

The literary sections of the newspaper “Ρωμιοσύνη” (“Romiosini”) 1997-2006

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ABSTRACT--In this article we aim to highlight the literary sections of the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania of the newspaper “Ρωμιοσύνη” (“Romiosini”) published during 1997-2006 after the fall of the Communist dictatorship in Albania (1945-1990). In the literary sections of this newspaper, especially during the second decade of its publication, were included many qualitative creations of the literary works of the writers belonging to the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania. We will deal mainly with the poems and the stories published in the newspaper, bringing concrete titles and general characteristics of these literary types, which had their artistic and aesthetic values, without the dictatorship artistic shortcomings that derived from the ideological restrictions of the ruling communist party. These creations with their values further enriched the tradition and the culture of the Ethnic Greek Minority and as such deserve to take their place in the studies of the literary criticism.

Keywords-- newspaper “Romiosini”, literary sections, poetry and fiction of the Ethnic Greek Minority

I. INTRODUCTION

The most important newspaper of the Ethnic Greek Minority, “Λαϊκό Βήμα” (“Popular Tribune”, 1945-2017, Gjirokastra), which is mainly concentrated in the south of Albania, continued to be published even after the collapse of the communist dictatorship in Albania (1945-1990). After 1990 there were also published several new newspapers of the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania. They were: “Η φωνή της Ομόνοιας” (“The voice of OMONIA”, 1991-1998, Gjirokastra), “Ελευθερία” (“Freedom”, 1992, Saranda), “2000 Το όραμα του νέου αιώνα” (“2000 Vision of new century”, 1996-2018, Gjirokastra) and “Ρωμιοσύνη” (“Romiosini”, 1997-2006, Gjirokastra). The new newspapers continued the tradition of publishing texts of the artistic literature.

Due to the lack of an Ethnic Greek Minority publishing house in Albania, all the above mentioned newspapers were forced to “emigrate” abroad in order to be published. They were prepared in Albania, Gjirokastra or Saranda and then travelled to Greece, Ioannina, or elsewhere to be printed and then returned to Gjirokastra or Saranda to be distributed to the readers of the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania.

The newspaper “Romiosini” was launched in the first week of November 1997. It contained eight pages originally, and since January 7, 1998 ten pages, from March 24, 1999 contained 12 pages and from September 27, 2000 returned with eight pages.

The newspaper headquarters were at the Gjirokastra Press Office in Albania but as already mentioned its publication was made in Ioannina, Greece. It was a weekly newspaper, headed by Dhimitri Caka as director, the

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Kristaq Xhai as the chief editor, and Panajot Barka as coordinator of the publishing council, who worked for this newspaper until June 17, 1998. The coordinator based on the regulation and the newspaper's statute defined the platform, the object and the content of the newspaper.



Figure 1: The editorial of the first newspaper «Ρωμιοςύνη» “Romiosini”, 1st Year, first week of November 1997, page no. 1

The publishing council of this newspaper consisted of 21 members, all prominent representatives of papers, art and public life in the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania. Some of these members were: Andrea Marto, Filip Çakuli, Kosta Gazeli, Andrea Zarballa, Grigor Kacalidha, Stavro Çati, Lefter Kondo, Thanas Suxho, Panajot Lulo, Kosta Naço, Vasil Papa, Thanas Bollo, Jorgo Miçi, Foto Qirjazati and Panajot Barka. This group of highly qualified journalists devoted great passion to the newspaper, who “*with confidence and dedication aimed at the advancement of the Greek paternal homes. They undertook the noble initiative to inform the public of the Ethnic Greek Minority, the public of Albanian and the international one, about the struggle initialized a few years ago by the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania for sanctioning and securing all recognized human rights and the rights of the minority.*”

One of the targets of the newspaper “Romiosini” was to come closer to the reader as a new voice of a very old and also current objective related to the existence of the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania. Another target of the newspaper “Romiosini” was to create a new press profile in the Ethnic Greek Minority, to inform everyone on everything, to respect the human values, the mankind and the honest political dialogue, to respect every idea and useful thought about the Ethnic Greek Minority etc.

II. THE SUBTITLE, THE SUCCESS AND THE CLOSURE OF THE NEWSPAPER

“ROMIOSINI”

The first edition of the newspaper “Romiosini” was published under the subtitle “Weekly newspaper serving to the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania” and contained the emblem of a torch. The subtitle continued even in the following editions until April 1, 1998. The edition of April 8, 1998 carried another subtitle “Weekly newspaper

of the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania”, that accompanied the newspaper till its last edition in August 11, 2006.

