

Gilman BAKALLI
The Alphabet of Transition

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By: Prof. Assoc. Dr. Gilman **BAKALLI**

Editor for the Graz Publication
Dr. Oana **HERGENRÖTHER**

Translating Team for the Albanian Publication
Translator: Blerta **ALIKAJ**
Translation Editors: Jerina **DUSHKU** and Wendy **LEE**

Editing Team
Main Editor: Gino **LUKA**
Literary Editor: Keti **GELUZZI**

The Alphabet of Transition

36 Essays/Ideas and Debates

(1990–2016)

Prof. Assoc. Dr. Gilman BAKALLI

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Editor's Note:**The Constancy of Change***Oana Hergenröther*

The Alphabet of Transition (published originally in Albanian as *Alfabeti i Tranzicionit*, UET Press, 2018) is a collection of original essays about modern-day Albania, in which Gilman Bakalli (1967–2016) comments on a range of topics, from market forces to the role of the intellectual, from his ecological concerns to the taboo topic of blood feud in his home country. This book is a selection of considerations about topics and phenomena tormenting a society undergoing radical changes in economic, political and ideological structures, with which come shifting perspectives in cultural narratives, cultural tropes, and cultural norms. Without presupposing to give any kind of all-encompassing historical analysis, the author chooses concepts that, for him, lay bare the crucial problems of a society that is not certain of its directions, still conflicted about its roots, and lost in the contradictory and often merciless present.

In this series of essays, that challenge both the reader familiar with the Albanian context and the one repeatedly reaching for an online search engine, essays arranged in alphabetical order choosing for each letter a word that serves as prompt (A for *Accusation*; B for *Botox*, etc.), the author considers the relationship between Albania and Europe, the imagined East-West and center-periphery dichotomies, the syntagmatic and paradigmatic transformations at the turn of the century, all seen through a web of references from science, culture, and art.

Gilman Bakalli was one of the people who put on different hats over the course of their life: he will be remembered as teacher, researcher, and politician. He completed his degree in German Studies in his home city of Shkoder but went on to do a PhD in Philosophy in Graz, under the supervision of Professor Walter Höflechner. The close connection to German-language science, philosophy, and art is visible at every step through this essay collection. Gilman Bakalli then went on to teach at the University of Shkoder “Luigj Gurakuqi” and at the European University of Tirana, and also took an active part in Albanian political life, contributing with his expertise, his experience in international networking, and with, according to many different reports, his personal charisma.

Sadly, Gilman Bakalli was cut short in his efforts of completing the promise of the book's title – 36 ideas and debates. Hence, as the observant reader will notice, there are only 27 letters of the alphabet and 27 essays in this book, a fact which deconstructs

the book's title and serves as an invitation of a kind to imagine the contents of the remaining nine titles by following the trains of thought commenced by the author. We remain curious and can only imagine what the author might have told us on the topics of *Trainings, Slaughterhouse, University, Country, Occupied!, Taxes, Long-Lived or De-funct, Envy, and Noise*. These inviting titles and their subtitles (especially interesting would have been "V – Vend (Country) – Neighboring Countries: 'On the Love Between Neighboring Peoples'", as it might have thrown a witty light and given some insight into the relations with Albania's neighbors – my own native country of Serbia included) we can only imagine would have rounded this collection of insightful and informed comments on Albanian society and culture.

The same observant reader might also notice that some of the numerical facts in the book are not up to date: you might find out, for instance, that John Darley, the American psychologist, died in 2018, although under his name in this book we only find a date of birth; the same goes for Samir Amin, the Egyptian-French economist, who died in the same year. Bakalli's book predates these events, and was a contemporary of others, but although not all the numerical data might be right at the time and place the reader takes this book into her hands, we do not let ourselves be fooled by the contemporary narrative of fulminant change that makes the truths of today – the outdated history of tomorrow: The ideas and debates in these 27 essays firmly hold their ground. Gilman Bakalli was keenly aware of the necessity of remembering and of stepping out of the unending race in order to assess events, people, (hi)stories, and cultures. In particular, towards the end of the book, in the chapter with the subtitle "The Gym as Ideology", Bakalli problematizes the narrative of constant flux and uninterrupted movement: Albania is here used as the example, but Bakalli is referring to the global ideology of an accelerated society of, as he says, "running very fast in order to remain in the same place", akin to running on a treadmill in the increasingly popular gyms all over Albania.

