

## **ALBANIA 1996**

### **Democracy or Dictatorship?**

On 26th May Albania held parliamentary elections, the first since 1992 and the third since the collapse of the Communist regime in 1990.

It is difficult for a visitor to today's Albania to recall the emptiness and desolation that existed there only 6 years ago. Numerous small business have mushroomed and cars (then banned) now fill the streets. The ruling Democratic Party has been praised for its free market policies giving Albania one of the highest growth rates in Europe. It has also been commended for its stabilizing role in the Balkans, in particular for not encouraging irredentist ambitions in neighbouring Kosovo where 1.25 million Albanians live.

However, from the beginning of its term in office the Democratic Party has been accused of human rights abuses. These accusations have become more vocal in the last few months as have allegations that President Berisha is developing into another Balkan dictator in the mould of the infamous Enver Hoxha. Even the US, once Albania's most loyal ally has begun to criticize the government openly.

The 1996 elections provided a suitable opportunity to assess the democratic process in Albania and decide whether or not the country was moving towards Western Europe or back to dictatorship and isolation. The British Helsinki Human Rights Group sent 5 observers to the first round of voting on 26th May, Dr Malcolm remained in the country and monitored the second round on 2nd June. Daniel McAdams returned to Tirana for the third round on 16th June.

## **BACKGROUND**

The modern history of Albania has left its mark on the country's standing in the world and its people's culture. Without an understanding of the peculiar impact of the Second World War and the 45 years of an extreme Stalinist regime, today's Albania cannot be judged in a proper perspective. The application of universal standards of democracy and human rights takes place in specific conditions and history explains them.

The Albanians are one of Europe's most ancient peoples, but their modern statehood dates only from 1912 when the country became independent as the Ottoman Empire which had ruled the region since the later fifteenth century collapsed. Controversies about national identity have dogged the country ever since. In its modern boundaries, Albania is home only to about half of Europe's Albanian-speaking population. It was Serbia's victories over the Ottomans in 1912 which opened the way to Albanian independence but ironically prevented the Albanian majority in Kosovo and the substantial Albanian minority in Macedonia uniting with their fellow Albanians in one state.

Newly-independent Albania was weak and dependent upon the whims of the great powers as to whether its sovereignty would survive or not. During the First World War, it was not respected and independence was not really recovered until after Italian troops left the country following the First World War. Even then, Italian influence remained strong and it helped to explain why other constitutional experiments failed and Ahmed Zogu was able to proclaim himself "King Zog" in 1928. However, Albania's relations were not sufficiently subservient for Mussolini's imperial ambitions and on Good Friday, 1939, Italian troops occupied the country.

During the Second World War, Albania witnessed not only a resistance struggle against the Italian and later German occupiers but also a complex civil war between Communist partisans led by Enver Hoxha, various non-Communist resistance groups and the local collaborators with the Axis powers. Members of British Special Operations Executive were sent to assist the resistance groups and arms and other supplies were provided. In this way, Britain became involved in the struggle for power between the pro-Stalin Communist forces and the rest. Despite the views of the key SOE officers on the ground in Albania, Britain threw its weight behind Enver Hoxha's partisans (as was also the case with Tito's partisans in Yugoslavia). Without Allied assistance \_ and given the absence of Soviet help \_ Hoxha's forces would probably not have triumphed against the Balli Kombetare, Zogists, etc. A strange mixture of upper class English arrogant indifference towards remote foreigners and the sinister influence of Communist agents and fellow travellers led to the refusal of the British High Command to give sanctuary to non-Communist resisters who had aided its SOE operatives. This was one of the most shameful episodes in British wartime history.<sup>1</sup>