“Romiosini” quickly became one of the most successful newspapers. It broke the record of newspapers sales to the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania. The circulation of the newspaper “Romiosini” amounted to 2,500 copies, of which about 1,000 were sent by mail to the subscribers in Greece (of which 250-300 copies were sold in the kiosks of the central square “Omonia” in Athens) and the rest were distributed for free in Albania. The revenues from the sales were minimal and until 2003 the newspapers could be published thanks to the support of a company that contributed to its financing. Also thanks to the support of the minority entrepreneurs of Gjirokastra town, as there were advertised the products of their enterprises.

The newspaper “Romiosini” had not a local character. It circulated in Albania, in Greece and all over the world. But over the time it began to lose market due to the economic issues, and due to this reason, no matter the great efforts to create a network of subscribers during 2006, mainly in Greece, Germany and America, in order to save the newspaper, it could not survive and was closed in August 11, 2006.



Figure 2: The editorial of the last newspaper «Ρωμιοσύνη» “Romiosini”, 9th Year, Friday, August 11, 2006, page no. 408.

III. THE LITERARY SECTIONS OF THE NEWSPAPER “ROMIOSINI”

The literary page of the newspaper “Romiosini” was the forum of the writers of the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania, of the people of papers, the poets, the commentators, the critics, the folklorists, the scholars, the musicians, the people who dealt with the figurative arts, so of all the people who dealt with the art and who continued ideas and produced culture.

During 1945-1990, a period that coincides with the communist dictatorship in Albania, the press in the Greek language necessarily reflected a well-defined line and according to the interests of the communist state, which naturally orientated the artistic literature as well. After the 90s, dealing with the art and the literature in the transitional period from dictatorship to democracy was considered difficult. In the framework of the free movement of ideas as well as the free market, everyone could publish their work in different fields. Thus, there appeared creations related mainly to the propaganda and the nationalist outbreaks, irresponsibly violating the artistic criteria. Some of the books published as artistic literature were not at all such. They were merely historicism and rhetorical models with no artistic value. The literary newspapers of this period claimed to be qualitative and exhibited new talents, but the latter did not have the devotion of creations. After the 90s, for about

a decade, the creative community of the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania found itself in difficulties, with no organizational structures, with poems and writers not very liked, with no hope of publishing their work, without theatre or artistic group. Only one decade after the collapse of the dictatorship, the literature and the literary creativity began to be published with indisputable analytical and artistic values. Some of the most famous Ethnic Greek Minority writers of this time who published their qualitative creations on the pages of the newspaper "Romiosini" were: Andrea Zarballa, Niko Kacalidha, Petro Çerkezi in poetry, Telemak Koça, Foto Qirjazati, Spiro Kristo who published mostly in prose. In the genre of prose, there was dedicated special attention to the creations of Spiro Kristo, who belonged to the youngest writers of the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania. He never stopped creating rich and competitive literary works. It was an inexhaustible source of narratives, poems, and critical writings. The motives "spread" in his literary works were published in the newspaper "Romiosini", and the messages he conveyed constituted a source of inspiration for the ordinary people. Among the most specific stories of Spiro Kristo were: "Walk on", "Sad thoughts", "Broken frames", "The Big Easter", "The long farmer's day", "The lost ships", "With the eyes of the soul", "The far away yelling", "The first love...", "The yellow field", "The next turn", "My good angel, don't leave!" ect.

In the newspaper were also published stories of other authors, such as those of Vasil Dilo: fragment from the story "Paradise is next"; of Jorgo Zarballa: "Pearls" about a sweet moment of love etc.; by Petro Çerkezi: "Sorrow's music", "Horny man"; Telemak Koça: "Midnight event", "The friend of the police" etc.

While the novel that really succeeded in the pages of the newspaper was the novel of Foto Qirjazati, titled "Listen to the whistling of the wind", published in two volumes: I "Hunting the beauty" and II "The daughter of the poet". The novels published in the newspaper "Romiosini" were not complete but with fragments, so was published the fragment from Part I "Hunting the beauty" of the novel "Listen to what the wind blinks", with the subtitle "June"; was published the fragment from Telemak Koça's novel "Seven windows" etc.