The final steps in editing the publication of this book in English are taking place in a world paralyzed by the COVID-19 pandemic that showed, among many other things, that our relationship to movement, to narratives of progress and acceleration on the one side, and standing still and stepping out of this movement on the other, is very much an issue constructed by the various economic and cultural narratives of our time and space. On the other hand, academic work and science in general do mean an uninterrupted transformation: like language is forever modified and enriched by every single new utterance, science is in the constant flux produced by each new scientific contribution to it. As important as stepping out of the adopted neo-liberal narrative of constant flux might be, the flux and changes of the corporeal world do not depend on a discourse or an ideology of any given time: being and not being, moving and then standing still – are undeniable facts.

Gilman Bakalli did not manage to finish this book of essays in the way he himself intended to, and the nine 'missing' essays mirror the gap he left in Albanian academia and political life. Another such recent intervention of corporal reality was the departure of Professor Simon Edwards (1946–2020), who taught English Literature at the

University of Roehampton, London, but also at the University of Graz, and, with a great and fervent dedication, at the University of Shkoder. Professor Edwards' words open this collection with an introductory text and contribute to this study in and of Albanian culture, which he admired and contributed to with his work; they also happen to be one of the last texts written by Simon Edwards.

In reading about discrepancies like the changes in architecture and the loss of green spaces in Tirana that did not, however, bring with them a change in the treatment of citizens by the political elite; in reading about the opening of Albania to the world, but the country failing to truly address the issues of discrimination against migrants and immigrants; etc. – in all this, the author will relentlessly keep reminding us that *the more everything changes, the more it stays the same.*

Introduction

Simon Edwards

When Professor Roberta Maierhofer forwarded me an English translation of the late Dr. Bakalli's original Albanian text published by UET (Tirana, 2018), I read through the text interconnected through a web of references from fields in which the book deals (cultural theory, history and criticism, philosophy, political thought, sociology) and saw a very acute and sound description of the situation in the country where I had been a regular visitor since the 1990s, teaching in the English and American Studies Department in the city of Shkoder.

Dr Bakalli's book is not an academic piece of work in the formal sense, though it draws impressively and in a scholarly way on a comprehensive reading and understanding of both historical and contemporary cultural thought. It is effectively something of a tour-de-force, in applying a whole range of what might be loosely described as 'post-modern' thinking as well as more conventional cultural theory to the specifically Albanian context, though never without a wider regard for the global forces that the author sees as informing and distorting the distinctive transformations involved in the Albanian attempt to 'catch up'. He is aware in a wholly serious but never a solemn way of the Albanian exceptionalism within the Balkan comity of nations. While he makes ingenious use of his full range of reading from international sources (American, German, French, British) he is anxious to avoid any of the modish moral relativism that we find in the legacy of writers such as Derrida, Foucault, Baudrillard, Bourdieu et al. The book as a whole is divided between a deeply ironic but also highly sensitive response and interpretation of Albanian history and prospects of its modernisation. While it deals in some already familiar *topoi* of the post-modern world, the juxtaposition of the chapters and their different tonal qualities makes for a strikingly original reading experience.

Indeed if we can find traces of the techniques of the Baudrillard essays collected in *America* (1986), perhaps the more significant influences come from an engagement with the writers of the 18th-century Enlightenment, and the vision of a universal humanity, as it is to be found in Albania as anywhere else. The alphabetical model for the book is surely taken from Voltaire's *Dictionnaire Philosophique Portatif* (1764). However, it manages to follow the wit and humour of Voltaire with appropriate echoes of his notorious rallying cry: 'Écrasez l'infâme'.

