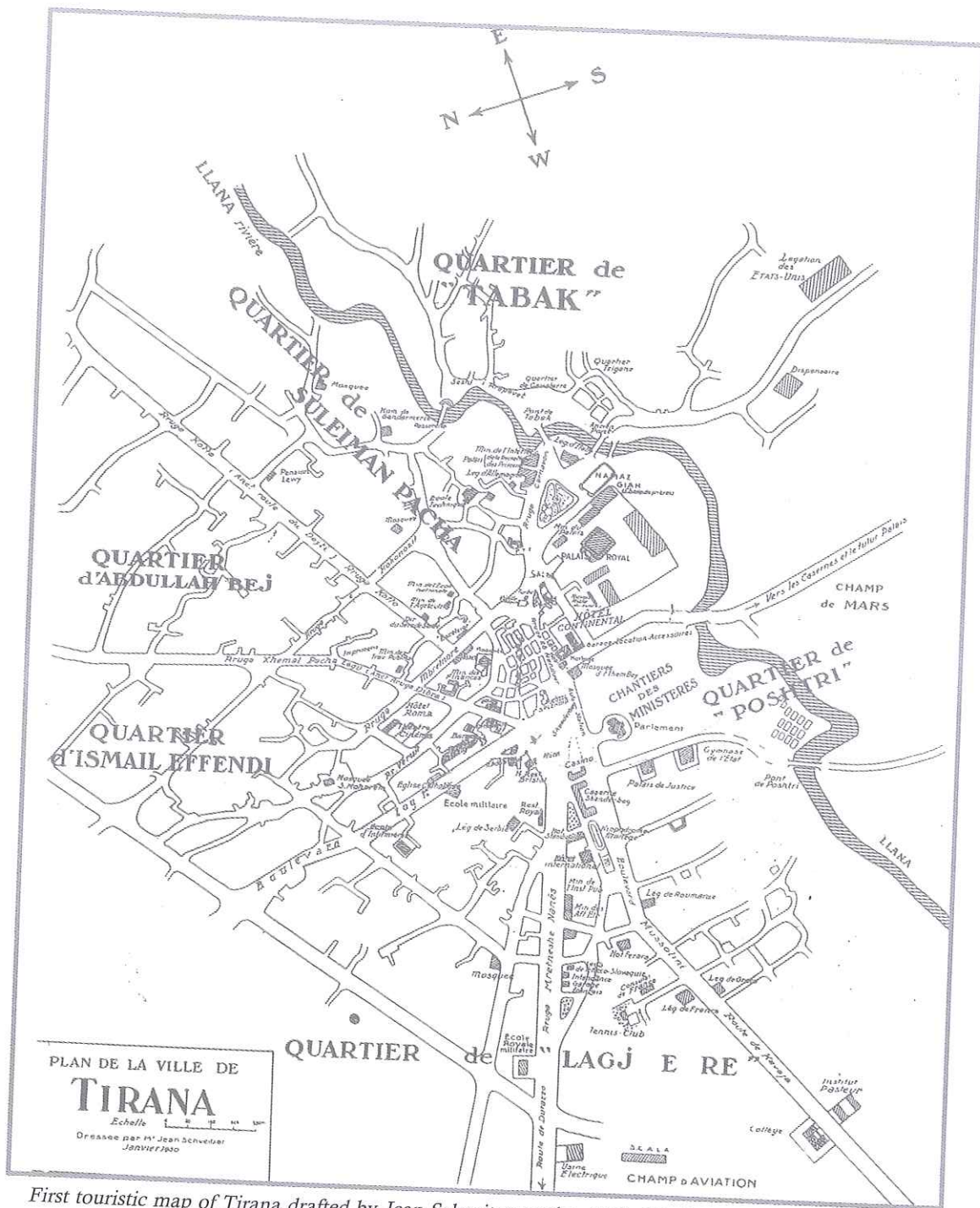
Tirana is a really nice town to live and stay.