In the section entitled "The literature", there were also published the poems of the authors of the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania, such as Niko Liti: "The flag" (from the collection "The first tweets"), "From my mother's hands" (from the poetic collection "Sorrowed songs"), "Pigeons and hawks", "Peace", "The moon", "Our mountains", "About the veteran warrior of the 40s", "The leaves fall in autumn", "It's never too late for love", "The loneliness" 2-2 2004 etc., of Thoma Stamuli: "Love, the good time" (1-7-1999), "The wish for hope" (20-4-1999) etc.; of Foto Qirjazati: "If you want to forget the prison", "If I had no hope", etc.; of Spiro Kristo: "To become a good man" (Saranda, August 2000), "Tremendous beauty" (Kostar, August 2000), "Half moon" () etc.; of Andrea Zarballa: "Consider us, also", "The hero", "Winter trees", "Joining with the native" etc.; of Niko Kacalidha: "We are three hundreds", "The killed soldier's elegy", "Down the wide field", "Written in the destiny", "Looking for the wells" etc.; of Petro Çerkezi: "Collecting the broken stones" (4.4.2000), "The city gates" (4.4.2000), "The slave in the royal palace" (April 2000), "The smile of the centuries" (April 2000), "Love's face in every coin" (4.4.2000) etc.; of Foto Malo: "The lemon", "To the wild flower" etc., of Kristo Mihail Vidhuri: from the poetry collection "The tweets – My songs" are published the poetries "In action", "The festival", "In Dhrovian village mountains", from the same author are published the poetries "Up in Marandorahi", "Old memories" etc., the poetries of Kristo Çati: "The sweet homeland", "Ask the stars" etc., (extracted from the poetic collection "The rain's song"), of Llambi Thanasi: "What runs in my mind..." etc., of Spiro Llajo: "A visit to the ancient town of Butrint" etc., of Vangjel Milo: "My lovely country" etc, of Aleko

Papa: "The fall", "The library" etc., of Vangjel Zafirati: "Two seagulls", "Your name" (extracted from the poetic collection "Summer season"), whereas from the poetic collection "Stone's tear" are published the poetries: "The hope", "The clarinet" etc., the poetries of Taso Vidhuri: "The bell of my village" etc., of Pavllo Shuti: "The twilight" etc., of Mina Leka: "Sons of Greece, sons...", in the memory of Spiro Liti: "The storks" etc., of Stavro Llajo: "The clear sky" etc., of Nikolla Dhimo: "The Euro" etc., of Rajmond Taho: "In the home entrance, in Lugar village" etc., of Vasil Piraliu: "The stranger", the ballad "The black heart of the poppy", "My poetries for the emigrating people" etc.; of Kosta Nusha: "It just remained a memory", from the poetic collection "The emigrant scream" are published the poetries "I will return in my village", "The fugitives" etc.; of Ziso Lluci: "Who endured the alarms", "Everthing in harmony" etc.

In the section "Literature" there were also included various reviews, such as: Spiro Kristo's titled "The invisibl disclosure issue" written about the poetic collection of Niko Kacalidha: "The hundred papers of the Pleiades" (Erotic discovery); the reviews of an anonymous author titled "Referring to the poetry of Kristo Vidhuri" written about the poetry collection of "My songs" by Kristo Vidhuri; another review of an anonymous author titled "The ideological labyrinth and the transformed tradition" written about the novel of Telemak Koça "Seven windows" etc.

The "Literature" sections had particular interest relating to the Greek literature through publishing poetries and valuable tales. Also, in this section were successfully published works from the Albanian literature. The public was particularly fond of the section entitled "Book's criticism", where were published various criticisms, such as: the criticism of the work of the poet Niko Kacalidha, titled "More devotion on the poetic works" written by Kristo Zoko and an analytical criticism about the poetic language of Niko Kacalidha, titled "A work on God's testimony", written by Kosta Garo, etc. Some other criticisms were the ones of Eleni Cakiri and L. Xhollo on the book "The other man" of Spiro Kristo; the criticism of Vasil Kuri on the book of Harallamb Kiço "Dhivri i Minoritetit Etnik Grek në ndërrimin e shekujve" (The Ethnic Greek Minority in the ages). Furthermore, there were published criticisms about the poetic summaries of Aleko Papa "The modern guidelines of Odyssey" and about Vasil Piraliu's "Flower on the road". For the first collection, the criticism was written with the same title of the book, whereas for the second summary the criticism was titled 'The poetry collection simple on one hand, and philosophical on the other hand "Flower on the road" is a documentary poetry' both of Spiro Kristo. For the poem summary "The stone tear" by Vangjel Zafirati was published the criticism titled "The stone tear, the invisible joy" by Jorgo Zarballa; about the poem of Kristo Vidhuri "The whistle tweet" was written the criticism titled "The moral formation and education in the children poems of Kristo Vidhuri" written by Thoma Ap. Tasiula etc.

Also, of great importance was the other literary section "Romiosini Letrare" (The literary Romiosini), which appeared for the first time on January 14, 1998. There were published various poems such as: "I did not become a beast in the cave of Polifem", "Where to leave Pleiades?", "Traveling", extracted from the poetic collection of Niko Kacalidha "The hundred papers of the Pleiades"; the poem "Saranda town" extracted from the poetry collection "Saranda", and the poem "The small oranges", by Vangjel Zafirati; the poems "The Balkan", "The saints of my country" etc. by Vasil Gjizeli. There were published also Aleko Haxhiu's poem "The light of Arsak" which was dedicated to those who gave light to Poliçan's village school, and the story "Wearing in black but with a white heart" etc.