From 1944 until 1991, Albania was ruled by the Albanian Party of Labour (APL), led by Enver Hoxha until his death in April, 1985. He created the most long-lasting Stalinist regime in Europe. Hoxha's admiration for Stalin was no doubt genuine, but it was also aided by Stalin's break with Tito in June, 1948. Suspicion of Yugoslav intentions towards its smaller neighbour were not unfounded but Hoxha's regime let them proliferate into a fantastic system of paranoia which justified repression on a massive scale. His regime's subsequent break with the Soviet Union in 1961 and with China after Mao's death in 1976 led Albania into a cul-de-sac of isolation. Ironically, Albania's self-imposed pariah status attracted a perverse admiration in extreme left-wing circles in the affluent West \_ a motley gaggle of fellow travellers of extreme Marxist- Leninist views continued to make pilgrimages to the last unreformed model Communist society, particularly from Scandinavia.<sup>2</sup>

Pill-boxes litter the Albanian landscape as testimony to the Communist system's paranoia and its wastefulness. These standardised concrete death-traps would have been useless against a modern invader \_ and no invader could be less modern than the condition Albania's isolation imposed on her antiquated forces \_ but they also consumed vast resources. They are monuments to Hoxha's deformed sense of Albanian nationalism.<sup>3</sup>

Hoxha's Albania existed in a time-warp as well as a backwater. The petty tyranny of Hoxha's regime was exemplified by its ban on beards. Even fellow travellers arriving to show their solidarity from less happy lands abroad were obliged to shave excessive facial hair and the degrees of it were noted in their Sigurimi files! Hoxha's regime may have been eccentric but it was far from comic. After 1967 the practice of all religions was banned and severely punished. Until 1991, private cars were banned allegedly on egalitarian grounds but in practice to stifle freedom of movement. Fishing boats were rare and trawled in closely supervised twos for fear that people would flee their workers' paradise \_ private boats were, of course, illegal. Albanians attempting to swim the three mile channel to Corfu risked death at the hands of border guards. In all, the regime executed more than 5,000 opponents, though many more people died of the side-effects of ill-treatment and undernourishment in its concentration camps and during collectivisation. In all, the regime imprisoned more than 200,000 people, in so far as those Albanians outside the barbed wire fences of its gulag could be considered "at liberty."

Consistent with his imitation of Stalin in all matters, Hoxha's rule was marked by recurrent and bloody purges. These went on long after the derided "revisionists" elsewhere in the Communist bloc had found ways of resolving their differences without mass bloodletting. Even in old age, Hoxha was capable of the ruthless slaughter of former close comrades like Mehmet Shehu, the prime minister, who killed himself or was "suicided" in 1981. (Shehu was himself a murderer of considerable bloodthirstiness, but his fall drew in innocent victims as well as fellow former servants of the regime.)<sup>4</sup>

## **From Hoxha's Death to the breakdown of the Communist regime**

The chief beneficiary of Hoxha's last murderous purge was Ramiz Alia who replaced Mehmet Shehu as the heir-apparent and in fact succeeded his mentor in April, 1985. At the same time the election of Mikhail Gorbachev as General-Secretary of the Soviet Communist Party and his initiation of perestroika revealed the depths of the crisis in the Soviet bloc. For all that the Albanian Communists derided the Soviet Communists as soft-liners and betrayers of Marxist policies, in fact the crisis of extreme poverty and economic backwardness admitted in the Soviet Union under glasnost was less acute than in Albania which had followed even more rigid economic policies made still more unproductive by Hoxha's obsessions.

Ramiz Alia's regime reacted to the collapse of Communism elsewhere in Eastern Europe and the Balkans with bravado. Tirana radio dismissed the execution of the fallen Ceausescu in Romania at Christmas, 1989, as the deserved fate of a "revisionist" who was insufficiently Stalinist. As if to emphasise its rejection of the Soviet bloc's most hardline ruler, Tirana hurried to be among the first to recognise the new regime in Bucharest. Nonetheless the pace of change in Eastern Europe and its proximity to Albania was unsettling for the Alia regime despite Ramiz Alia's claim that "the events taking place there are nothing to do with us."<sup>5</sup>

Minor relaxations did occur in 1989, for instance, "Agitation and propaganda against the state will now draw 5 to 25 years in jail instead of death... The power of the local authorities to deport whole families to another region by simple administrative decision has been scrapped. Only a court can order a removal, and then only of the guilty party not the whole family."<sup>6</sup>

Between February and April, 1990, the situation for the Albanian regime worsened. Under acute economic pressure it lifted some of Hoxha's most extreme restrictions on economic initiative and also reversed the ban on religion, lifted the death sentence and even reinstated the Ministry of Justice abolished in Hoxha's cultural revolution during the 1960s.