The Mediterranean four season type of climate conditions, the short distance to the sea, the hills around, the chains of the

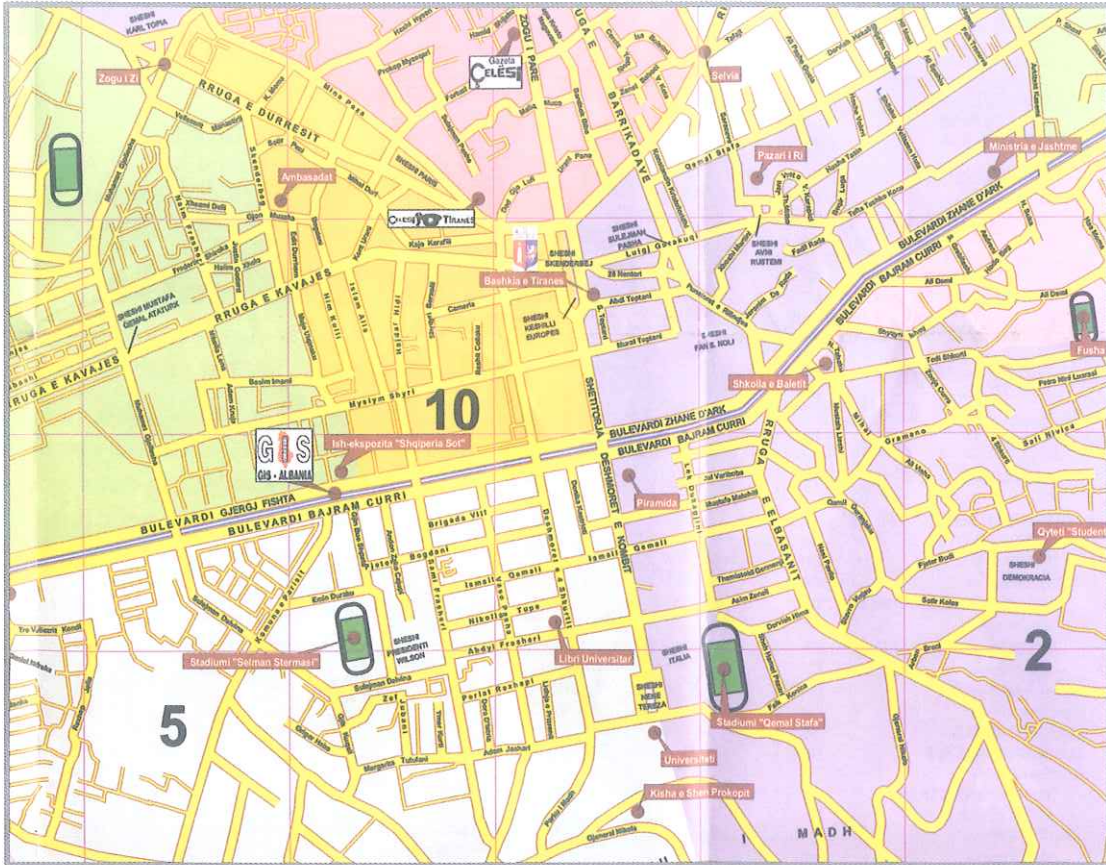
mountains of the east and abundant water resources of rivers, torrents and lakes are important premises toward quality of life for Tirana city the capital of Albania. Tirana has been always famous for its



The first Guide of Albania cover and Frontepiece compiled and published by Leon Rey on 1930, delivered for this publication from Mr. Zhani Canco, Architect.



First touristic map of Tirana drafted by Jean Schweitzer and published by Leon Rey in the Guide of Albania on 1930, delivered for this publication from Mr. Zhani Canco, Architect.



Tirana downtown map of 2003 taken from "Cesli" Practical Guide of Tirana

panoramic views including distant or nearby hilly or mountainous landscapes.

Tourist life in Tirana could be very interesting in terms of enjoying life in Tirana downtown and the nearest locations outside of Tirana city.

TIRANA DOWN TOWN used to be always a tourist attraction for the nice atmosphere that has been present always since its foundation. This peculiarity is emphasized also by famous travelers like Eduard Lear, Edith Durham and Leon Rey. The latter one published the first Guide

of Albania on 1930. The map of Tirana and the chapter on Tirana of the Rey's Guide outlines this nice atmosphere of the down town area, which by that time was mainly the area of Bazaar.

Tirana Down Town of today consists of the following locations:

1. New Tirana, or so called "Block", the location of the former vilas of heads of former communist regime .
2. Locations between the Str. of Durrës, Str. of Kavaja, Str. Myslim Shyri and nearby.