In the literary sections of the newspaper “Romiosini” were included also the sections “Open line”, “Instead of the article” and “Commitment”. In these sections, the younger generation of the Ethnic Greek Minority poets in Albania tried to elevate it to the highest level of the artistic poetry. Most of them follow the tradition of the previous generations, and many times imitated the style or repeated the motives of the old poets. However, the poetry of this generation demonstrated hopeful signs, both in the conceptualization of the content and the qualitative aspect.

In the section “Open line”, were published the poems of Aristidhi Iasonidhi: “The indifference, “In the uphill”; of Aleko Haxhiu: “My Teacher”, “Wonders of the destiny”, “Candlelight of destiny” etc.; of Niko Kacalidha on the new year: “Happy New Year, my people”; of Persefoni Gjini: “The roots; of Vasil Kuri: “The story of the birds”; of Sotir Kromidha: “The roots are where we are born”; Thoma A. Kromidha: “The village” etc.

In the section “Instead of the article” were published poetries with various themes. We are mentioning some of them: “Against the young masters”, bearing the nickname “Orinos”, “Our Dropoli full of praise” by Mihal Paguna; “The life, the sacrifice”, “Strangers in our native home” by Aleko Haxhiu; “Smooth eroticism” by Foto Malo; “Cursed emigration” by Persefoni Gjini; “We benefit from you” by Vasil Koça etc.

In the section titled “Dedications” were published many articles on the Ethnic Greek Minority, such as: the dedication to Foto N. Qirjazati titled “The dedication of Foto N. Qirjazati, a survey on the literature of the Ethnic Greek Minority”; to the poet Niko Kacalidha was published the dedication “Niko Kacalidha, the poet who honours and unites us” under the care of L. Kondo; to Vasil Barjabana was published the dedication titled “Përkushtim për 60-vjetorin e Vasil Barjabasë. “Dedication to Vasil Barjabana on his 60th anniversary. Thoughts on the work of the poet, the prose writer and the scholar of the Ethnic Greek Minority song”; on the occasion of the death of the poet Pano Çuka was published the dedication titled “Pano Çuka, the great Greek heritage” written by Niko Filipidhi etc.

In the newspaper “Romiosini” were published a few descriptions and sketches. From the descriptions we remember: “The sweetness of return day” and “The pain of the soul” of Spiro Kristo. The sketches of Spiro Zimoidhi “The memory of my native land” and “What went wrong, my angel?”; of L. Kondo “What a pity we had no information” and “The burning tear of emigration”; the anonymous sketch “All for the check ...”; the sketch of Jorgo Zarballas titled “Pieces of a serious silence...” etc. Among the chronicles we recall “Rainy night...” of Lefter Pisolidhi; among the portraits we remember “Never quit a vision...” a portrait for the writer Vasil Pilo written by Pirro Simoidhi; and “A day with Barjaba” by Jorgo Zarballa.

The readers preferred also the literary section “Book presentation” where were launched various books, such as “The other man” by Spiro Kristo, which was a collection of 11 stories; “The unknown Romiosini” by Thoma Sterjopullo that referred to the culture and the tradition of the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania; “The Greek Minority of Albania” written under the support of K. Ciceliqi and D. Hristopullu, presented by Dhori Qirjazi entitled “Një vështrim i veçantë ndaj ngjarjeve” (A special look at the events) etc.

In the literary section “New editions”, were presented the new books that were published, such as: “St. Mary of Ravenia, holy monastery, the sleep of St. Mary of Goranxia village, Dropull) by the writer Niko Liti, “Vergo” by N. V. Liti, “The anxious day” by Vangjel Papakristo etc.

The section titled “The children’s corner” under the care of Vangjel Xhollo addressed to the youth of the Ethnic Greek Minority in Albania who liked a lot this section, where were mostly published the creation of the pupils from different primary schools in the villages of Dermish, Lazarat, Aliko, Zminec, Mesopotam, Kranje, Frashtan etc. Though they were young, the children lived everyday with their problems, and they wrote with patience and courage proposing different solutions. In their poems were combined the love, the pain, the hate, the consequence, the joy, the despair, the hope, the virtue, etc. The themes of their writings were related to the village, the school, the books, the parents, the friends, the teachers, the separation from the loved ones, the emigration, the homeland, the hope for the future, etc. Their simple verses conveyed genuine messages in every direction.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

In the literary sections of the newspaper “Romiosini”, after the collapse of the communist system in Albania there were created the appropriate circumstances for the harmonious development of the literary types. The people and the special categories of readers found in the literary sections of this newspaper published during 1997-2006, a variety of expression manners, interpretation of the material and the problems at that time. The literary works published on the pages of the newspaper “Romiosini” were no longer oriented to the communist dictatorship and was pervaded by the spirit of the time after the 90s.

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