It is equally close in spirit (and in its eclecticism) to a number of books of speculative essays that have been successfully translated and published in English from Italian sources. I am thinking here of Umberto Eco's *Travels in Hyper-Reality* (1986); Claudio

Magris' *Microcosms* (2000); Aldo Buzzi's *Journey to the Land of the Flies* (1994); Luciano de Crescenzo's *Thus Spake Bellavista* (1977); and perhaps even Primo Levi's collection of reflections on 21 chemical elements in his *The Periodic Table* (1985). Its more overtly political emphases are perhaps closer to work by Hans Magnus Enzensberger collected in English as *Political Crumbs* (1982).

Unfortunately, Dr. Bakalli before his death was unable to complete the last of the 36 chapters and not the least of these to be missed is the promised one on 'Neighbours and Neighbouring Countries', where he might have gratified the reader's wish to understand more fully the case of Albanian particularism.

I believe this is not merely a valuable book, but also an enjoyable one in its own right – provocative, playful and challenging all at once. It is the work of a fine and subtle thinker and certainly deserves to be available to a wider audience.

Foreword

Gino Luka

Today, after approximately half a century of “order”, Albania is experiencing the type of chaos the magnitude of which is bound to horrify chaos itself. Each revolution brings its own chaos but what happened in post-1990 Albania is beyond chaotic. We may in fact consider the transition from the “crystalline” era to a new “amorphous” one (perfectly) complete. Said amorphous state makes it hard to define order; in other words, the condition of everything being in its proper place, where it should be and, as it should be.

Since order is a relative concept and each one of us has a different idea about what it should be, we must ask ourselves how to perceive it.

Chaos is more important than order. Order is relatively rare and may easily crumble on the slightest provocation. The most common example of this is Nature itself, wherefore Nature chooses to fight chaos with chaos, generating many forms of life through chance mutations.¹ Perhaps Albanians have naturally mastered this phenomenon and as a result, their actions have become part of the natural chaos ...

Despite the fact that the chaos of transition is difficult to map, as the factors at our disposal are numerous and unstudied, chaos in and of itself is not a problem. Chaos theory suggests that the long-term effects of our actions or creations may be predictable after all, so it is best to be open-minded and flexible. It is important to have ideas and ways to implement those ideas. Nature chooses its own course when matters do not go well or when they stop altogether. Therefore, predicting Albania’s future is a bit like preparing a weather forecast ...²

The Alphabet of Transition offers many themes of current relevance, with a focus on the particular problems of the 1990-2016 transition period. In his *Alphabet* (which the author managed to complete just before he was forced to stop working due to major health issues), the 36 letters of the Albanian alphabet correspond to 36 keywords, each letter introducing a relevant term.

¹ In *The Vocation of Man* (1800), German philosopher **Johann Gottlieb Fichte** (Rammenau, May 19, 1762 – Berlin January 27, 1814) says: “You could not remove a single grain of sand from its place without thereby ... changing something throughout all parts of the immeasurable whole.”

² **Edward Norton Lorenz** (West Hartford, CT, May 5, 1917 – Cambridge, MA, April 16, 2008) was an American mathematician and meteorologist, known for pioneering chaos theory. He discovered *strange attractors* and coined the term *butterfly effect*: “Does the flap of a butterfly’s wings in Brazil set off a tornado in Texas?” was the title of an academic paper that Lorenz presented in 1972.

Using these keywords listed in alphabetical order, Bakalli elaborates on many hot topics in present-day Albania. At first glance, there is no other connection between the words; however, the *Alphabet* draws a map of closely related concepts. This is particularly evident with those that run against concepts well-known or widely accepted as the truth, but which are strangely rejected by Albanian public opinion, despite their possible veracity.

Radical change permeates all areas of life in Albania: “Eliminate everything of ‘old.’ Embrace and implement anything new as soon as possible ...”

However, are all old things evil and all new things good? Moreover, most importantly: “Is everything presented as new, really new?”

Everyone has the ability to express an opinion, one hopes, under minimal influence from ideologies and the politics of the moment, even though such a feat may appear impossible at first glance. The *Alphabet* invites us to use our independent thinking and to form an impartial judgment on many political, economic, and social aspects of life in Albanian society. This foreword is far from an exhaustive commentary on the *Alphabet*, and makes no such claims.