3. The zone from Scanderbeg Square to Old Bazaar

4. Boulevard Zog I.

These locations represent a variation of a - *shops* full of goods starting from the common Chinese clothes and Turkish jewelry to the last Italian fashion shoes and Italian jewelry.

b - from traditional cheapest *fast food* of traditional "a beer and a meet ball" to the most delicate and expensive "fish restaurant" like Rozafa located just near the Sulejman Pasha Square, in the right side of the wide road to Bazaar. Many restaurants have live music, jazz, pop, folk or mix of those.

c - hundreds of *bars* starting from a price of 0.2 Euro a coffee (in Tirana you get real Italian espresso like in Italy; some times they serve even Turkish coffee) to 2 Euros a coffee. There are locations in Block where there are so many number of cafés that no place in the world could have. Cafés and Cafés, on line and full of people.

Normally some foreigner could ask: who works here? All are having coffee for hours and hours! A smart answer could be : there are discussing over a coffee about the work, they are negotiating. When you want to have a business meeting you should say : when we will fix the



fragments of quite life in "Rinia" Park gardens today and two photos of the year 2000 when it was overcrowded by illegal kiosks and bars



View of the lake forest beach in the Tirana National Park



Aerial view of bar-restaurant Juvenilia in the entrance of the Tirana National Park

time for coffee? And the advise is that you should start with a coffee, no matter that will be converted into a lamb barbecue or a pizza, if the meetings happen to be in the the lunch hour. It's a matter of the business, you want to do it or not, so do it according to the rules on place. As you know "in Rome do as Romans do"; in Tirana have the coffee as Albanians do. And indeed all the foreigners working in Tirana got the coffee habit quickly.

Another luxury way of having a coffee in Tirana at any moment is the presence of the *Tirana Park* in the south part of the city, just at the end of the Boulevard "Martyrs of Nation" which is accessible from Block on foot only for five-ten minutes and by car only one minute; from other downtown locations only five to ten minutes by car. The perimeter of this Park is well "equipped" with numerous bars and restaurants, so that you can have a coffee in the middle of a mixed pine, oak, poplar, eucalyptus, elm, etc., forest in a sunny day even in January outside

in the open air.... Why not doing going for tourism or doing business in conditions of the like....

Tirana city downtown and the Park offer pleasure to *ardent walkers* because of the nice and joyful atmosphere in the streets. The majority of pedestrians are youngsters and students of middle school full of life and you can find yourself in the middle of a group of pretty noisy girls and boys while walking and shopping in the downtown area.

Within downtown locations the tourist could enjoy the up to date *shows* of two wonderful cinemas, Millenium I and Millennium II, Opera House, National Theatre, different shows of theatres, hall music, etc., in the Academy of Art stage arena etc. Special national or international shows like, National Pop festival, Miss Albania, foreign groups, Miss Europe, etc are organized in Palace of the Congresses or in the so called "Pyramid": the Center of International Culture.

Of special touristic interest are the visits to National Historical Museum, National gallery of Art, numerous private Art galleries (mind that Albanian actual painters are well known in the world over).

Tirana has many *Libraries* and numerous bookshops because Albanians are still one of the most reading population in Europe in spite of TV expansion. Books of any kind in Albanian and common European foreign languages (English, French, Italian, German) are found almost in every downtown library or bookshop.

Numerous *TV and Radio stations* have nice programmes especially Top Channel, TVSH, Klan, TVA, Top Albania Radio, etc.

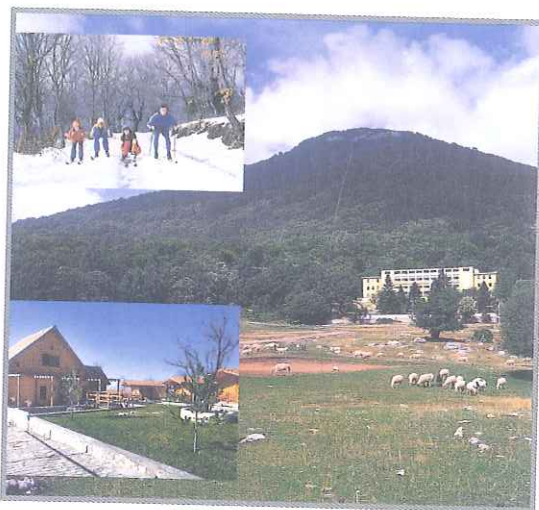
Services of any kind the same as in the most European cities such as *Internet cafés, taxi, house rental* etc., are easy accessible for any tourist since there are numerous agencies in all main streets.

