

The Biographical Study of Mother Teresa:

Considerations from Her Family Relation and History of Her Birthplace, Skopje

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Abstract

In this thesis I deal with the life of Mother Teresa that began in the city of Skopje in Macedonia where she was born, and where as Gonxha Bojaxhiu she spent her childhood and her youth. Apart from the historical background of the region I have also explored the personal elements in her character, particularly those that were influenced by her family.

Key Words: Skopje, Macedonia, Mother Teresa

This thesis seeks to study the environment under which Mother Teresa was raised until she reached the age of eighteen, the age when she left for India and the influence this later exerted upon her activities within the Indian subcontinent. It is obvious from her life that she demonstrated extreme flexibility and adaptability with regard to diverse cultures and ethnic groups, besides a deep-seated tolerance towards religions other than Catholicism. The author however is of the opinion that such characteristics were imbued by her during the first eighteen years of her life in her native city of Skopje through her experience of her country's history, culture, ethnic background, religion, and family life, and accordingly the author wishes to probe the matter from these different perspectives.

1. The Methodology and Bibliography of this Research

In 2003, the author was able to visit the city of Skopje in Macedonia, which happens to be the birthplace of Mother Teresa, in order to carry out her research. It was at this time that the author came into contact with Kosta Balabanov (1928.5.29~), the former Director-General of the Museum of Macedonia, who graciously agreed both to edit this article on the basis of his extensive historical knowledge and advise the author on this future research. Busy as he was, he nevertheless aided the author's work in Macedonia, especially in relation to the complex historical and ethnic elements that permeate the history of the region.

After the death of Mother Teresa, Stojan Ternechevski (1955~), a journalist who produced documentaries both for Macedonian Radio and Skopje Radio, broadcast on January 6, 1998, a documentary entitled *Gonxha Bojaxhiu of Skopje: Mother Teresa — the Nobel Prize Recipient*. Although broadcast originally in the Macedonian language, the author nonetheless succeeded in obtaining an English transcription of the broadcast, and in September 2003 the author also obtained a copy of his new book, which had been published under the title *Tereza*.

Besides working as a journalist for the Macedonian National Television, Ternechevski also serves as director for the group entitled the 'Humanitarian Organization Mother Teresa.' In 1975, while serving as administrator for the Red Cross in Geneva, he met Mother Teresa, and since then he has sought to assist her and her charitable works through his many journalistic activities. The organization he heads holds a ceremony every

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year on September 5, which is the date of Mother Teresa's death, in order to honor those individuals who have demonstrated in their lives the spirit of her work. Here they make a gift of a statue of her to people who organize charity concerts and other such activities for her sake, thereby encouraging all to emulate her spirit. This group has also been the force behind the creation of the Mother Teresa House in Skopje, which opened in 2003 as a museum commemorating the principal events of her life. It is located about three minutes away from the actual site of her original childhood home, and approximately fifty meters from where her statue now stands.

The documentary was comprised of interviews with Mother Teresa's relatives and other prominent religious figures, including the Mayor of Skopje and certain others associated with her and her activities. Among those interviewed was the author Fr. Don Lush Gergi, who had earlier published a biography of Mother Teresa. In the course of the interview he remarked:

“Mother Teresa comes from Skopje. She's of Albanian descent. Mother Teresa is a Catholic. She lived through all the changes and dimensions of her hometown Skopje, which was at that time under Turkish rule. Gonxha Bojaxhiu witnessed the formation of the first Yugoslavia. She actually felt what all those changes and problems meant. Beginning with the changes in the family, the school, the Catholic Church, Mother Teresa had the whole world in small dimensions.”

“That's when she began to communicate with others that had different point of views as to language, culture, and religion. However, in all those differences, Mother Teresa began to understand that love is the only thing that reduces the differences and gives us all a chance to live well with all those differences.”

“Later, when Mother Teresa came to Calcutta and when she saw all the poverty there, she remembered Skopje, where she washed the wounds of desolate women with her mother Drona. In other words, the family life had remained with her as something secure and inspirational. Assured and permanent roots which gave Mother Teresa an opportunity to develop and to erupt as a phenomenon of goodness and love.” [1]

“Live well with all those differences.” In light of the fact that she was a child of an ethnic Albanian mother and was born in Skopje in Macedonia, these words were to become an essential key phrase in her life.

2. Mother Teresa's Family Background

Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu who later came to be known as Mother Teresa was born on August 26, 1910 in what is currently the Republic of Macedonia, in the city of Skopje. She was baptized at the church of *The Heart of Jesus* on August 27, and the priest who baptized her, namely Fr. Zef Ramai gave her the name Agnes, after St. Agnes. St. Agnes was born in Rome in the reign of emperor Diocletianus (245~313), and in 304 she was martyred at the tender age of twelve or thirteen, during the Christian persecutions.

2-1. Mother Teresa's Mother's Family Background

Some sources however state that her mother Drona was an Albanian who was born near the city of Venice in Italy.

During the author's visit to Macedonia, she was able to interview Pina Markovska (1914~), the niece of Mother Teresa's mother, and question her directly regarding her family's background. Mother Teresa and Markovska were separated by four years, so at the time of the interview Markovska was ninety years old.

