

## The Final Conference

The conference was scheduled to take place on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2013 in Tirana International Hotel. We agreed to give the conference the all inclusive title “Dealing with the Communist past of Albania” though the past was only one of the aspects we dealt with as we focused also on the present consequences of such past on the Albanian society and its implications for the future.

The purpose of the conference was:

- To highlight the importance of preserving the Communist prisons as part of the historical testimony and inform the public opinion as well as the competent structures on their present condition.
- To bring to public attention the issue of the social integration of the ex-persecuted
- To appeal to the state structures the emergency of revealing the perpetrators in the interest of fairness to the victims.
- To establish how to deal with a violence burdened past so that it serves reconciliation and is perceived correctly and objectively by the coming generations.



structures, representatives of NGO-s, publicists and other scholars devoted to the issue of the communist past.

The session started with the speech “The Importance of the preservation of the communist prisons as an important historical testimony for the future” by Gezim Peshkopia – *ex-persecuted; known publicist; member of the Institute of the Study of Crimes of Communism*.

It was immediately followed by the speech of Pjeter Pepa, well known scholar who has devoted lot of his work to studying the ordeal which the Catholic Church had to go through during Communist Regime. His speech was very loyal in bringing the stoicism of the Catholic clergy and the unspoken atrocities they had to endure for the sake of their ideals of faith and humanism. His description were so intense, so full of vivid pictures that they brought tears in many eyes.

After these first significant speeches, we played the documentary “The Silent Gates of Hell” which was an account of the history of Communist Persecution and the present condition of places of sufferance. It was realized in collaboration with the Institute of Study of the Crimes of Communism and was supported by Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Albania.

Following the documentary there was perhaps the most interesting part of the first day, a Panel Discussion. The participants were:

Peter Weiss – President of MKF; Member of the German Parliament

Fatos Lubonja – Well known publicist and political analyst; ex-persecuted

Mark Marku – Member of the Albanian parliament, active in the issue of the ex-persecuted

Amik Kasoruho – Well known publicist, member of the Institute of Study of Crimes of Communism; ex-persecuted.

Monika Kleck – Representative of Renovabis – Responsible for the projects in Albania

The panel was moderated by Agron Tufa – Head of the Institute of Study of Crimes of Communism

The panel was opened with the speech of Peter Weiss who brought a German perspective as well as the experience of MKF in dealing with the violence burdened past and the processes of preserving the historical memory and putting it in function of reconciliation.

Afterwards the floor was given to the other members of the panel in random order: Mark Marku; Fatos Lubonja; Monika Kleck; Amik Kasoruho. They shared with the audience their personal experiences concerning Communist persecution (Fatos Lubonja; Amik Kasoruho) and offered their analysis about the situation where we stand and what has to be done in order to fulfil the objectives. The work proceeded with the questions from the audience which were handed to the members of the panel in written form.

The second phase of the conference started the next day, on February 5<sup>th</sup> in the morning with a more limited number of participants. The second day was conceived in the form of a round table with about 50 participants. This day was very intense as some of the participants had to share their memories and experiences of their years in the Communist prisons.

The testimonies followed in this order:

Simon Miraka – Testimony from the prison of Tepelena

Fatos Lubonja – Testimony from the prison of Spaç

Bardha Saraçi –

An important part of the second day was the participation of the young generation. We had a dozen of students from the Jesuit High School “At Pjetër Mëshkalla” who have been in Spaç in October. It was good to have their impressions in the conference as they leave aside the political connotations and focus only on the humanist aspects of persecution and sufferance.