Tirana has also almost everyday direct *air flight* connections with Italy (such as Rome, Milan, Bari, Rimini, Ancona), Austria (Wien), Hungary, (Budapest), Turkey (Istanbul), Greece (Athens), Slovenia (Ljubljana), Kosova (Prishtina), Yugoslavia (Belgrade), Bulgaria (Sofia), FYRo Macedonia (Shkup) etc.

OUT OF TIRANA

The most traditional touristic venture out of Tirana is the Tour of Dajti Mountain (max. height 1612 m) which tour could be organized to be carried out by foot or by car. Dajti Mountain is declared to be National Park of Albania (actually

only 3.3 ha but soon it will cover a surface of more than 20 ha) for the wonderful forest, trees and animals including wild bear. In the level of 1000 m over the sea there are wide horizontal meadows and fields at the size of several football stadiums together which are used for sportive entertainment games and for ski in winter time. This location is called "Dajti Field". There are nice old traces of narrow roads to go by walk which could last from 4 to 7 hours to arrive at so called "Dajti Field". The tour of Dajti Mountain is mentioned as tourist attraction even in the first Guide of Albania of Leon Rey pub-



Composed photo of Dajti Mountain National Park Resorts, photo Denis Mani

lished on 1930. Good news is that an Albanian - Austrian investment will make viable the installation of a lift to the "Dajti Field" which will make the trip to tourist resort only on 12 minutes.

Other traditional familiar tour is that of Petrela Castle which is only a 12 km trip to the ancient place and medieval



Distant photo of the new bar-restaurant in the peak of Petrela Castle opened only on 2003

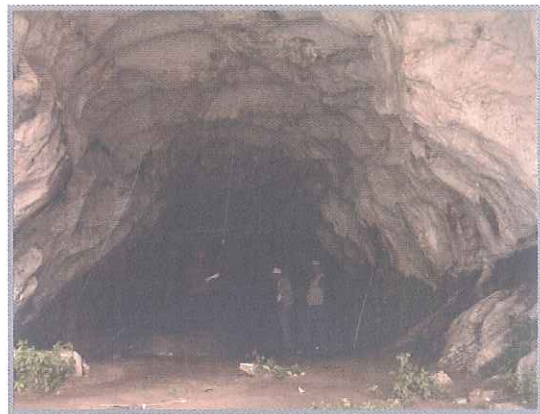
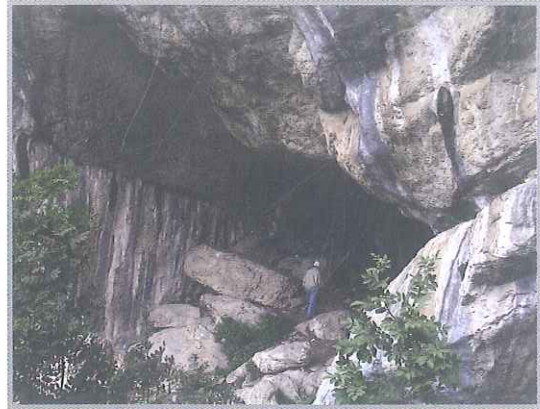
castle. A brand new restaurant is constructed at the peak of the castle preserving the architecture and promoting the magic panorama of the Tirana Field.

Other entertainment of this tour could be the skeetshooting and hunting simulation games and training center in Mullet village before going to Petrela castle. There are different restaurants in this location which have swimming pools.

In the same road to Elbasan, just 2 km after the turn to Petrela castle the tourist could turn to follow the Tour of Pellumbas prehistoric cave, only 6 km from the main national road.

The Tour of Pellumbas's cave (see details in the chapter of Archaeology) has started only recently in a frame of a project of SEDA NGO, IAA and Commune of Berzhita.s,

Working visits of SEDA NGO and CDD Forum have verified on site the potential touristic resort identified by Institute of Archeology of Albania (IAA).



Views of the outside entrance, entrance and internal premises of Pellumbas prehistoric cave.



View of a herbal medical crop in one of the fields out of Tirana.

Another castle is involved in the tour of Preza village which looks over the Rinas Airport at one side and to the sea beach at the other. Several nice restaurants are there and the panorama and the height are marvelous ones. This castle has hosted the Marriage of Scanderbeg also.

On the way to Peza, Preza and Petrela there are constructed numerous *Mini Football fields* and swimming pools what have created other opportunities for local and foreign tourists.

