

A MEMOIR

BENEATH THE SILENCE

THE NAMES A REGIME TRIED TO ERASE

BY DR. ELIDA DAKOLI

Concert pianist. Founder, DFW Institute of Musical Advancement. Trustee, Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. Ambassador of the City of Durrës.

ABOUT THE BOOK

In a country where silence meant survival, one family learned to live with missing names, empty walls, and questions no one dared to ask. *Beneath the Silence* traces the destruction of two Albanian families under Enver Hoxha, whose dictatorship was the most isolated Stalinist regime in Europe. In 1943 a respected lawyer and public figure is gunned down in the street. Three years later a businessman is seized as an “enemy of the people,” and within hours his home, his property, and his dignity are stripped away. What remains is a matriarch’s quiet endurance, children raised under surveillance, and a legacy carried in objects, fragments, and memories never said out loud. At the center is a six-year-old girl in Durrës whose family classification, the official designation of “bad biography,” locks her out of the school’s pianos. Her father draws her a keyboard on paper. She practices in silence for years, on an instrument that makes no sound.

Told across three timelines and two family lines, the book is a political survival story, a family saga, and an artist’s reclamation of identity. It closes in 2023, when Dr. Dakoli returns to Durrës as Ambassador of the city that tried to erase her family, finds the piano sabotaged hours before the concert, summons a replacement from another city in four hours, and performs with her children. Then she speaks her grandparents’ names aloud, in public, with pride.

THE COMMUNIST STORY ALMOST NO ONE HAS TOLD IN ENGLISH.

WHAT COMES NEXT

Beneath the Silence is book one of a planned series. Book two carries the story forward into emigration, a concert career built from nothing, testimony before the Texas Legislature, and an ongoing legal fight to reclaim the family’s stolen property and honor Albania’s mass graves.



BOOK DETAILS

FULL TITLE

Beneath the Silence: The Names a Regime Tried to Erase

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PostHill Press, distributed by Simon & Schuster

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CATEGORY

Biography & Autobiography / Memoirs

History / Europe / Eastern

Political Science / Communism

THE RECORD BEHIND THE BOOK

1943

Great-grandfather Hysen Myshketa, a lawyer and public figure, assassinated for his democratic politics.

1946

Grandfather Sadik Dakoli seized as an “enemy of the people.” His remains were never recovered.

47

Year of rule by the most isolated Stalinist regime in Europe (1944 to 1991).

2023

Named Ambassador of the City of Durrës, the city that classified her family.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

DR. ELIDA DAKOLI

CONCERT PIANIST · EDUCATOR · ADVOCATE

Dr. Elida Dakoli is an Albanian American concert pianist, educator, and advocate. Born in Durrës during the final years of the most isolated Stalinist regime in Europe, she began her musical training on a paper keyboard drawn by her father, because the school's pianos were locked to students with "bad biographies." She emigrated to the United States in her early twenties and earned advanced degrees in piano performance, culminating in a Doctorate of Musical Arts.

She has performed at Carnegie Hall in New York and the Brahms-Saal in Vienna, and on stages across the world. She is a Mason & Hamlin artist and the image and recording artist for PianoDisc, whose newest IQ platform was introduced through her. She is the founder of the DFW Institute of Musical Advancement, which serves hundreds of students across Texas, and of Inspired Sounds, a nonprofit expanding access to music education in underserved communities.

Dr. Dakoli serves on the Board of Trustees of the Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation. In 2023 she was named Ambassador of the City of Durrës. She has testified before the Texas Legislature in support of a Day of Remembrance for victims of communism, and is the author of the scholarly study Aleksandër Peçi: Albanian Music Before and After the Iron Curtain. She lives in Dallas, Texas.



CREDENTIALS AT A GLANCE

- Carnegie Hall, New York
- Brahms-Saal, Vienna
- Doctorate of Musical Arts
- Mason & Hamlin artist
- PianoDisc image and recording artist
- Founder, DFW Institute of Musical Advancement
- Founder, Inspired Sounds (nonprofit)
- Trustee, Victims of Communism Memorial Foundation
- Ambassador of the City of Durrës, 2023

ADVANCE PRAISE

"Beneath the Silence is a powerful reminder that faith, freedom, and the human spirit can never be silenced. Elida Dakoli's story is both inspiring and timely, reminding us why liberty must always be cherished and protected."

DAN PATRICK

LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF TEXAS

"Beneath the Silence is more than a memoir. It is a testament to the resilience of the human spirit in the face of tyranny and a reminder of what is lost when freedom, faith, and human dignity are crushed under communism. With clarity, grace, and moral force, Dr. Elida Dakoli has given a voice not only to her family's suffering, but to the experience of millions whose stories must never be forgotten."

DR. ERIC PATTERSON

PRESIDENT AND CEO, VICTIMS OF COMMUNISM MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

"Dr. Elida Dakoli has written a remarkable memoir of perseverance, faith, and hope. Beneath the Silence is the story of a family tested by hardship and persecution, and of a young girl who refused to let silence define her future. It is beautifully written, deeply personal, and profoundly inspiring."

GREGORY SLAYTON

PROFESSOR, DIPLOMAT, AUTHOR, BUSINESSMAN, AND PHILANTHROPIST

SUGGESTED TALKING POINTS

01 THE PAPER KEYBOARD

A father draws a keyboard on paper so his daughter can practice at home, because the school's instruments are locked to children like her. Why the most powerful image in the book is an instrument that makes no sound.

03 THE LAST UNTOLD COMMUNIST STORY

Russia, China, Poland, and East Germany fill the shelves. Albania, the most isolated Stalinist regime in Europe, is barely represented in English-language memoir by comparison. Why the gap exists and why it matters now.

05 WHAT FAMILIES DO WITH WHAT THEY CANNOT SAY

An uncle watched his father beaten through prison bars as a boy and carried the image in silence for fifty years. On generational trauma, and on the difference between forgetting and being forced to forget.

07 RETURNING AS AMBASSADOR TO THE CITY THAT ERASED YOU

In 2023 Dr. Dakoli returned to Durrës as Ambassador of the city, found the piano sabotaged hours before the concert, summoned a replacement from another city in four hours, performed with her children, and said her grandparents' names out loud in public.

02 "BAD BIOGRAPHY": HOW A STATE SORTS CHILDREN

Albania's classification system decided who studied, who worked, and who disappeared. Dr. Dakoli explains how a six-year-old learns she has already been sorted, and what that does to a childhood.

04 TWO FAMILIES, THREE GENERATIONS, ONE SILENCE

A great-grandfather assassinated in 1943. A grandfather taken in 1946 whose remains were never recovered. A grandmother sewing burlap sacks to feed four children. What gets inherited when nobody is allowed to speak.

06 MUSIC AS THE LAST FREE SPACE

Under a regime that controlled repertoire, performance, and access, artistic expression became an act of defiance. How a locked piano shaped a career at Carnegie Hall and the Brahms-Saal in Vienna.

08 MEMORY AS CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

Testimony before the Texas Legislature, a Day of Remembrance for victims of communism, and the case that historical memory is not nostalgia but a precondition for a functioning democracy.

INTERVIEW FORMATS AND AVAILABILITY

Dr. Dakoli is a working concert pianist and is available for a combined reading and recital format, in studio or on location, in which passages from the memoir are paired with live performance. She is also available for standard broadcast, podcast, and print interviews, virtual book club appearances, campus and institutional programming, and panel discussions on authoritarianism, historical memory, and arts education. She is based in Dallas and travels. Interviews available in English and Albanian.

FOR INTERVIEWS, REVIEW COPIES, AND MEDIA REQUESTS

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