

*Albanian Newspaper Reader*

David L. Cox

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Reviewed by *Brian D. Joseph*  
The Ohio State University

In this book, author Cox presents 65 carefully chosen articles from current Albanian newspapers. His intent is to provide “beginning and intermediate students of the Albanian language with a collection of authentic materials” (p. xi), in keeping with an encouraging trend in foreign language education that favors the use of materials created by native speakers for real purposes (as opposed to artificially constructed dialogues or highly edited and oversimplified reading passages).

The newspapers in question are, out of the Albanian capital of Tirana, *Rilindja Demokratike*, *Republika*, and *Zëri i Popullit*; out of Skopje (Macedonia), *Flaka*; and out of Switzerland (but formerly out of Prishtina in Kosova), *Rilindja*. The selections cover the period of 1995 to mid-1996 and treat a wide range of topics, including various current events, such as visits by foreign dignitaries, football matches, academic conferences, and Mother Teresa's doings, as well as news of Albanian affairs abroad (e.g., a lecture on Kosova at the University of Wisconsin, showings of Albanian films in Montreal, etc.), interviews (e.g., with noted Albanian author Ismail Kadare), and the like.

Each of the selections, which range in length from 4 lines to 60 lines, is accompanied by an individual glossary that gives the meaning of words occurring in that passage for the first time in the *Reader* and a few explanatory notes, as needed, often covering some aspect of the external context of an event reported on in the article. There is a substantial (44-page) composite glossary at the end of the book that recapitulates in one place all of the individual vocabulary lists. In addition, there is a bibliography of two-plus pages with a listing of dictionaries, grammars, histories, and such; not all of the books will be readily available, since many are published in the Balkans, but it is useful for the user at least to know about them.

Cox has made very few changes in the articles, fixing just some obvious typographical errors. The resulting articles are not always the most elegant prose (and indeed, some are

translations of items taken from foreign wire services), but they are all readable and illustrative of current journalistic Albanian.

In an interesting decision that makes the book usable to even rank beginners, Cox includes English translations of all of the articles. While some users may be tempted to rely on the translations, having them in the book provides a basis for readers to check their work — and thus their progress with the language — on their own. Instructors might be inclined to find a way to keep students away from the translations, but the availability of such an aid does mean that class time could be spent on the often perplexing ways in which the grammar of Albanian leads to the translations one finds, a task that is often just as enlightening and rewarding as struggling to come up unaided with a smooth translation oneself.

One small quibble I would raise with the presentation of the selections is the fact that the listing in each article's vocabulary of just the words occurring for the first time means that a user is put at a (slight) disadvantage if (s)he skips around and does not cover the articles in the sequence they are presented in the book. This is not a huge problem, but can be a bit frustrating at times as it can necessitate going back and forth between the reading passage and the composite vocabulary at the end of the book.

I have used excerpts from this book in a class of mine introducing students gently to Albanian, and I chose mainly, due to my own personal interest and that of the students, the language-oriented articles (of which there are several). I found that there was enough in even the short pieces to generate plenty of class discussion and questions about Albanian grammar, and thus sufficient opportunity to delve into some of the finer points of the structure of the language. I thus judge the *Reader* to be a success for what it sets out to do, and recommend it — especially when used together with a good grammar (such as the excellent and thorough one by Newmark et al. 1982) or an authoritative dictionary (such as the excellent one by Newmark 1998) — as a way of plunging into learning about this fascinating language or just maintaining or refreshing one's knowledge of it.

### References

- Newmark, Leonard. 1998. *Albanian-English Dictionary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.  
Newmark, Leonard, Philip Hubbard, & Peter Prifti. 1982. *Standard Albanian: A Reference Grammar for Students*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.