

Who Dr. Ibrahim Rugova Was, Is, and Will Be!

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About 18 years since his passing and 80 years since his birth, after so many perspectives and analyses, for me, the central question remains who the Historic of President of Kosova, Dr. Ibrahim Rugova, was, is and will be!

Answering this question is essential, but that is based on my own personal experience, friendship, brotherhood, knowledge of and cooperation with Dr. Rugova, and it is not intended to impose it on anyone, as a good Latin saying goes: *Quot capita, tot sentetiae* (so many heads, so many opinions).

In light of this, in my perspective, Dr. Ibrahim Rugova was first a fruit of holy providence, an also a product of the dramatic history of the time—a time which hinged on the matters of life and death, light and darkness, good and bad, freedom and enslavement, lies and truths, democracy and dictatorship, existence and destruction, which could all be summed up the Shakespearean way with the famous saying—to be or not to be.

With Dr. Ibrahim Rugova, we, the Albanians of Kosova and beyond, stood on the side of life, justice, light, freedom, democracy, and independence through peaceful and non-violent means.

He did not arrive at these determinations, commitments and brave and visionary directions easily, but through a very tough philosophical journey based on the history of our Illyrian and Arberian predecessors as well as that of our Mediterranean and European region, and in accordance with the school of thought of Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Havel, and especially Pope John Paul II, and Mother Teresa.

His starting point was very pragmatic: it is better to be a live donkey than a dead bear; which meant that it was essential to save the existential being of our people, in accordance with Mother Teresa's postulate: give your best.

He expressed this with these words: "Our powerful weapons are antiquity, tradition, culture, roots, and our identity, as well as our youth... Albanian intellectuals want to serve the people. What do we need, a Kosovo diminished by massacres or exclusions?... Now it is crucial to save the people. We will seek from the international community a transitional phase, international protectorate for several years, then we will work together for the independence of Kosovo... Two personalities have positively influenced me: Pope John Paul II and Mother Teresa..."

Therefore, he was and remains a visionary, a "sower," in a way, even a "prophet," an architect, the historic President of a free, independent, democratic, open Kosovo, open to all, to Belgrade and Tirana, always seeking dialogue, communication, and discussion for the good, the right, the truth, above all life and love, which are links in the common historical and current chain.

I will never forget his life principle: "If the world recognizes who we have been and are, what we want and how we want to achieve it, then the world will be with us because antiquity, history, tradition, culture, civilization, our centuries-old Christianity, above all life and justice, equality are

with us... We want to seek human and democratic ways for them to accept us for who we are without harming anyone... The people, through experience, teach and guide us: Good comes slowly, while evil comes quickly..."

And history happened – the miracle, the world was with us, with small Kosovo, with our people, because our principles, attitudes, and our cause became the scrutiny of the conscience of all humanity.

His far-reaching mind, his great heart, his human and national culture, allowed Dr. Ibrahim Rugova to be timely and timeless, both in the assessment of the past, history, antiquity, and martyrdom, as well as in the projection of the future, freedom, democracy, and independence, for the benefit and good of all.

Principles such as: "On our side is the truth, history, the land of Kosovo, the people... The peaceful and nonviolent strategy is a solution and a necessity to prove that we are a people who have chosen peace through peaceful and nonviolent means... Nonviolence is a choice, as we have remained without police, without parliament, without government, because Serbs have expelled Albanians from these institutions. However, the peaceful and nonviolent strategy is more of a determination than a necessity, so that the world investigates that we are oppressed and abandoned by all..." (Valentino Salvoldi – Lush Gjergji, *Resistenza nonviolenta nella ex - Jugoslavia*, EMI Bologna, 1993, p. 29 -30).

This method, form, strategy has proven to be the best, even the only one, to avoid the oppression or expulsion of the people, to avoid massacres and our destruction.

Dr. Ibrahim Rugova never "knew" and never wanted to defend himself, but courageously, wisely, and very successfully, he defended the Albanian people, especially our Kosovo, everywhere. He never "knew" and never wanted to attack anyone, except for evil, injustice, dictatorship, hatred, falsehood, deception, and always with the power of Truth and Love, with the persistent and inspiring strategy of forgiveness, reconciliation, cooperation, and coexistence with all.

My appreciation for Dr. Ibrahim Rugova is this: Some write history, some remain in history, some are history. Dr. Ibrahim Rugova writes history, remains in history, and what is even more important, he is historical and a marvel, our present and future, the Albanian "Gandhi," the guide and inspirer of our freedom, independence, and democracy.