The author of the *Alphabet* bases his writings on the principles of democracy, human rights, the rule of law, peace, development, health, solidarity, sports, sexuality, the environment, family, Albania ... and Albania is located in Europe. The trip that this alphabet takes us on continues beyond its letters, inviting us to deconstruct our very own concepts and culture. Deconstruction, derived from Martin Heidegger’s³ concept of *Destruktion* (without destroying), is a method we use to understand how a work of fiction, art, poetry, and the like, is created, by taking it apart into smaller pieces and studying how they are used to create a text formed by these idea-words, symbolically starting with the letters of the alphabet.

Through deconstruction, we study the written text and what the author intended to include or omit within the text. Since words are not entirely exact (simply leafing through a dictionary will illustrate how many different meanings a word can have), we cannot understand what exactly the author meant with his choice of suppositions in order to prove a hypothesis ...

Nevertheless, Bakalli uses this principle to “chop up” the text fearlessly and to offer his readers each separate “piece”, ultimately joining them into a whole within a historical context, giving complete meaning to the author’s work and avoiding misunderstandings and duplicity. Naturally, the reader is the one who will choose the meaning of each part, and this may not be a simple feat. According to Jacques Derrida,⁴ reading is

³ **Martin Heidegger** (Messkirch, September 26, 1889 – Freiburg, May 26, 1976) was a German philosopher. He is considered the most notable exponent of existential phenomenology and ontology. In 1927, he published his most important work *Sein und Zeit* (*Being and Time*).

⁴ **Jacques Derrida** (Jackie Élie Derrida, Algiers, July 15, 1930 – Paris, September 10, 2004) was a French philosopher. He was a philosophy professor, first at the *École Normale Supérieure*, then the founder of *Collège International de Philosophie* and later, until his death, the *directeur d’études* at the *École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales* in Paris. His name is closely associated with the concept of deconstruction that deeply influenced intellectual thinking in the second half of the 20th century, in many disciplines including philosophy, linguistics, literary criticism, political theory, legal thinking, religious studies, media

similar to trying to hold a wet fish in one's hands, because words have infinite meanings, or as Derrida calls it, "sliding along the chains of word-symbols". The author renders his text readable and understandable by deconstructing key concepts. This technique allows the text's interpretative and artistic efficacy to explore the innovative potential of what has not been said explicitly in the text, which would otherwise be understood but superficially, by using the words metaphysically, capturing their hidden meanings and displaying them in all their glory.

The pages of this *Alphabet* are a treasure trove of the author's experience gathered through the years of his university tenure, and contain several essays, meticulously written and imbued with numerous elements of Albanian and European culture. Despite their complex topics, the essays are comprehensible even to the general reader without losing any of their emotional power. The author broadcasts a message of peace from the first lines of his work, the sarcastic "Akuzë (Accusation)", with the goal of achieving peaceful coexistence. He does not hide his views but avoids long moral diatribes; he presents and elaborates on the main concepts by outlining our experience as global citizens; he reminds us of the responsibility we have to peacefully coexist and collaborate. "Jabanxhinj (Immigrants)" deals with the lack of tolerance, the refusal of the Other, which causes non-acceptance and lack of trust, respect, and love. It elaborates on the moment when someone perceives the presence of others as dubious and threatening.

In "Digital (Digital)", the author details our bombardment by information, causing what researchers call "the stress of the global village"⁵, a dangerous social pathology that may produce instances of collective egoism, xenophobia, and the need for sacrificial lambs. The overflow of images is fostering within the public a disturbing state of insecurity, frustration, the loss of points of reference, and the need for new foundations, with many finding consolation in fundamentalism by refusing the new historical reality of melting-pot globalism in order to validate their own supremacy and that of their ethnic, cultural, and religious groups.

The author considers himself a part of this world, with his own way of perceiving the world and living in it. He feels a "part" of the whole, part of Planet Earth, part of the Universe. His *modus vivendi* is the ethical principle of bearing responsibility for the future by promoting noble acts, ways of living, and consumer models that do not focus on the self alone, but see to the future of mankind and of nature.