An opposition among literary intellectuals and technical experts began to form in 1990. In the spring, the world-famous author Ismail Kadare challenged Ramiz Alia to liberalise the system and the cardiologist, Sali Berisha, published a call for Albania to end its self-isolation.

In July, 1990, 5,000 Albanians confounded the few Western journalists who believed they had noted Alia's popularity<sup>7</sup> by seeking refuge inside the grounds of foreign embassies in Tirana and demanding the right to emigrate from the country. Although Ramiz Alia dismissed them as "vagabonds and hooligans", he conceded their right to emigrate and dismissed key harder line officials, insisting that he wanted well- thought out and well-coordinated" reforms. At the same time, the regime sacked relatives of the emigrés from their jobs and expelled them from the Party. In August, Alia still resisted demands for the abolition of the one-party system. In September, 1990, Sali Berisha published an attack on the privileges of the Albanian communist élite by which time the economic crisis made it difficult to service even their needs.

### **Interlude: March,1991 - March, 1992**

Under the Communist system with its frequent scores of 100% turnout and 100% "yes" to the candidates of the ruling Democratic Front, the distribution of seats and the system of voting did not matter. In March, 1991, however, a multi- candidate election fought on the Communist-drawn boundaries gave it a strong advantage because of the bias of the balance of seats to the countryside.

There the local Party of Labour secretary and chairman of the collective still exercised a dominant influence over a peasantry cowed by decades of purges and collectivism. In fact, whereas urban areas had only 85 directly-elected constituencies, if the allocation of seats had been weighted by population 97 seats ought to have been located in towns. There was also a wide disparity between the number of voters in the large urban seats and some small rural ones.

The DP regretted the first past the post system used in 1991 which also weighted the results against them. Although the DP was unhappy about the Communists' tactics in the vote, their spokesman Genc Pollo, argued, "The main thing is that we recognize the validity of the result and intend to be present in parliament when it meets in order to put our political point of view \_ though we also plan to collect all available evidence of electoral irregularity and to confront deputies who have won their seats illegitimately." Pollo opposed turning to the streets to protest such results: "Right now we want to reduce the level of tension in the country, which is why we are asking people not to riot, not to go on the streets but to seek a political solution." in fact, two of the Democratic activists killed in Shkodra had been appealing to the demonstrators to go home at the time of their killings.<sup>8</sup>

The Democratic Party refused to nominate a candidate for president, so the Albanian Party of Labour nominated two \_ Ramiz Alia and Namit Dokle, then editor of Zeri i Popullit and now acting leader of the Socialist Party \_ in order to fulfil their commitment to multi-candidate elections. With the DP deputies abstaining Ramiz Alia was elected unanimously. The new prime minister was a young (38 year-old) economist from the Socialist Party (the name adopted by the Albanian Party of Labour in June, 1991), Fatos Nano. As prime minister, Fatos Nano espoused a cautious programme of economic reform, far removed from the "shock therapy" favoured by the opposition. He had to deal with the growing humanitarian disaster which was only alleviated by foreign aid, especially from Italy. (Later on, Mr Nano was accused and convicted of misappropriating some of the aid and other funds. The opposition and some foreign human rights groups dispute the validity of his conviction on the grounds of "irregularities" at the trial but efforts to clarify what the irregularities were proved frustrating.)

### **The 1992 Elections**

General strikes were in fact held to protest against the 1991 elections and mass emigration started up again as hopelessness appeared to grip the country. The loss of authority of the renamed Socialist Party \_ a result of the worsening economic crisis and the repeated mass migrations \_ deepened the crisis. In November, 1991, the Democratic Party withdrew from the broad coalition government accusing the ex- Communists of frustrating reform. (The absence in London at the time of Finance Minister and Deputy-Premier, Gramoz Pashko, and his irritation with the decision were the first signs of growing tension inside the DP among its founders.) In 1992, Ramiz Alia was prepared to agree to fresh elections.

