

# 'White Cavemen' clean up the Bronx

NEW YORK — "White cavemen," is what Suzie the waitress called the Albanians of the Bronx, the borough that is New York City's answer to bomb-blasted Beirut.

Suzie's description of the Bronx Albanians was unfair and due, I suspected, to sour grapes since she was Italian and thus still ashamed of what happened to the Mafia. The mob had made the big mistake of trying to muscle protection money out of some Albanian-owned pizza parlors. The baseball-bat wielding Mafiosi were met by a hail of well-aimed gunfire from the pistol-packing Albanians, some of whom love guns more than their wives. After that, the mob's insurance salesmen went elsewhere.

"My God," said a truly shocked Suzie — and you don't shock easily when you wait on truck drivers in a Greek diner in the Bronx — "Albanian kids even mug black muggers!" Now there, I thought, was a real man-bites-dog story. Charles Bronson, move over.

The Bronx Albanians are America's newest and most interesting pioneers. They come from the rugged northern mountains of Albania (turn right at the toe of Italy to find Albania) and from Kossova, the part of Albania occupied by Yugoslavia. Most of the 30,000 Albanians in the Bronx are Ghegs, fierce warrior tribesmen who will defend a guest with their lives or carve up an intruder with equal gusto. They eat Slavs and Turks for breakfast and think the more learned Tosks of southern Albania, who eat Greeks for breakfast, are sissies.

These Albanian mountaineers arrived in New York penniless refugees. Many were illiterate and few could

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speak English. Poverty forced them to settle in the Bronx, the half-ruined nightmare slum filled with drug addicts, criminals and welfare cases.

Before World War II the Bronx was a prosperous, verdant residential area of Irish, Germans and Jews. The Grand Concourse was built to rival Paris' *Champs Elysee*. But after the war New York's rich liberals enacted the nation's highest welfare payments. In short order, the Bronx was turned into a giant human cesspool.

Up from the South came busloads of illiterate black sharecroppers and great numbers of Puerto Ricans: All settled down on welfare, producing ensuing generations aptly described by one black writer as "urban cannibals." Not surprisingly, most of the Bronx's whites fled.

The borough's new inhabitants quickly destroyed once-attractive neighborhoods. Buildings were savaged: Wiring and plumbing ripped out of walls; garbage thrown out of windows, excrement down stairwells. Muggers and addicts prowled the empty streets.

So dangerous was the Bronx that even the police, who

called the south Bronx precinct "Fort Apache," would not patrol on foot.

Into this wasteland of gutted buildings and broken humans came the Albanian mountaineers. They saved money earned washing dishes or floors and bought abandoned tenements for \$250. Entire families worked to repair these wrecks. People began to move into the restored buildings.

Day and night, armed Albanians guarded their property. Black and Puerto Rican muggers quickly learned to stay far away from the property and tenants of the Albanians. Pistol-packing Albanians did what New York's police could not — they restored order and civilization to the worst parts of the Bronx jungle.

Building by building, the tenacious Albanians created little islands of security in the heart of New York's most crime-ridden area. Middle-class people began to return, drawn by clean buildings, low rents and, most important, security.

Just as the cleanup of New York's Hudson River has brought back fish for the first time in 50 years, the cleansing of the Bronx by its Albanians has restored life to neighborhoods formerly written off as hopeless.

Incredibly in our socialist age, this heroic feat was done by the proud Albanians without a cent of government money. More than 20 Albanians, some barely literate, are now property millionaires.

Which should remind us that nations are built by the hard work and guts of private citizens, not by governments. Now if Chicago, Detroit and Houston could just manage to find more Albanians . . .

RE GRADING the trustees (June 27): Grading the trustees was such an outstanding article I must congratulate Judi McLeod and the *Sun*. The article was both original and suitable in its concept and deadly accurate in its conclusions. Judi McLeod has laid before us a clear, concise record of our trustees' performance (or lack thereof) and it is up to us to show the board we want quality education and not leftist brainwashing for our children. The accuracy of Judi McLeod's grading is underscored by the pathetic reply from failing Ward 5 trustees Penny Moss and Fiona Nelson (July 2). Unable to defend their lamentable performance on a rational basis, these trustees play

(Interesting sidelight)

J. Falcone Toronto  
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I WOULD like to express my thanks to Mr. Margolis for his excellent article "White Cavemen' clean up the Bronx" (June 29). Through my association with Albanians, both family and friends, the article prompted me to shed some light on their strong faith and convictions. As well as to mention the parallelism which the article portrayed with regards