Despite her age, however, she was able during the interview to display a sound recollection of events and matters related to family history. Markovska had lost both husband and son at an early age due to illness, and her daughter, who had been confined to a wheelchair, expired at the age of fifty-six, leaving her alone. Consequently, she was supported in daily life by a few of Mother Teresa's sisters, who called on the elderly Markovska every week to help with the cleaning and other duties that are now difficult for her to perform.

According to the account of Markovska, Mother Teresa's mother was an Albanian hailing from the city of Prizren near Kosovo, but she was unable to explain why people referred to her as belonging to Italy. Recently, certain groups have sought to manipulate Mother's Teresa's ethnic background and use it for political propaganda. Markovska suggested that probably as a reaction to this, others who resented this type of exploitation may have deliberately dispersed this erroneous information, in order to stem off further propaganda efforts by those groups. Markovska also pointed out that political pressure was being exerted in certain quarters, to utilize Mother Teresa's ethnic identity as a tool to support numerous nationalistic movements. She felt that acts like these may have lead to the dissemination of such incorrect information by opposing groups.

Her mother's name was Dranfile Belnai (1889~1972)^[2], but she was called Drona, a word meaning 'rose' in Albanian, and because of this she gave her daughter the name Gonxha, which means 'flower bud.' The Belnai family were wealthy people who hailed from Prizren in Kosovo. Originally they were from the village of Novo Selo near Gjakovica, and since the middle of the 18th century they were owners of fields, woods, gardens, and herds of sheep and goats. They also ran bakeries and handicraft shops in the cities of Gjakovica and Prizren, to which they moved at the beginning of the 19th century. Though the family roots were Albanian, their faith was Catholic.

In her 1998 biography of Mother Teresa, entitled *Mother Teresa. Citizen of Skopje, Citizen of the World*, journalist-author Jasmina Mirlonski recorded the year of Drona's birth as 1889.

Nikola and Drona had three children. Their elder daughter Aga was born in 1904, their son Lazar in 1908 and in 1910 was born their second daughter Gonxha, who later became Mother Teresa.

Since her eldest daughter Aga was born in 1904, we may conclude through simple calculation that Drona would have been just fourteen years old when she married, and fifteen when she gave birth to Aga. On discussing the matter with Milonsky she confirmed this fact by explaining that marriage at such a young age was a widespread practice in those days. Drona came from a well-to-do family that was involved in land and property management. At certain times of the year the family also manufactured jewelry, and for this reason her father frequently visited Skopje.

Nikola's family, Mother Teresa's father's family, managed a small inn in addition to his involvement in construction business. Apparently Drona's father was a regular customer at the Bojaxhiu shops and inn, for whenever he came to Skopje on business he would stay at the Bojaxhiu inn.

It was in this way that the two families came into contact with each other, and later, due to the intimate relations that existed between them, a marriage was arranged between Drona, aged 14, and Nikola, aged 28.

All Catholic families of that time were referred to as Latins. Regardless of their ethnic background, they had strong ties with each other, and consequently they often arranged marriages between their children. Such was the case with Nikola and Drona.

2-2. Mother Teresa's Father's Family Background

It has been said that Nikola Bojaxhiu (1875~1919) was Albanian, but according to Tony Josifovski, the nephew of Nikola's cousin, whether this was true or not is uncertain. It does seem as though Catholic Albanians

tended to marry within their own group. Hence the marriage of Mother Teresa's parents might have exemplified this custom, and it might even serve to confirm the fact that both families were of a Catholic Albanian background. At the same time, however, in the Bojaxhiu family line, there were numerous cases of marriage with people outside the group, and so it is impossible to establish whether both families were in fact pure-blooded Albanians or not.

In yet other sources, Vlach and not Albanian ethnicity is attributed to Nikola's family, because ethnically the surname does sound Vlach. On discussing this point with Professor Balabanov, he provided the author with the following clarification regarding names in the region:

“My own last name was originally Balabanjan, but during Serbian rule Skopje names were altered to sound more Serbian in tone. Thus my last name became Balabanvic. Once again, when shifting to a region under Bulgarian rule, in order to be included in the citizens' register the name was changed to Balabanov. Thus an analysis of the surname of a person from the Balkan peninsula, has little meaning or worth in discerning ethnic background.”^[3]

So, ultimately to which ethnic group did Nikola belong? Since even his relatives are unable to cast much light on the issue, the author will permit the question to remain unanswered. It does seem as though he was not a pure Albanian, but it is possible that the author may be wrong in her analysis.

What we may confidently assert is that Nikola was born in Skopje, for the family name appears in the town registry from the 18th century, the period during which the Turkish Ottoman Empire ruled Skopje.

According to the official Ottoman records, the Bojaxhiu family had lived in Skopje as early as the 18th century. They lived in the center of the city near the left bank of the Vardar river, in a single-story house with a large yard. In the yard were two shops and an inn. One shop was for the sale of construction tools, and the other was a dyer's shop or *bojadzija* in the local language (pronounced “boyajija”). The customers were both people from Skopje and merchants from outside the city.

Most of the merchants were Vlachs, and they were usually shepherders. They would come to Skopje in order both to sell their dairy products and dye their wool at the shop, and they would lodge at the inn. The street on which the Bojaxhiu shops were located was known as *Boyajiski sokak* (meaning “Dyer's street”), and the neighborhood was called *Vlashko maalo* (meaning “Vlachs' neighborhood”).