The Democratic Party polled 62% of the vote and gained 92 seats. The Socialists took 25.7% of the vote and 38 seats. The Social Democrats took 4.3% and 7 seats with 2 seats going to the Unity/Human Rights candidates, essentially representing the Greek Minority and 1 seat to the Republican Party.

### **Post-Election Splits and Setbacks for the Democratic Party**

The scale of the Democratic Party's victory seems to have encouraged factionalism and squabbling. There were not enough positions to occupy all 92 Democratic deputies and some were bound to be disappointed. Others discovered that their pet solutions or projects were not favoured by the government.

Several of the personalities most associated with the establishment of the Democratic Party soon became highly critical of the policies of President Berisha's government and after acrimonious wrangling were expelled from the Democratic Party at a special congress in August, 1992. Although Berisha attended the congress, he did not chair its sessions as has been widely alleged by his critics. Among the critics was Berisha's former deputy, Arben Imami, who had moved from a vociferous supporter of a purge of Communist officials to a critic of such a policy and a supporter of reconciliation. Gramoz Pashko was another member of the breakaway faction.

The ex-DP men who now formed the Democratic Alliance and their Western sympathisers feared anti-Communism and resented any favour shown towards the members of families who had suffered under the Communist regime. A snobbish hostility to people from outside the intellectual nomenclatura could sometimes be detected. For instance in the case of Tomor Dosti who had been exiled from Tirana for 35 years because his father, Hasan Dosti, had been a leader of the wartime Balli Kombetar, only returning to the capital again in the year of the upheaval.<sup>9</sup>

The local elections in Albania followed soon after these highly vocal internal wranglings inside the Democratic Party. Given the worsening economic situation in which the dreadful legacy of the Communist system had left Albania, initially compounded by the negative primary impact of "shock therapy" helped to explain why the Democratic Party lost ground dramatically in the local elections.

Looked at closely, however, the results indicated that the two leading parties were running neck-and-neck: the Democratic Party actually gained more votes than the Socialists \_ 43.16% to the PSSH's 41.32%, but the Socialists won 22 mayorships compared with 19 for the Democrats out of a total of 43. In general, in terms of distribution of seats in the communes, the voting system worked to the advantage of the PSSH with its largely rural vote and slightly against the DP with its concentration of support in urban centres. What was most important was the failure of any of the fringe parties to challenge the stranglehold of the DP or PSSH on Albanian politics. Already only a few months after the general election, in effect a two-party system was clearly developing in Albania, with the other groupings very much dependent for gaining seats on the PR portion of the general election system or the generosity of one of the two big parties in standing aside to give its candidate a clear run on an allied ticket. (Only the Greek minority has any real chance of winning direct mandates in the few localities in which it constitutes a significant share of the population.)

### **Early Criticism of the Berisha Government**

Ignorant of the nomenclatura structure, some Western human rights activists have objected fiercely to criticism of the "families" of the old élite, arguing that this promotes a return to the idea of "collective guilt" upheld by Enver Hoxha himself. Certainly accusing or punishing people solely on grounds of their familial relationships is abhorrent to any notion of individual human rights and responsibility, but it cannot be ignored that family members of highly-placed officials of the state apparatus, including its security services, frequently enjoyed privileged careers of their own in the superficially separate and independent fields of culture, the universities or science. Some may have owed their advancement to their own skills but in a nomenclatura system \_ particularly such a tightly-controlled one \_ even one's own abilities were rarely decisive. In any case, what some Albanians complained about after 1992 was not that people should be judged as individuals for their behaviour under the old regime but that privileged intellectuals and other "clean" members of nomenclatura families used their better connections, not least to the West, to raise a hue and cry about the human rights of their relatives and acquaintances from the old regime.