Other sportive entertainment and courses such as classes for *free flights*, flight's possibilities with two seats equipments, *skeetshooting* (near Mullet village), *piloting small cars* (near Sauk village), *water sports*, *sportive and tourist diving*, *horse*

riding tours (close to Mullet village) etc., are encountered more and more every day and are becoming very popular in Tirana.

Durres sandy beach and Kavaja region new sandy beaches southward have been always the most attractive venture for Tirana citizens and tourist, but now that a new highway provide a better road access, it could be said with no doubt that these beaches belong to Tirana.

Detailed information and contact points for above mentioned entertainment and services are given in several Tirana **Touristic Guides** such as Tirana Pocket Guide, The Practical Guide of Tirana (çeseli Tiranes-key of Tirana), Tirana official Guide etc., are very useful for tourists since there is useful information. This information could be browsed also in the address: www.tiranaguide.com.al

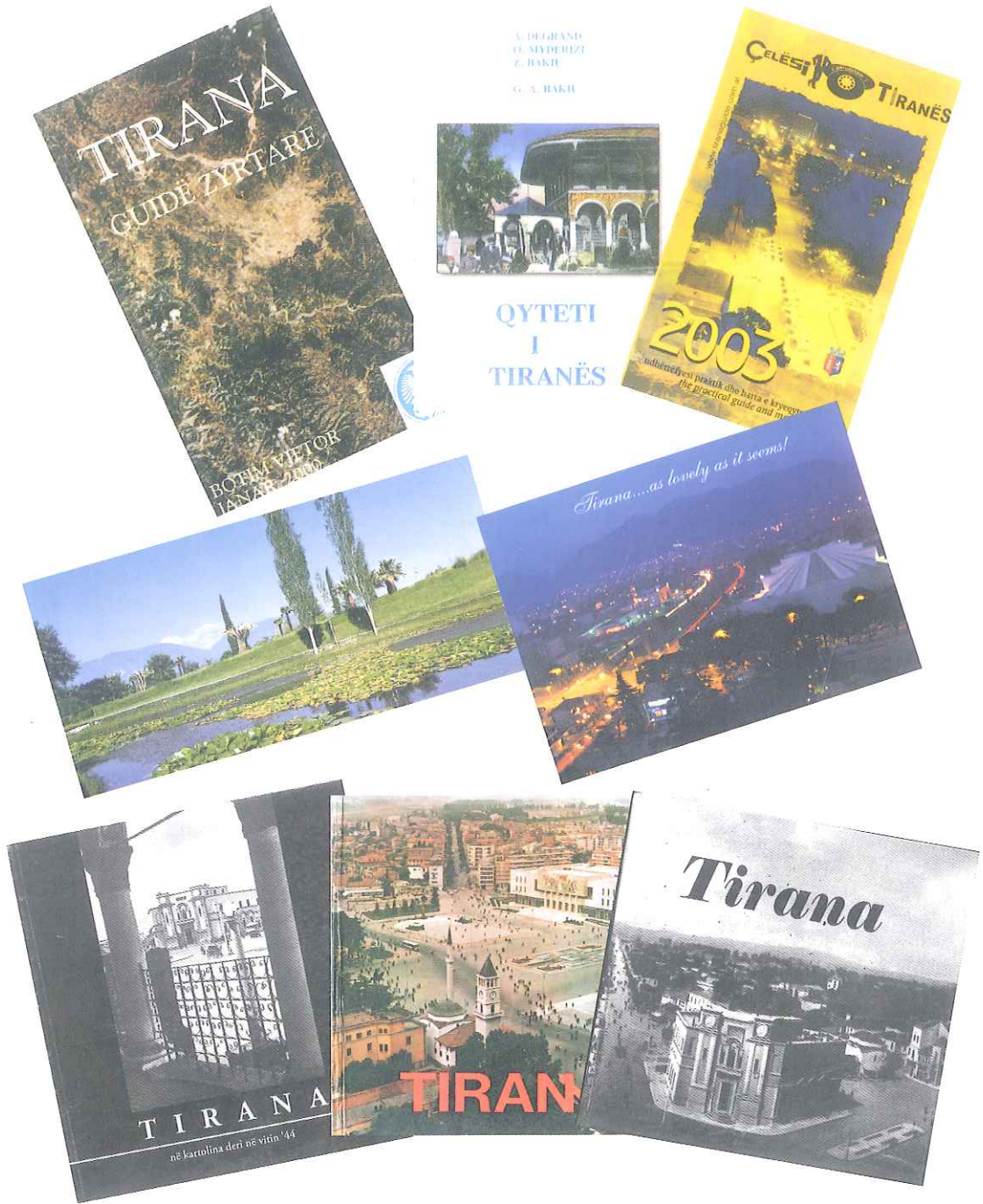


Photo of a small practical Guide to learn Albanian Language, placed in the Tree of Indo-European Languages taken from Webster English Vocabulary.