This is the universal ideal of the Enlightenment, of philosophers like Kant⁶ (mainly in his works *Zum ewigen Frieden (On Perpetual Peace)* and *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Ge-*

theory, anthropology, cultural studies, architecture (inspiring the deconstructivist movement), postcolonial studies, gender studies, and psychoanalysis. His work is globally studied, especially in the United States and South America. He is commonly associated with the so-called French post-structuralism or postmodernism, even though Derrida himself never identified with these terms. He was influenced by the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and the basic ontology of Martin Heidegger.

⁵ **Antonio Nanni** (Doctor of Philosophy and Education Sciences), *Educare alla Convivialità, Un progetto formativo per l'uomo planetario (Educating for Conviviality, A Formative Project for the Planetary Man*, pg. 8).

⁶ **Immanuel Kant** (Königsberg, April 22, 1724 – Königsberg, February 12, 1804) was a German philosopher. He was one of the most important representatives of the German Enlightenment and predecessor, in his later work, of the main elements of Idealistic Philosophy.

schichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht (Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View), a moral message also present in the (French and American) Declaration of Human Rights. Bakalli calls into question our future and warns us of the dangers threatening Albanian society in particular and the world in general.

In “Dhuna (Violence)”, the author examines the violent and “animalistic” character of human nature, but at the end of the essay he gives us hope by stating: “There must be something more than ‘animalistic nature’ lurking under the thin veneer of civilization ...”

As far as environmental threats are concerned, an alarm goes off daily for Albania and for the planet as a whole. Everyone is aware of the very real dangers ahead, including energy disasters, in the absence of environmental policy reform. In “Ekologji (Environmentalism)”, the author shows his optimism by writing that “more than ever, Albanians are ready to reject the benefits of potential economic growth at the expense of the environment.”

Albanians must build their future together in order to avoid a catastrophe.

Demographic shifts constitute another threat, in particular the upset equilibrium between rural and urban areas, not just in Albania but also in the global North and South, bringing about the devastating results manifesting today. The author focuses on the dangers plaguing humanity due to wrongful immigration policies. Closing borders is a reassuring but naive reaction. Racism and lack of tolerance have no place in tomorrow’s multi-ethnic world.

The lack of self-acceptance is yet another threat, though it may appear less significant at first glance. The author talks about “plastic beauty” in individuals with personality disorders, who have trouble accepting themselves because they feel that they were born in the “wrong body”, or because their efforts to be themselves are continuously thwarted by their peers or virtual models: “Albanians’ growing enthusiasm over lip fillers and silicone breasts is an indicator of the level of despair of our society, which finds it impossible to measure up to the cultural achievements that come as a result of hard work and incessant practice.”

In “Liria e tregut (Market Freedom)”, the author expresses his concern about the “free market” in Albania, something more akin to a jungle than a market. Not too long ago, the thinking was that economic development depended on isolating poor countries from the world market and having these countries rely on their own resources instead. The Albanian experience showed that this theory resulted in chaos and regression. E. Hoxha tried to isolate Albania from capitalism with obviously disastrous results for the country. Meanwhile, countries that collaborated by integrating their economic activities at the international level have experienced progress and development.⁷ All the issues discussed in the *Alphabet* are intertwined and interdependent.

⁷ **Samir Amin** and **André Gunder Frank** are advocates of underdevelopment theories, who focused on the processes of economic globalization and the codependency of global North and South. They examined the point to which a self-centered and independent development may still be possible (the *self-reliance* principle) under a changing international context. **André Gunder Frank** (Berlin, February 24, 1929 – Luxemburg, April 23, 2005) was a German economist and sociologist. He was one of the founders of

With his modern mentality and global vision, and by studying the issues in relation to each other, Bakalli shows us that individual problems no longer exist: every problem is everybody's problem.