The Bojaxhiu family was devoutly Catholic, and there was also a Catholic church in their neighborhood called the church of the *Heart of Jesus*.

Mother Teresa's great-grandfather, Niko Bojaxhiu, ran a construction business and managed a handicrafts shop in the city. As a dynamic craftsman of the city he was given charge of the decorations during the opening ceremony of the Skopje railway station, on August 9, 1873. Lazar Bojaxhiu the grandfather of Mother Teresa married Chila, and in keeping with tradition he took over the business of Niko, the grandfather of Nikola.^[4]

Mother Teresa's father Nikola was the only child of Lazar and Chila. He was named after his grandfather Niko (whose full name was Nikola), and young Nikola was called Kole.

Depending on the source, however, Nikola's occupation was said to range from pharmacist to craftsman, architect, carpenter, construction entrepreneur, and politician. Some also state that he was a city council member, thereby showing that he was probably a person of considerable wealth and popularity.

Nevertheless, on concluding the author's research in Skopje, she learned that Nikola had actually been interested in working as a medical assistant, and that he had in fact worked at the pharmacy of Dr. Soskalovic, a family friend and a famous doctor in Skopje. The pharmacy was located just across the Vardar River, about a

five-minute walk from the family home near the Orthodox Christian Church of Saint Dimitri.

Nikola helped Dr. Soskalovic in the office and travelled with him on business to Italy, France, Austro-Hungary, Walachia, Egypt and around the Turkish Empire. His mother hoped that he would become a pharmacist, but on graduating from the school for manufacturers in Skopje, he got ready to inherit his father's business. As Nikola was a pleasant-natured man with a good commercial sense, the business prospered under his management.

Also, as a lover of art and culture, he was instrumental in setting up the Skopje theatre. In 1906, the local Turkish ruler Shefket Pasha started the construction of the first Skopje Theater. Nikola led the campaign for donations to help the project, and he himself donated construction materials from his shop. In 1912, he became a member of the city council, and thus a respected citizen of Skopje. He was one of 12 delegates and represented his neighborhood *Vlashko maalo* (meaning "Vlachs' neighborhood")

Lazar and his wife Cila (pronounced "Chila") built a new two-story house next to their former residence. It was built for their only son Nikola. Later the street got the name "Pop Kocina" (pronounced "Pop Kochina"), and the new house got the number thirteen.

Mother Teresa's family lived at 13 Pop Kochina Street, ^[5] just next to the Vardar River, which flows through the country southeast into Greece. In 1963 an earthquake of magnitude 6 rocked Skopje, killing over 1100 people. It destroyed the home in which Mother Teresa was raised, and so today the street has become a busy shopping mall. In the vicinity, there lay the church where she was baptized, the church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, which was also destroyed. The statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, however, was miraculously spared and is now displayed in the reconstructed church. To this day, Catholics of the city venerate the statue and pray before it, and besides being the only Catholic Church in Skopje, it is the site of Drona and Nikola's wedding and the family baptisms.

When Mother Teresa was growing up, the church was only about four blocks away from the family home, but after the earthquake, it was relocated to an area outside the center of the city, about twenty minutes by foot from the original location. Since the socialist Yugoslav government of that time declared churches and other places of worship as undesirable in the city center, a location outside the center was chosen for the renovated church. Although the Yugoslav government did not permit the building of a new church, they did however permit the rebuilding of the ruined one.

When the catastrophic earthquake hit Skopje, Mother Teresa was in India, and in 1967 she managed to organize the shipment of emergency goods to Skopje from India. Later in 1970, under the sponsorship of the Macedonian Red Cross, she returned to Skopje at the age of sixty, this being her first visit since leaving the town at the age of eighteen. Today the vicinity around Pop Kochina Street where her childhood home lay is a bustling shopping area, located in the city's lively business center just off Macedonia Square. The site of her home is marked by a memorial plaque on the square, and the very spot where the house originally stood is clearly designated.

3. Mother Teresa's Relationship to Skopje

Mother Teresa visited Skopje a total of four times since leaving it at the age of eighteen, and on this visit as she walked along the banks of the Vardar River, recalling her childhood memories, she remarked as follows:

"I thank you for all this from the bottom of my heart. It means so much to me to be able to come back here after 52 years. Even though Skopje has changed and looks completely different, it's still the Skopje where I was born and where I spent my childhood days with my family, a place where I was happy.

Those were good times. Now, I'm especially happy because my sisters will be able to give their love to our people in sign of gratitude to all. Even though a small number of sisters will remain, only four, I believe they'll be able to give the love and warmth that I received in this city. We haven't much to give, but what we give, we give from the bottom of our hearts."^[6]

Immediately after being nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 1978, she visited the Macedonian Red Cross, and during the visit she spoke to the Red Cross representative Dare Xhambaz and said, "Skopje is my hometown."^[7] Also, to Vasko Popovski the mayor of Skopje she said:

"Imagine that I should live to receive such a heartwarming acknowledgement from the people of my town Skopje! I've been all over the world and I've received many acknowledgements, however I'll keep this one close to my heart because it means so much to me."^[8]

Before leaving Skopje Mother Teresa said, "I'll be back again with my sisters to help my fellow citizens. That's my debt to my birthplace, Skopje."^[9] On several other occasions she used phrases such as "my birthplace Skopje, my fellow citizens," and "people of my homeland." It is obvious from this that Skopje occupied a special place in her heart and that she held its people in high esteem.

