

BIO

Antonio Caiazza was born in Siano (Salerno) in 1964. He has lived and worked in Trieste since 1993. He is currently a journalist at Rai's editorial office for Friuli Venezia Giulia. He has covered events in the Balkans for various newspapers for many years. His first major article was the reportage *Albania, dove il tempo è Tirana* (Albania, where time is Tirana), *Il Mattino di Napoli*, summer 1987. He graduated in Law (University of Salerno) and obtained a postgraduate diploma in Journalism from the LUISS School of Journalism and Mass Communications (Rome) with the reportage-thesis *Albania, anno zero* (Albania, year zero) (1992). In 1997, he covered the financial pyramid crisis and the political and institutional collapse for Radio Capodistria (RTV Slovenija). In 1999, he covered the humanitarian crisis of refugees triggered by the war in Kosovo and Serbia from Macedonia for *Il Gazzettino di Venezia* and Radio and TV Capodistria.

He has dedicated several television reports, articles, and three books to Albania: *In alto mare. Viaggio nell'Albania dal comunismo al futuro* (Instar Libri 2008, Turin), a reportage that condenses various trips and compares different eras (the 1980s, early 1990s, and early 2000s);

Una storia scomoda. La guerra segreta al film con Mastroianni sugli italiani in Albania negli anni del fascismo (An uncomfortable story. The secret war against the film starring Mastroianni about Italians in Albania during the Fascist era. Bibliotheka Edizioni 2025, Rome; currently being translated into Albanian) which, for the first time, using previously secret documents found in Italian and Albanian diplomatic archives, reveals the boycott carried out by Italy in the early 1980s to prevent the making of Luciano Tovoli's film *Il generale dell'armata morta* (The General of the Dead Army).

Abstract

Some ideas for reflection on the work of those who tell stories and history.

The ethics of historical storytelling lie in the ethics of using sources. Sources are like the keys on a piano: black and white, low and high, the left and right sides of the keyboard. You can choose to play only some of them. But to truly capture an era, you need them all. Because around each key, there are others, there is a before and after in a chain of causal consequences.

I am a journalist, not a historian. I have been following events in Albania for forty years. I visited it for the first time when it was still the *last bastion of Stalinism*, in the mid-1980s. I wrote a book on Albania using as sources what I myself had seen, read, and learned, as well as what had been told and shown to me by dozens and dozens of witnesses and experts. The sources for the other two books were all those of the first, that is, my personal experiences and testimonies blended into a dense mixture of colors and sensations. Plus the documents from the archives.

Archives as a repository of truth in our age of “fluid truths”, flexible narratives, and arguments geared toward supporting theses. Theses should be the result, the distillation of the observation of facts, but increasingly often the reading of facts or fragments, sides, aspects, or portions of facts

serves to support pre-packaged arguments and theses. Archival research can become a hellish and dangerous machine, a weapon of political construction or demolition.

The concept of “the banality of evil” (Hanna Arendt) in telling history to new generations. Dictatorships are never sudden and are never an accident of history. The paths that lead to dictatorships and the human tragedies they produce are long and often imperceptible. When they become apparent, it is already too late and the road back is already closed: other sacrifices, far more serious, would be needed at that point to reopen it. The imperceptibility of evil, when it is being constructed, prepared, and organized. When it becomes blatant ferocity and shared terror, the tipping point, the point of no return, has already been reached.

The tragic and suicidal mistake of waiting for the *monster* to appear before raising the alarm, before standing up to protect individual and collective freedoms, the rights of individuals and societies. Evil never has the face of a *monster*; it is more likely to take on that of a neighbor. The planning of evil has nothing dramatic about its procedures: gray-suited employees, conscientious and competent officials diligently plan what is needed, with tables, calculations, proposals, bureaucratic meetings, efficiency measures, and rationalization of expenses. With this sense of duty, camps and barracks were designed, transport was planned, workers were hired, the necessary materials were ordered and paid for, and the necessary resources were prepared. An entire apparatus, perfect and precise, to set up another, one that puts terror into practice. Every member of the two systems... goes home in the evening. They have dinner. They laugh. They take care of their children.

If we wait for *the monster* to appear before rising up to defend our democracies, we will have already lost them without even realizing it.