

Blood Feud in Albania: Study. Secours Catholique (France Caritas): Shkodër, Albania (2010) pp. 148.

Many Albanians have worked to produce this illustrated booklet (available free from Justice and Peace in Shkodër, northern Albania). The data was collected by Dardjan Konomi, Vladimir Banushi and Majk Mila, processed by Lucjana Dodandi with commentary by Luigj Mila (Secretary General of Justice and Peace Commission, Albania).

The book is made up of three parts: the first discusses the results of a survey carried out amongst high school children in a number of towns; the second part consists of a number of short contributions by eminent Albanians. The book closes with a section of photographs taken by Stefano Schirato portraying the grim life of those in feud. In the introduction to the book, it is noted that the areas worst affected by bloodfeuds are Bajze, Koplik, Mes, Gruemire, Gur i Zi, Vau i Dejes, Velipoje and Shkodër.

Research findings are recorded with diagrams based on questionnaires given to high school children to find out their attitudes towards the rule of state law and to that of *Kanun* (traditional) law, and how each was affected by bloodfeuds. Most of the young people were found to be sceptical of the effectiveness of state law (80%, 88% for adults), leading the researchers anxious to work through education on ‘the principles of peace, tolerance and forgiveness’ (p.27).

The second section of the book records speeches made at a conference held in Tirana in December 2009 by the Justice and Peace Commission in collaboration with Caritas. These speeches were given by: Angelo Massafra (Archbishop of Shkodër-Pult Dioceses, President of the Diocesan Committee of Justice and Peace) and Luigj Mila (who gave an historical overview of bloodfeuds and stressed that human rights should be incorporated into every country’s education). Victor Scheffers, Secretary General of Justice and Peace, Netherlands also spoke on Bloodfeud and Human Rights. Other speakers were Enkelejda Qama of Caritas; and Vladimir Banushi. As a field worker, the latter voiced his distress in finding children growing up to the noise of guard dogs rather than school playground commotion. Dardjan Konomi the Project co-ordinator also spoke, as did Anton Banussi, a retired teacher, member of Justice and Peace, and also the actor Mirush Kabashi, Vasilika Hysi, MP and Ridvan Troshani, Vice Mayor of Shkodër Municipality. Only Aldo Bumçi, Former Minister of Justice, Head of the DP in Tirana, now Minister for Tourism could barely find negativity in the issue of bloodfeuds:

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‘For blood feud everything has been said and I think that it shouldn’t be a concern of ours, the politicians of nowadays. It could be a topic of discussion for anthropologists and historians but not a topic of the daily agenda, and for this the politicians have responsibility. I think also that blood feud does not constitute a problem in the everyday life of Albanians because it is limited in some areas and by no means can be considered a representative of the country’s problematics because it is not.... Exactly for this reason, the phenomenon cannot be considered as an immediate problem in our country.’

Unfortunately the English translation is very poor, though the issues come through clearly.

Two years after the book was published, and the situation of bloodfeuds in Albania actually seems to be worsening, Luigj Mila gave me a detailed list of 49 families currently ‘closed’ in and around Shkoder, with a total of 102 children who do not attend school. The Italian organization Operazione Colomba gave me a list of names and ages of 10 men killed in the Shkodër area in bloodfeuds in the past year (and 3 more were killed in the last two weeks I was there, September, 2012).

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