Various political groups have attempted to make use of Mother Teresa in order to support their individual goals, and some in particular have emphasized their links to her in an effort to shore up their political causes. However, on completing the author's in-depth research in Skopje, she reached the conclusion that Mother Teresa in all likelihood identified herself as a citizen of Skopje or a *Skopjanka*, rather than anything else. During her eighteen years in Skopje, the ruling authority changed hands from the Ottoman Turks to the Serbs, and to complicate the issue even more, due the fact that she had already departed for the shores of India, she never had the experience of living in Macedonia, either when it was part of Yugoslavia or even when it became an independent nation. It seems likely to the author, therefore, that she experienced in herself a feeling of being a citizen of Skopje, because the fear of being politically exploited was a constant source of worry for her.

In Skopje, a city where rulers frequently changed and people of diverse ethnic and religious backgrounds co-existed, a sense of being a *Skopjanka*^[10] appears to have developed. This concept transcended barriers of religion and ethnicity and emphasized the ideas of tolerance and harmony with regard to differences. It is this *Skopjanka* identity that the author feels most aptly suits the manner in which Mother Teresa pursued her life, and the results of such thinking are apparent in her activities.

Geographically, Macedonia was located at the crossroads between the Western Roman Empire and the Eastern Church's capital of Constantinople. Since Macedonia occupied this central position between the East and the West, the people of the country's capital, Skopje, developed a unique character. On this point, Biljana Jovanska, a long time journalist who worked for the magazine *Zum*, and who has written widely on the subject of religion in the Balkan peninsula, commented:

"As Macedonia is situated in the center of the Balkan Peninsula, historically it became a sort of stage for invasions and disputes across the region. The people of Skopje developed a sense of tolerance and harmony, out of the sufferings, hardships and turmoil they had endured. I feel that those who have endured suffering such as the people of Skopje, tend to develop into a gentler and more compassionate people."^[11]

Her analysis of the qualities of compassion and tolerance, carried out from the standpoint of a historical insight into the religious and political state of affairs in Skopje, matches the situation in India.

After obtaining the Nobel Peace Prize in 1979, Mother Teresa was invited to Skopje the following year. In keeping with her promise to the people of Skopje, she returned to aid the poor and destitute of the city, and four sisters of her congregation came along at the same time in order to carry out the work. ^[12] Currently at the Mother Teresa residence in Skopje, there are four sisters living and working. They run an orphanage for abandoned children and a soup kitchen to feed the poor of the city.

After receiving the Nobel Prize, she was awarded the distinction of becoming an Honorary Citizen of Skopje, and on that occasion she made reference to her winning of the Prize, commenting as follows:

“I didn’t achieve all that on my own. I have many sisters, many people that we call co-workers. We have other people, baptized and non-baptized that worked and shared their love with the people. However, we’ve gained more from the poor than they have from us. Even, when it is most difficult for me, when I am around the sick, the children, the old people, when I help them, God watches over me and gives me strength. He brings me back to my youth, to Skopje, by the river Vardar, and he gives me strength to save people.” ^[13]

The message that Mother Teresa emphasized, with reference to the people of her homeland, was the power of love to create peace. Regardless of ethnic differences or whether people were baptized or not, by working together and understanding each other with love, it was possible for us to build peace.

Mother Teresa visited Skopje from India four times until 1986. ^[14] Not only did she daily visit the Catholic Church where the statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus was placed in order to hear Holy Mass, but she also visited the Macedonian Orthodox Church in order to heal the long-standing historical wounds that separated the Eastern and Western churches.

The hometown she so loved, however, was a place where people such as her mother were daily confronted by problems of inequality, the constant threat of conflict, and rule by different powers, and the roots of these divergences can be exposed by a study of the population and religious features of the area.

4. Her father Nikola’s Influence: His Death and the Background of the Ethnic Conflicts

Mother Teresa, her sister Aga (1904~1974), and brother Lazarus (1908~1981) spent their early lives with their financially-successful father and deeply religious mother. About her father Mother Teresa declared, “he was a man of a charitable disposition who never refused the poor.” ^[15] Her mother’s charitable nature was fully backed by her father, and, since Nikola himself had once aspired to become a medical assistant, it was natural that he followed his wife in her acts of kindness to the poor.

Mother Teresa’s father spoke several languages. He spoke Macedonian, even though it did not become the official language until 1944. Apart from Macedonian, he spoke Serbian, Turkish (which was the language of the ruling political powers until 1912), Albanian, Italian, and French.

Language problems and ethnic conflict are deeply connected. Even as recently as 2001~2002, ethnic Albanian guerrillas demanded that the new Macedonian government grant the Albanian language an official status for use in education, politics and law, and the Macedonian government eventually accepted their demand. Ethnic conflict in the region was not merely a matter of territory but was associated more with each culture’s

survival, and furthermore, in a multilingual, multi-ethnic nation such as Macedonia, understanding languages spoken by other ethnic groups is obviously of the utmost importance.

