

## **ENVER HOXHA'S LETTER TO KRISTAQ RAMA, MUNTAS DHRAMI, AND SHABAN HADËRI**

Letter from Enver Hoxha to the Three Sculptors (as printed in Drita, July 13, 1969)

In the Eternal and Life-giving Fountainhead of the People's Creation, We Will Find That Great Inspiration to Realize Beautiful and Magnificent Works for Our People

Dear Comrade Sculptors: Kristaq Rama, Muntaz Dhrami, and Shaban Hadëri,

Greetings. On the day that I visited your studio to see the maquette of the Monument of the Declaration of Independence in Vlora, I gave you some friendly advice and observations. The goal was that you should enrich your patriotic inspiration even further in deeper study of the history of Albania, of the great folklore of the people and of the documents of the Party.

Naturally, you know what great importance this memorial has for the people and for its future generations; therefore it must be made in such a way that, bringing to life in bronze the historic event in Vlora, it [also] creates a powerful and dynamic synthesis of the heroic battles of the Albanian people, of the glorious battles against occupiers: battles for freedom, independence, and national sovereignty.

In this monument, our people must see that freedom is won and is protected by the rifle, just as the National Liberation War [World War II] was won, led by the Party, and just as it is protected today by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Of course, you understand, I don't think that motifs of the National Liberation War should be included in the composition, and when I told you that perhaps certain motifs from the Vlora War of 1920 could be integrated, my thought was that the Independence Monument would represent not just the achievement of a goal, but the forward charge to arrive at other, even more important goals. In it we would see our own revolution moving forward, rising up. The imagination of the people should see, in the work you will create, that which it realized in the glorious National Liberation War, that which it is realizing today in the building of socialism.

To do such a thing, it is not at all necessary to mix together motifs from different periods, because then the subject of the monument would change. Instead, retaining within the composition the subject of the specific historic period, through your praiseworthy talent [certain characteristics] will emerge in sharp relief: the great force and character of the Albanian [man], bravery, heroism, the spirit of sacrifice, intelligence, his continual warlike and revolutionary surge forward. These are characteristics for all generations, for the past, the present, and the future of Albania. How these characteristics might emerge in the monument is something you understand, since you are sculptors and a good sculptor, I think, must be not merely an artist, but also a poet, and a writer, and a revolutionary fighter, and a thinker connected closely to the people. You are all of these things, so act!

I apologize if I am wrong, but the composition of the ensemble, the placement of people and of symbols, and the expressions of the individuals are those things which can give the monument those meanings and express [those ideas] of which I have spoken above.

I have reflected on this issue since the day I visited your studio, and allow me to tell you some of my thoughts. Let me say at the beginning that they may be baseless, that my thinking might be wrong, and perhaps I didn't have enough time to carefully observe your maquette, which I of course find worthy. You also told me that you would [subsequently] work and rework it; therefore I offer some of my modest thoughts.

The whole ensemble of the monument should give the feeling of the steely unity of our people and of its force in overcoming both centuries-long enslavement and every impediment that comes before [this unity].

The whole ensemble of the monument should be on the attack, so that the figures which make it up are not in static positions. Aside from the Kosovar, or the northern Albanian, the southern Albanians are in static poses, their rifles are "at rest." They feel the satisfaction that comes from raising the flag in war, and this is something which is essential to express because it represents the idea of independence. But it is not everything. This independence must be protected, the war must be continued, the revolution must rise.

The figures of the people, aside from that of the old man of Vlora [Ismail Qemali]—who it seems to me is posed correctly—are to some degree conventional; to distinguish the different regions of Albania, the costumes have been stylized more than is necessary. Not only did fighters of the period not all wear skirts [fustanella], but war cast aside the manner of dress of parades. The Kosovar, with his chest bared, is more realistic.

The waving flag, it seems to me, is given a thick and inflated form; it does not have the look of the flag of heroic battles, the flag that has passed through fires and storms. This is important since the flag is a central figure: it must be, how should I say it, agile and sharp like an Albanian, like the eagle at its center.

I agree with you that the figure of Ismail Qemali should be the central figure, as you have made him, but from the entire ensemble it should be clear that his act is a consequence of the legendary struggle of the people.

Finally, in the composition of the monument there is no evidence of our great scholars of the National Awakening [rilindësit] and their battle with the pen, a battle that cannot be forgotten and cannot be separated from the battle with arms. This is an integral part of the period for which we raise the monument. Therefore, study once again this time period for the [creation of the] monument.

My dear friends,

When I was in your studio I spoke to you about the importance of the miraculous folklore of our country. I myself am a great admirer of the people's folklore and of all those sculptors, artists, poets, authors, and scholars who immerse themselves in it and are inspired by it. In the eternal and life-giving fountainhead of the people's creation, we will find that great inspiration to realize beautiful and magnificent works for our people. From the works that your hands produce, our people take inspiration; therefore, be inspired by them as well.

In the last issue of *Drita*, I read the ballad of the talented poet Agim Shehu, "Before the Bust of Selam Musa." Read what he says of your works:

"Here, in bronze

Freedom holds you  
Selam, flower of Labëria  
Selam Musa of Salaria”

Be inspired yourselves for your monument by his inspiration:

You stay, but you can't stay still  
And so shivers come to you  
In your haste you go wandering  
'Down below Babica'

In the valleys in those nights  
You came down like a north wind  
The spotlights followed  
Your black shepherd's cloak  
The flame in your hands  
With haste to put  
The strap round your rifle  
Tightening it lest it fall”

Listen to what he says later on:

“In every battle, unleashed  
It took you in the chest  
Your shepherd's cloak like a legend  
Lying on the barbed wire”

I will not cite all the lines of this beautiful poem, but I mention these because we all want the monument you are working on to be a masterpiece of popular inspiration for the heroism of our forebears and also for the future generations that the Party educates and inspires.

Once again I repeat that my observations are friendly in nature. I have great faith in your patriotism, party-mindedness, inspiration, and talent, and I am sure that you will create a beautiful work, with a quality even greater than the beautiful works you have already realized for the fatherland.

Yours,  
Enver

Tirana, June 6, 1969