

# BALKANS AWAKENING

## ALBANIA

Albania, a small country that lies in the south-western part of the Balkans and the name of which, in native language, means "the land of eagles", has a rich history and strong roots.

Describing Albania, the Albanians and their history is particularly difficult. The country has very ancient origins and a unique language of its kind which is considered the oldest in Europe. Over the centuries Albania has survived many attacks and wars but it was mutilated and reduced to a third of its' territory during the last one, in 1945.

Following the Second World War the Communism system, led by Enver Hoxha, was established. One of the main principles of the regimen was interdiction of all religious beliefs and observances, in favor of a scientific-materialistic world view. This was achieved also through the destruction of almost all places of worship of any form or creed. As a result, Albania became the first (and only) completely atheist country with such an attitude persisting over a period of almost 50 years.

A key principle of the Communism was the expropriation of all individual assets and wealth, with the aim of introducing equality between social classes. Finally, the Communism system brought also the complete isolation from the rest of the world, with devastating consequences on the economic, social and political level.

The scholar system was inspired by the Soviet Countries and, up to the 90s', recalls, for some aspects, the Waldorf education, where teachers were devoted to their profession, the masters of music and painting were true professional artists. The school curriculum contained workshops with manual work activities, carpentry, sewing, music, painting and, in addition to sporting activities, a short collective morning gymnastics was practiced at the beginning of school activities. Teachers, doctors, engineers, were among the most requested professions and were chosen/obtained by people of will.

At the end of the dictatorship, in the early 90s, the Albanians found their selves in a deep economic crisis and had to reinvent a new way of living or leave their country. Unfortunately, the demolition of an entire regimen included also the few positive aspects, amongst which, the scholar system.

Albanian history has been the subject of many reflections for us, Anila and Anita, two childhood friends who decided to leave Albania for a better university education in 1999. In addition to their studies, in Architecture (Anila) and Banking Economics (Anita), over the years we have developed a spontaneous interest in the world of the spirit.

The 2020, the year of the pandemic, served as a major stimulus for reflecting on the great "why's of life" amongst which, the history of our country. What did this period mean for humanity? What was the teaching behind this incredible historical period? And, above all, what are we called at, each of us, NOW?

It is during the reflections on these questions that the image and feelings of a Steinerian school in Albania appeared strong. That image lit the hearts of both and from that moment on, we have dedicated body and soul to that vision:

The first contacts with Trevor Mephame with IASWECE and their support, the first visits to Steiner schools in Italy, research on Teacher Training, etc. Thus, in June 2021 we decided to undertake training for Teachers in Italy, where Anila still lives, but not Anita, who must take a flight every month to attend the course.

From then on, a succession of events and meetings with people has continuously strengthen our feeling of being on the right path, despite the 800km of distance and travel impediments, the respective families and individual jobs in fields that are distant from pedagogy, etc.

The training in Italy, in Colle Val d'Elsa, gave us the opportunity to meet a missionary soul and the founder of the "La Formica" Association, Stella Fallaha. She immediately supported the project and accepted the invitation of two Albanian women to go to Durres and give an introductory lecture on the Waldorf Pedagogy.



This is how the first seed was planted in the heart of the Balkans!



In March 2022, the structure that will host the headquarters of the Cultural and Pedagogical Association "Mollakuqe" (Ladybird) takes shape in a structure that has been sleeping for years in the open, waiting for someone to give it a new life.



Meanwhile, we are committed to complete the teacher training (actually we have just finished the first year) and to disseminate the Steinerian pedagogy in Albania by organizing events on the subject and inspiring other compatriots to support the project.