4-1. Mother Teresa's Education and its relation to her language ability

In 1917 (during the First World War), Mother Teresa started attending a Catholic school, the only Catholic school in Skopje. It opened in 1880 in a building near the Vardar River, and it functioned as a school until 1926. Together with her sister Aga, she was active in the drama and music club, and from an early age, she even sang in the children's chorus at the church. All Catholic activities in both the school and church were conducted in the Serbian language. In 1918 she became a first grade student at the state elementary school where, again, the medium of instruction was Serbian, but rather than give up her Catholic education, she decided to simultaneously continue her attendance at the Catholic school. On completing grade four at the elementary school, she furthered her education at Skopje's Women Gymnasium (an institution equivalent to a middle or junior high school), while her sister attended the Middle Trade School. These details reveal her as being a serious and responsible student, and she eventually graduated from the Gymnasium with the best of grades.

However she was best at Serbian, which in her later years she used during interviews in Macedonia, when it seemed as though that she had more or less forgotten her Albanian.

In India, Mother Teresa mastered languages easily. She was often commended for her skill in Bengali, and while studying the language at the Loretto convent, she earned the nickname Bengali-Teresa, because she later even taught in Bengali.^[16] She was also able to speak fluent Hindi, Serbian, Croatian, and her own ethnic tongue Albanian, besides English, which she acquired at the Loretto convent. Like her father before her, she too was fluent in five languages, and such a linguistic ability was possibly inherited from him. Differences in race, religion, and language are often causes of conflict, and having been born in the Balkan peninsula, this was a truth of which she was extremely well aware. It was perhaps this that made her realize that acquiring a knowledge of the language of the other was a matter of primary importance.

Within the communities of the Missionaries of Charity in India, Mother Teresa decided upon choosing English as the common language, over either the regional language Bengali or the language of the north which was Hindi.^[17] More than the fact that it was the language of the Loretto convent, her decision to choose English was made because she was aware of the delicacy of the language issue in India. When viewed in the light of her early life and experiences in her native Macedonia, her choice is understandable. She was aware of the dangers associated with linguistic and ethnic conflicts, and it might have been this that led her to decide upon using English in her order. Also, since her nuns hailed from diverse parts of the country, English served well as their common language, for by using English they were able to interact with one another on an equal basis. All activities at the convent including holy mass, daily prayers, and everyday communication, spoken and written, were conducted in English. Although she probably never imagined that her order would eventually spread throughout the world, choosing English as the common language certainly boosted its world-wide growth.

4-2. The Historical Background of Mother Teresa's Father's Death

Mother Teresa had described her family life as a joyful one,^[18] but the fact is that after her father Nikola's sudden death in 1919,^[19] the situation of the family was drastically altered. There is a strong possibility, however, that his death was politically motivated. It was during her father's lifetime that the people of Macedonia began to resist the five hundred years of rule by the Ottoman Empire, but to comprehend how her father's death may have been linked to the political turmoil within Macedonia, we need to inspect the historical background. Such an investigation is also essential for another reason, namely because the author personally believes that the

circumstances surrounding her father's death affected Mother Teresa in her later work in India.

From the 19th century onwards, the people of the Balkan peninsula who had endured nearly five hundred years of rule under the Ottoman Turks suddenly awoke and set their sights on independence. In Macedonia, too, there arose a rediscovery of educational and literary culture, and ethnic consciousness began to spread across the peninsula.

In December 18, 1912, when Mother Teresa was two years old, the first Balkan war broke out. Serbia, Greece, and Bulgaria united against the Ottoman Empire, and the combined Balkan forces managed to end the Turks' five hundred-year rule of the peninsula. However, as a result of this victory, ethnic groups across the peninsula began to fight each other and to assert their independent identities. Even before the war, Serbia and Bulgaria had intended to take over Macedonia as their territory. So the Albanians in Macedonia now fought for the formation of Great Albania, the Bulgarians, Serbs, Greeks, and Albanians in Macedonia began territorial wars within Macedonia, and at the same time, next to Macedonia, the Republic of Albania was formed. Bulgaria and Serbia felt it necessary to stop any movement within Macedonia in support of an independent Great Albania.

As a result of these events, on June 29, 1913, when Mother Teresa was still two years old, the second Balkan War began. Bulgaria, with its territorial aims on Macedonia, went to war with Serbia and Greece, even without a formal declaration of war. To maintain the balance of power, Romania declared war on Bulgaria and attempted to mediate between the two sides. On August 10 of the same year, the Treaty of Bucharest was concluded, and it was decided that 51% of Macedonia, the southern portion, would become Greek territory, 39% of the central section would be under Serbian control, and the remaining territory would go to Bulgaria. In this way Macedonia was formally partitioned into three sections. From this period, Skopje, where Mother Teresa lived, became the territory of Serbia, and Serbian became the common language in Skopje until the formation of the Social Federation of Yugoslavia in 1944. Skopje was ceded to Serbia, and from this time on they were forced to speak Serbian, until Yugoslavia allowed them the use of the Macedonian language. The Albanians, who occupied Skopje in 1911 and who had desired to create Great Albania, now found themselves under a new ruler in Serbia. Nevertheless, the desire for Great Albania still survived.

At the onset of the First World War in August 1914, Mother Teresa was four years old, and this was the third time since her birth that war had engulfed her homeland. Even though Macedonia had disappeared from the political map through the partitioning, the people of the country still held hopes of winning their freedom. Albanians, too, hoped to gain independence, from both the Serbians and the Macedonians.