Anyone in Albania who enjoyed a higher education or had travelled abroad could only have done so with the approval of the Party. But Western proponents of an amnesty or even amnesiac approach to the question of guilt and innocence in Communist countries all-too-often forget that to say everyone

in the country \_ apart from a handful of suicidally brave dissidents \_ abided by the regime's rules and even applauded as and when instructed does not mean that there were no gradations of collaboration and guilt in a country like Hoxha's Albania. There is a huge difference between those who took the first opportunity to break with the past and those who grudgingly did so. President Berisha's successful medical career under Communism is often cited as evidence of the lack of a real divide between post-Communists and the rest in Albania, all were compromised, but the venom of the attacks on Berisha (witnessed both in Albania and at a seminar in a British university after the elections) is based on the idea that he is a "renegade". Many Albanian Socialists and their sympathisers seem to resent bitterly his abandonment of their ranks and his criticisms of the old regime as if rejection of Hoxherism was a character flaw.

Oddly enough some of the Western human rights campaigners who have objected to the prosecution of former high-ranking Communist officials accused of murder or corruption are also vehemently opposed to any rehabilitation of wartime opponents of the Communists. Some of these people were collaborators with the Axis occupiers of the country and no doubt responsible for atrocities against resisters of all colours and innocent bystanders, but many were not including those who started resisting the Axis before Hitler's invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941 while Hoxha's group remained neutral until then. The willingness of Western human rights activists to accept Hoxherite designations, including of the children of such alleged "war criminals" and their support for the exclusion of such off-spring from public office suggests that a curious inconsistency has crept into their thinking about "guilt by association."<sup>10</sup>

### **The Constitutional Referendum**

The constitutional order in post-Comunist Albania was widely regarded as unsatisfactory. Hoxha's 1976 Constitution, for instance, ruled out foreign loans or Albania's entry into alliances or European organisations like the CSCE. It had already been amended ad hoc especially after Sali Berisha's election as President in April, 1992. Given the emergency nature of the state of Albania then it is hardly surprising that most of the new government's political energies went into mastering the economic and social crisis. The acutely dangerous situation on Albania's ex-Yugoslav borders as the war in Bosnia intensified also required a lot of attention. It was only in autumn, 1994, that a new draft constitution was ready. On 4th November, 1994, the proposed constitution put forward by President Berisha was rejected in a referendum.

Although its critics attacked the text of the constitution on the grounds that it was too presidential and would in effect make Albania into an authoritarian state, it may be doubted how far ordinary voters were moved by considerations of legal niceties in deciding how to vote. In effect, the referendum was a mid-term opportunity to pass a judgement on the Democratic Party's performance in office. The negative effects of "shock therapy" still outweighed the benefits and many voters saw the chance to express their displeasure with continuing economic and social hardships.

The opposition criticised the bias of the state radio and television (and some government supporters told this Group's observers in 1996 that coverage had been one-sided and counter-productive) and doubted that the referendum would be fair, but the government accepted the bad result.

### **Run-up to 1996 Elections**

After two years in the electoral doldrums, suffering an embarrassing mid-term defeat over the constitutional draft, the Democratic Party's support began to pick up in 1995. The Economist Intelligence Unit noted, "Opinion polls at the end of 1995 suggested that after a nadir in support in

1994 and much of last year, the DP was firmly in the lead, with the SPA trailing behind by a large margin." The turn of the year EU- sponsored Eurobarometer poll found 45% of the voters already committed to the Democratic Party with only 22% certain to vote Socialist \_ a sharp turnaround from the year before when 33% were committed to the Socialists with only 25% saying they would vote Democratic. A Tirana University poll found 51% in favour of the Democrats with 26% supporting the Socialists. A "feel-good" factor was making itself felt with 56% of respondents saying they were "much better off" than in 1992.<sup>11</sup>

The party press of each side of the political divide as well as the parties' own spokesmen have tended to engage in hyperbolic attacks on each other. Although DP's attack on the opposition coalition as "the red front" has been deplored by some Western commentators, the opposition's own rhetoric has been savage and even inflammatory. Comparisons between the government, its officials and police and the Nazis or the Gestapo are commonplace in opposition newspapers.<sup>12</sup> This creates an unhealthy and intolerant atmosphere, but few Albanian politicians could claim to be immune to the tendency to inflammatory utterance.