In "Gjakmarrje (Blood Feud)", the author discusses another blight of Albanian society and the reasons why this self-perpetuating mechanism still operates via tradition, honor, oath, the sworn word, land ownership, wealth, or "no reason at all", starting back in the archaic past when social practices were validated by the semantics of a language built around words like blood, honor, revenge, blood feud; all archetypes that charm, terrorize, and define the history of tradition:

The time depicted by tradition is more of an oral tale than history. From times that do not exist to facts that do not apply, a model of violence takes shape, draping like a well-tailored suit, held up on the one hand by individualism and on the other by the theorem of the blood feud: criteria that re-entwine and emerge well-defined from history, mapping out the cultural values that legitimate the processes through which Albanians think through their individual reactions.⁸

Ultimately, we could ponder the text of each concept letter, we could read it for pleasure, or offer our own interpretation. Using the method of deconstruction once again, note that each essay calls into play our eyes, starting with the fact that the graphics laid out on white space allow the text to appear and the interpreting game to include non-phonetic elements like punctuation, spaces, brackets, italics, and margins. Deconstruction is activated by *différance* in the reading of texts, a process that inverts the logic of textual codification by overturning the authoritarian, dogmatic, and hierarchical attributes, allowing for philosophy to be read like literature and vice-versa, and playing with more marginalized textual elements (such as opposing views, references, affinities, and consonances). Thus, each interpretation starts to resemble the exploration of the ruins of a civilization lost to catastrophe, where the artefacts take on a new meaning and "another" culture as they emerge; metaphysics turns into a "theoretical subconscious" within which the deconstructing interpreter brings out what was omitted.

This type of writing removes the text from its original context and makes it available beyond the time of its writing, hence guaranteeing unlimited decoding and readability. This creates the conditions for what Derrida calls *différance*, a term he coined, which compounds two meanings of the verb "differentiate". In its first meaning, the word implies that the sign is different from the thing for which it stands, that there is always a difference between the text and the being to which it refers, a gap that can never be completely filled, but that always leaves behind tracks to a myriad of readings and interpretations. The second meaning of *différance*, however, is to resend, to defer,

the dependency theory and world-systems theory in the 1960s. Even though he used several Marxist concepts on political economy, he rejected the concept of stages of history and economic history theory as a whole. **Samir Amin** (Cairo, March 9, 1931) is an Egyptian-French Marxist economist, known for introducing the term *Eurocentrism* in 1988 (Eurocentrism, the theory that puts Western Europe at the center of world civilization).

⁸ **Patrizia Resta**, *Pensare il sangue, La vendetta nella cultura albanese (Thinking of the Blood, Revenge in Albanian Culture*, extract, pg. 26).

therefore to create a distance between us and the thing or word that is absent from the text: in other words, we overcome the primacy of presence at the center of logocentrism. *Différance* is tantamount to an independent event of subjects who talk and listen, a Heideggerian event, if you will. It is the opposite of identity and presence: hence, the truth in texts is neither of an originating nor unitary nature, nor laid out as a whole, but rather distributed throughout.

Naturally, it is not the goal of the *Alphabet* to discuss all issues of the transition period. It rather serves as a guide for reflection on this particular period, as well as on our future existence by considering the consequences of our actions. A primary function of the text is to help educate us toward a competent and meaningful reading, and to avoid any type of dogma or bigotry. We constantly question our own language, knowledge, lore, tools, institutions, in short, our whole culture. This text is not only an efficient way to answer the educational needs of the young generations (gaps in our historical memory, the need for identity and a sense of belonging, wishing for the future, etc.) but also, as Paul Ricoeur⁹ says, it takes us, at least in an ideal context, to the masters of suspicion.

As Erich Fromm¹⁰ states in his *Escape From Freedom* (or *The Fear of Freedom*), many people live in anxiety and find themselves in trouble when they are given full freedom of thought and action, because they do not know whom to obey or on whom to rely.

Therefore, we should question any assumed truths and certainties that we hold as such, albeit without losing faith or falling into pessimism. This is the only way that our memory can become “dangerous” to the ones in power, who want to protect their privileges by making us forget our past and by trying to take away our wish for justice, naturally occurring inside everyone. As Bakallı puts it in his essay “Intelektuali (The Intellectual)”:

... the value of the intellectual is measured by his or her capacity for critical thinking, and his or her relative distance from the political and economic sphere. The intellectual’s autonomy from politics is the main criterion for generating uncorrupted knowledge.