On February 3, 1919, when Mother Teresa was eight years old, the Paris Peace Conference was held and the partitioning of Macedonia was confirmed, and it was in this year, too, that her father died. Nikola died in Macedonia, at a time when the people's resistance and struggle for the autonomy of the nation began to increase. On his return to Skopje from Belgrade, he developed stomach pains and died soon after in a hospital. He had gone to Belgrade not on business but as a member of the Skopje city council. The police, however, suspecting foul play, investigated the matter and informed his eldest son that Nikola was possibly eliminated for political reasons. Regardless of the investigation, the matter was never clarified. ^[20] The author visited the Butel graveyard where Mother Teresa's father is buried ^[21] and confirmed the year of his death, because the date of Nikola's death, too, is uncertain. The author confirmed the fact that he died in 1919, but the author would like to investigate the matter further and hopefully find out what exactly happened in Belgrade in that year.

On December 1, 1918, the kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was born, and soon after in 1919, a constitutional conference was organized in Beograd, the official capital of the Kingdom. Since Skopje was the territory of Serbia, it automatically belonged to this kingdom.

In 1929, this kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes eventually became the kingdom of Yugoslavia. In 1919, the southern Slavs gathered in politically-active Beograd to discuss the possibility of a united Slavic kingdom. It was during this period that Nikola had been in Beograd, and while returning to Skopje, he had died. The distance between Skopje and Beograd is approximately four hundred kilometres, and the trip can be made in half a day. If his death resulted from poisoning, then it follows that the perpetrator had given him the poison before his departure from Beograd or at some time along the way back to Skopje. There are two possibilities regarding the timing of the poisoning. One, that a slow-acting poison was given him before leaving Beograd, and two, that the poison was given to him somewhere along the way back to Skopje in the train. The author is of the view, though, that whichever theory we may choose to accept, the murderer was in all probability an acquaintance of his, a person who perhaps had engaged in political activities along with him. The various theories concerning the identity of the criminal are merely a reflection of the ethnic conflict, and all the author can say with certitude concerning the matter is that he was killed for political reasons.

If her father was a supporter of a united Yugoslavia, it is possible that a political enemy in disagreement with his stand was the perpetrator. There are a variety of possibilities as to the type of political enemy it might have been, such as an Albanian who backed the creation of a Great Albania, or a Serb who supported the Great Serbia ideal. Even within the pro-Yugoslavia movement there were divisions among those favoring a federalist union and those favoring sovereignty of the republics. However, as the author stated earlier, we have absolutely no information at all as to the persons who brought about Nikola's death, and so it would be wrong on our part to blame any single group for the crime.

Now that 80 years have passed since the death of Mother Teresa's father, it is difficult to discover the entire truth concerning the matter. However, solving that crime it is not the object of this paper. This probing of the details related to his death is necessary because such details inform us of the fact that if her father had really been an important political figure, an individual powerful enough to deserve assassination, it shows the extent to which he must have been active in the political affairs of Macedonia.

After the war, Mother Teresa's brother Lazarus quit his homeland of Macedonia in 1925 in order to live in his ethnic homeland, the Republic of Albania, which had been established in 1912. Later, the Republic of Albania became the kingdom of Albania, with the beginning of imperial rule under Ahmed Zog (1895~1961), and Lazarus served as a professional soldier under King Zog.

While Mother Teresa was alive, she exercised worldwide influence, and she was consequently subjected to pressure by a variety of groups from different parts of the world. Political parties, politicians, social movements, and religious bodies attempted to persuade her to get involved in their specific pursuits, and the author believes it was the circumstances surrounding her father's death that made her realize the necessity of maintaining a distance from them all. Often journalists would ask her tricky questions, and seek to convince her that the problem of poverty could never be solved without social reform. To these questions she would answer that her aim was not to construct a society, but to serve each one in society, and by this means she skillfully managed to evade being dragged into their activities. In response to other criticisms regarding her charitable work as not being effective in solving the problem of poverty, she would answer, "Still it is a drop in the ocean, but if this drop did not exist even the ocean would not."

Mother Teresa's method of helping the poor regardless of ethnicity or religion, was often criticized as not effecting a change in the structure of society through political or social movements. She felt that the way to peace, which was the cornerstone of a stable society, was to assist each one individually rather than through political action. In her answers to questions posed by journalists or in response to criticism of her methods, she cleverly avoided the traps that she knew would arise out of political involvement.

The gun carriage employed to convey Mother Teresa's coffin at her state funeral, was the same one that was used to carry the coffin of Mahatma Gandhi. The difference between these two individuals lay in the fact that one was assassinated for political reasons and the other was not. In India, socially or politically powerful figures are at times targets of assassination. The Indian people view Mahatma Gandhi as the father of the Indian nation, and at her funeral they came to treat Mother Teresa too with a similar degree of reverence. This confirms the fact that, like Mahatma Gandhi, she too achieved the status of a compelling and influential figure in India, despite her non-involvement in political issues.

The death of Mother Teresa's father Nikola in Macedonia did not result in any sort of a political outcome at that moment. Yet his death did create an effect in India, whereas in Macedonia, religious and ethnic riots are a frequent occurrence. The author personally believes he died a martyr for the cause of his daughter's mission in India, for by his death he taught her what she ought and ought not to do. Concerning Mother Teresa, Pope John Paul II was said to have remarked that despite the honor of becoming a recipient of the Nobel Prize, she voluntarily rejected the political field and tried to put into practice her religious convictions. As the Pope truthfully stated, she did display a vigilant attitude when dealing with political and social issues. She acted in accordance with her vocation as a nun and never ventured beyond the restrictions of a nun's duties. Indeed, the author personally holds the view that either consciously or unconsciously, she carried out the lessons she had learned from her father's death.