While staying in Tirana the tourist is interested for sure to know more about Albania. He should purchase Guide of Albanian Cultural Heritage or brows in the internet address: www.albanianculturalheritage.com

Special tourists who are interested also in deepening their knowledge in Albanian Cultural Heritage and especially those who are interested in Albanian language could contact seda@albnet.net to get a copy of the Practical method to learn Albania language.

GENC MYFTIU



Several important guides and info books on Tirana city and nearby, published from 1970 to 2003

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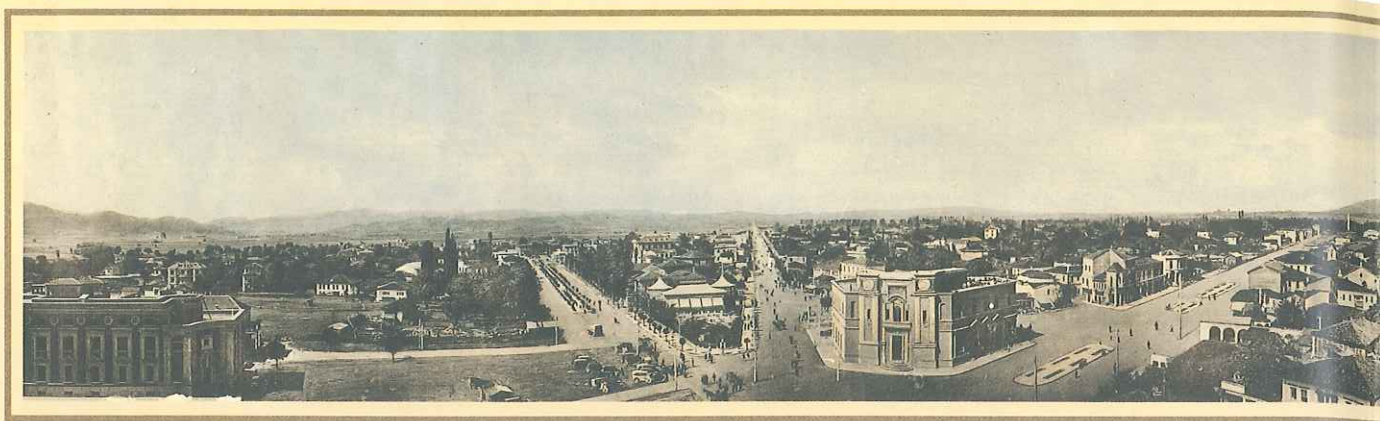
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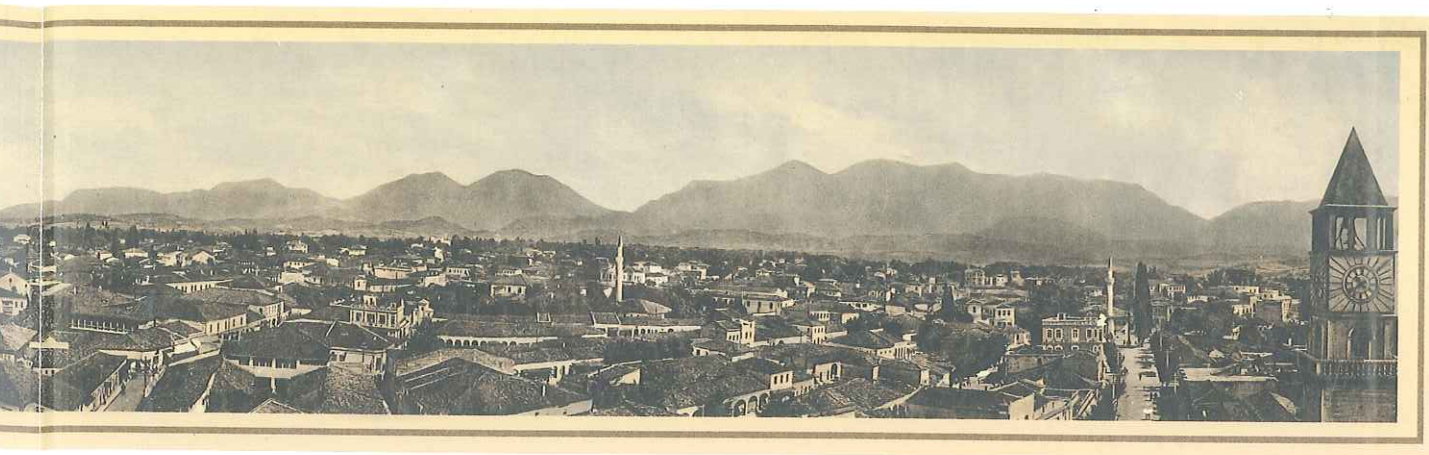
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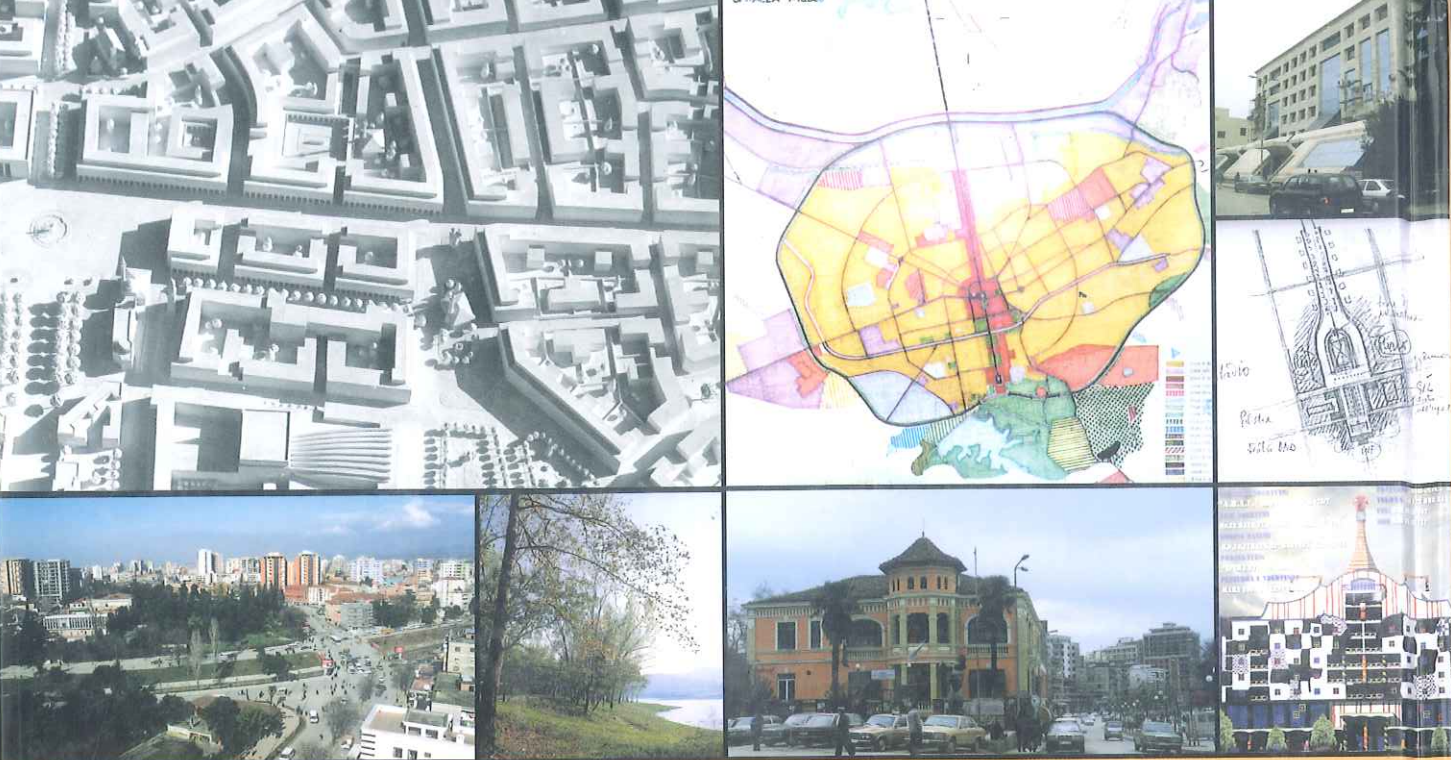
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Photos of Tirana shot in different times, provided by DK...



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