⁹ **Paul Ricoeur** (Valence, February 27, 1913 – Châtenay-Malabry, May 20, 2005) was a French philosopher. He completed his studies in philosophy first at the University of Rennes and then at the Sorbonne. He was drafted in 1939, served in World War II, and was captured with his unit. While in the prison camp, he started working with Mikel Dufrenne on the translation of Edmund Husserl’s essay *Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie (Ideas for a Pure Phenomenology and Phenomenological Philosophy, 1913)*. In 1978, he conducted a large study on world philosophy commissioned by UNESCO. In June of 1985 he received the Hegel Prize in Stuttgart.

¹⁰ **Erich Seligmann Fromm** (Frankfurt am Main, March 23, 1900 – Locarno, March 18, 1980) was a German psychoanalyst and sociologist. Fromm’s best work in political and social philosophy is his book *The Sane Society* (published in 1955). In this book, Fromm presents his arguments in favor of a social democracy from a humanist perspective.

A – Akuzë (Accusation)

The Magic Formula

In the beginning was the accusation. Then the counter-accusation followed. Thus politics was born. At least in Albania. For the Albanian political forces of this quarter century, politics starts with accusations and lives through accusations ... A political player catches an opponent (often prompted by tips from dubious sources) in the act, with his hand in the cookie jar, and accuses him. Publicly, of course. The accuser is not interested in seeking punishment but in making a public pronouncement of said accusation. The pronouncement raises the curtain and politics begins its performance. The public pronouncement of the accusation ensures the continuation of politics. When a new administration begins its mandate, its first act is to pronounce an accusation. It is exclusively through incriminating words or images that the new authorities are able to begin governing.

There is no value in reporting without accusations. An accusation offers the only newsworthy reporting, the only relevant version of events. Only accusations can describe what “really” happened. So the accuser says. The veracity of the accusations is of little importance. Even when flinging false accusations, the accuser claims that his tongue spews out only truth. In fact, accusations as political first acts never raise the question of their veracity or falsity. This type of accusation, in its purest form, claims to be the Truth and Reality in their most definite forms. The accuser is certainly aware that there are other versions of the events, but the ideal accuser, through the ideal form of accusation, insists on monopolizing the truth.

Does Albania have such an ideal accuser? Without a doubt, Sali Berisha continues to be the epitome of the ideal accuser for over two decades.¹¹ His political style is accusatory. Accusations flow through the veins of Berisha’s politics. They give breath to his politics and nourish his power. When Berisha accuses, he accuses with the power and sovereignty of a ruler. When Berisha accuses, he formulates his accusations into an oration that seeks to cement the undisputed authority of the ruler. Berisha’s accusations come across as breaking the norm, while he is at the same time proclaiming himself the norm’s guardian. By elevating himself, the accuser, to the position of Guardian of the Norm, he turns the Norm into “his” norm and the Law into “his” law. By perfec-

¹¹ **Sali Ram Berisha** (Tropoja, October 15, 1944) is an Albanian politician. He served as Prime Minister from 2005 to 2013 and as President of the Republic from 1992 to 1997.

ting the part of the ideal accuser, Berisha has actually managed to become the Authority on Norms and Laws in the eyes of many Albanians. By accusing in the guise of Authority on Norms and Laws, Berisha the accuser has solidified his authority and established the authenticity of his speech, which he often begins with typical despotic phrases like: “This is what happened, no doubt about it!”, “The truth is ...”, “Yes, indeed, I am telling you!” In each accusation, Berisha appears as the protector *par excellence* of Law and Order.

Berisha’s accusations are ideal, because they do not necessarily lead to punishment. Punishment could always follow at a later, more opportune political time. An accusation is like wine: it gets better with age. Similarly, Berisha’s accusations may grow in market value over time and may end up costing more to the rival who is being accused. The opponent’s “forbidden act” may live forever, at least symbolically, precisely because no punishment was administered.

Today, almost a quarter century after the political system changed in Albania, Berisha’s accused are subjected to incessant accusations that – in spite of their variety – all fail to result in a subsequent punishment. Unlike the citizens of the European Union, who are used to seeing accusations followed first by defensive statements from the accused, then by formal investigations and court hearings, to the citizens of Albania an ideal accusation of the Berisha kind does not represent an appeal to justice, but rather absolute speech, a curse, almost a magic formula to confuse the public.