5. Mother Teresa's Family: Torn by Walls Between States

On April 1939, Albania became an occupied territory of Italy and later a part of Italy. The deposed King Zog left his country for Greece, and Lazarus left Albania for Italy. In fact, Mother Teresa's niece still lives in Italy, on the island of Sicily.

In 1934, Mother Teresa's elder sister Aga left Skopje, which, owing to its being under the control of Serbia, was in a state of unrest, and shifted to Albania on her brother Lazarus' invitation. Aga was thirty years old at that time, and she had been working for the radio station at Tirana. Two years later, in 1936, both brother and sister invited their mother to join them in Albania. Five years after they had been reunited in Albania, the regime of King Zog ended, and Lazarus then made the decision of leaving for Italy. According to one source, it was owing to the fact that Lazarus had been enlisted by the Italian government to serve under Zog, and also on account of the fact that Albania had been occupied by Italy, that he was able to return to Italy after the fall of the Zog regime. It is unclear as to why Lazarus did not take his mother and his sister along with him to Italy at that time. Possibly he thought that since Albania was then under the occupation of Italy, it would be possible for him to call them over at a later date. As Aga and Drona were at that time living in Tirana, which lay about three to four hours from Skopje by car, they also probably felt that if they remained behind in Tirana, it would be easy for them to return occasionally to Skopje for a visit.

Nevertheless, in 1944, five years after Lazarus had moved to Italy, the Albanian communist party rose to power, and Albania became an independent nation. In 1948, Albania became a closed country, and Drona and Aga could then neither travel to Italy in order to be with Lazarus, nor could they make the three- or four-hour journey by car to visit their hometown of Skopje. Moreover, it was no longer possible for the mother and daughter to visit Mother Teresa in India, since the Albanian government refused them permission to leave the country. In 1972, Drona passed away at the age of ninety-three, and two years later in 1974, Aga passed away at the age of seventy. They were both buried in Tirana. Mother Teresa was aware that if she once entered Albania, she would never be able to depart, and for this reason she was unable to visit her sick mother and sister.

Conclusion

During the Venice film festival, an award-winning Macedonian director named Milcho Manchevski won the Grand Prix for his 1994 movie entitled *Before the Rain*.^[22] The movie vividly described the everyday lives of ordinary Macedonians living in the grip of ethnic conflict within a small mountain village, inhabited by both Macedonian Orthodox Christians and Albanian Muslims, who live together amidst an endless cycle of butchery and revenge. For the author, the movie seemed to express the never-ending circle of violence instigated by ethnic and religious divisions, by showing the tragedy experienced by two lovers who decided to come together despite differences.

“In the world outside, war is a rare thing, but here it is peace that is rare.” This line quoted from the movie serves to enlighten us with regard to both the past and present situations in Macedonia. We know that in the land of Mother Teresa’s birth, the sequence of hatred and violence has long been present, but on seeing this movie we realize to our sorrow that such a sequence continues even to this day.

Before the author’s arrival in Skopje to do this research, a terrorist attack was carried out,^[23] in the course of which grenades were hurled at government offices, army barracks, and courts. These incidents of violence, which occurred the day before the author’s arrival, made her realize even more as to how ethnic conflicts continue to fester in the region, but at the same time they revealed to the author a very important fact about the Macedonian people. In her conversations with the people of Skopje, the author learned that the majority of the residents want to end the violence and live peacefully with those who are different from themselves. Both Albanians and Macedonians desire to end the fighting and killing. That is to say, ordinary people of all walks of life who have no links at all with terrorism wish to end this violence linked to ethnic and religious divisions and live in peace with one another.

By the time Mother Teresa left her native Macedonia at the age of eighteen, she had already encountered three wars: the First World War, the first Balkan war, and the second Balkan war. Having lived in an area in which times of war exceeded those of peace, she grew to embrace a mode of living peacefully amidst diverse religious and ethnic groups. In a multi-ethnic multi-religious nation such as Macedonia, she realized that despite there being differences, people could still manage to live peacefully together. We may also assume that owing to her personal experiences in Macedonia, she was not only able to adapt easily to the cultural situation in India, but she also developed a tolerance towards other religions. As she herself hailed from the ethnically charged milieu of the Balkan peninsula, where issues of race and religion were hardly ever settled, in India and especially in Calcutta, she was well prepared to deal not only with the political and economic aspirations that prevailed in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and the Republic of India, but also the tensions that pervaded the Islamic and Hindu peoples of both nations. As a child of an Albanian mother whose birthplace was Skopje, it was doubtless through her personal experiences as a child that she arrived at the conclusion that the sole means of escape from this endless chain of hatred and violence lay in acts of love.

We notice from the above that despite having been raised in a nation where the seeds of ethnic and religious conflict were rampant, Mother Teresa yet managed to learn the art of bypassing conflict and succeeding in her chosen vocation, and furthermore, in India, she succeeded in putting such learning to good use, thereby enabling her work to blossom.

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NOTES

- [1] Stojan Trenchevski *MAJKA TEPE3A* 1998, p.33.
- [2] Jasmina Mironski *Mother Teresa* City of Skopje Republic of Macedonia, 1998, p.21.
- [3] The author personally received this information in the course of an interview with Professor Balabanov.
- [4] Stojan Trenchevski *TEPE3A* 2003, p.262.
- [5] It is based on the real estate documents of her parents' home of those days. Tony Josifovski has the documents now. Being the nephew of Mother Teresa's father's cousin he now has the right to Mother Teresa's parents' home, though at present the home does not exist.
- [6] Stojan Trenchevski *MAJKA TEPE3A* 1998, p.42-43.
- [7] Stojan Trenchevski *MAJKA TEPE3A* 1998, p.38.
- [8] Stojan Trenchevski *MAJKA TEPE3A* 1998, p.42.
- [9] Stojan Trenchevski *MAJKA TEPE3A* 1998, p.40.
- [10] Person born and grow up in Skopje.
- [11] The author personally received this information in the course of an interview with Biljana Jovanska, who is a long time journalist working for the magazine Zum. She has written widely on the subject of religion in the Balkan Peninsula.
- [12] Missionaries of Charity UL.GEORGI.DIMITROV 38.1000 SKOPJE.
- [13] Stojan Trenchevski *MAJKA TEPE3A* 1998, p.43-44.
- [14] 1970, 1978, 1980, 1986.
- [15] Navin Chawla, *Mother Teresa*, Gulmohur Press, 1992, p.1.
- [16] Navin Chawla, *Mother Teresa*, Gulmohur Press, 1992, p.8.
- [17] Although Hindi is the official language in India, there are 17 other languages which are recognized in the constitution.
- [18] Navin Chawla, *Mother Teresa*, Gulmohur Press, 1992, p.1
- [19] There are differences also in the date of their father's death in many books. For instance when Navin Chawla met Mother Teresa's brother Lazarus and interviewed him, he described the year of Nikola's death as 1917. Navin Chawla, *Mother Teresa*, Gulmohur Press, 1992, pp.1~5.
The author visited Nikola's grave and found that he died in 1919, and not 1917.
- [20] Joanna Hurley, *Mother Teresa A Pictorial biography*, Courage Book, 1997, p.23. In this work, she records her father's death as 1917, however most of the other sources chose 1919 as the year of his death. This work also claims that he was for the Great Albania ideal. Macedonian journalists never discuss the reason why Mother Teresa's father's died. To do so may sow the seeds for more conflict. The author also wish to follow their lead and not attempt to lay the blame on one party or the other.
- [21] Mother Teresa offered 18 roses at her father's grave when she visited there. Eighteen roses meant 18

years of her life in Skopje. So I also did the same and offered him 18 white roses.

[22] Milcho Manchevski *Before The Rain* 1994.

[23] The bombing that occurred on August 28, 2003 was caricatured by the Newspaper *AhebHuk* on August 30, just two days after the incident. Japanese newspapers do not make cartoons out of bombing incidents, even when there are no victims. After the Albanian armed guerrillas were suppressed, the government ordered them to give up their weapons. The government suspected that the guerrillas gave up only their old arms, and that the newer arms remain hidden with them even now. In the panel cartoons, the personnel said, "It seems as if the remaining arms have been given up at last," and he made this remark in front of an exploded government building.

There was an impressive comedy program that the author watched during stay. It was a comedy about an ethnic conference between an Albanian, a Serb, a Gypsy, a Turk, and a Macedonian who was the chairman. The difference in each ethnic point of view turns the cynical comedy into one full of severe black humor. It seemed as though each person converted the stress that arose from the other's difference into a good joke, in order to avoid a serious collision. The author felt that it was one way of surviving peacefully in a multi-ethnic nation like Macedonia.

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21. Jasmina Mironski, *Mother Teresa City of Skopje Republic of Macedonia*, 1998.
22. Stojan Trenchevski *MAJKA TEPEZA* 1998.

23. Johannes Jørgensen, *Der heilige Franz von Assisi 1182-1226*, Translated by Fuzio Nagano, Koudansya, 1979.
24. Jose Luis Gonzales-Balado, *Mother Teresa : one heart full of love*, Translated by Chiyoka Torii, Akashisyoten, 2000.
25. Jose Luis Gonzales-Balado, *Mother Teresa : one heart full of love*, Translated by Kazuko Watanabe, PHP syuttpan, 2000.
26. Natu Shimazu, Akiko Miura, Touru Hikuma, Tkakko Takabayashi, *Juunin no seinaru hitobito (10 holy people)*, Gakusyukenyusya, 2000.

マザーテレサの個人史に関する研究：

マザーテレサ生誕の地スコピエの歴史背景及びマザーテレサの家族関係からの考察

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要約：

本論は、マザーテレサの出生から渡印までの18年間の生育環境がインドでのマザーテレサの行動に、どのような影響を与えていたかを考察している。特に異教の地インドにおいてカトリック以外の宗教に対して「寛容」であり、且つ異文化を「受容」して地域に根ざした福祉活動を展開していた等のマザーテレサの特性が培われた背景を、彼女が生まれインドに来るまでの18年間を過ごしたスコピエの歴史、文化、民族、宗教及びマザーテレサの自身の家庭環境などから分析を試みた。

キーワード：スコピエ、マケドニア、マザーテレサ