There was a striking paradox about the polarised political atmosphere inside Albania in the run-up to the general elections. Despite their heated attacks on each other, both main parties and most of the minor ones claimed to agree on most key issues. The market economy had been accepted as the basis of future development by everyone including the Socialists. A European orientation was loudly promoted by both sides of the political divide. The election materials of both Democratic and Socialist parties were regularly illustrated with the flag of the European Union or its twelve gold stars. The sincerity of the attachment of the parties to democracy, the market economy and the European ideal was often called into question by their rivals. What is clear is that the prestige of the EU is very high among Albanians and any political party in a position to monopolise its support would gain disproportionately, just as a party denounced by Brussels would lose public acceptance. This means European institutions must be very careful about letting their Albania policy become captured by one Albanian faction or another.

### **An Albanian Economic Miracle?**

Economic change has been dramatic in Albania. Nostalgics for the days of "economic rights" such as "full employment" and "industrialization" under the Communist regime seem to ignore or deny the remarkable if very traumatic economic transformation since 1991. Already in November, 1991, the collapse of the planned economy was in full spate: the Bank of Albania lacked even the banknotes to pay subsidies to largely dormant heavy industrial plant and agricultural collectives. In 1992, "shock therapy" was implemented on a wide scale. By 1995, GDP was growing strongly \_ at a sustainable 5-6% \_ after an initial phase which saw a sharp fall in production, admittedly much of it of the useless Stalinist type which took perfectly good raw materials and degraded them into the useless products demanded by the Plan and Albania's autarky drive.

At the height of the social crisis brought about by the rapid transition from the Stalinist command economy to the market, about 450,000 people were unemployed in 1993. The heavy social costs of mass unemployment and of finding housing for the internal migrants leaving the land in the hope of finding work in the towns and especially Tirana caused a huge government budget deficit in the early years of Democratic rule. However, the recovery of the economy has brought the government's budget deficit under control.

By 1996, the fruits of the economic reforms were becoming widely evident in Albania. Car ownership was growing rapidly. Already in December, 1993, the number of privately owned cars had reached 100,000 from zero three years earlier. Tirana had 14,000 small private businesses \_ the country as a whole had 50,000+. Private businesses are now opening at an ever more rapid pace and

increasingly around the country as the new market economy's different branches emerge in previously completely depressed socialised areas.

Under Hoxha's obsessive but incompetent and unfulfilled plans for self-sufficiency, like Mussolini's Italy in the 1930s, Albanian farmers were forced to cultivate wheat despite the unsuitability of the terrain and climate in much of the country. Some anti-DP commentators regard the decline in wheat production from its (alleged) height under Hoxha to be a set-back for the Albanian economy but the over-investment in fertilisers, etc. required by the cult of wheat as a sign of Albania's independence and modernity actually undermined the economy and restricted the diet. In any case, market-led wheat production had already recovered from 270,00 tons in 1992 to 426,000 tons in 1993. At the same time land released as unsuitable for wheat has helped to increase meat production dramatically. (After Hoxha confiscated all farm animals in 1981 meat production and consumption fell sharply.) Animal rights campaigners may decry the increase in meat consumption among Albanians but it is a sign of their increasing well-being.

The foreign exchange crisis has been mitigated by the US\$500 million per annum remittances from c.300,000 workers abroad which already reached that figure in 1993. Migrant working is not the only reason for the fall in unemployment.

The opposition likes to claim that the Albanian economy is hamstrung by corruption and mafia activity. This claim has been taken up by some journalists. However, the observer who has experience of other ex-Communist economies is pleasantly surprised by the lack of obtrusive and expensive mafia activity. Comparing Moscow's city centre with Tirana's for instance is striking. Whereas the Russian capital has a number of very expensive outlets orientated towards the handful of new rich and Westerners on expense accounts, Tirana's host of small restaurants, cafes and shops seem to cater to a much broader section of the Albanian population. Oddly for an allegedly deeply corrupt country, Albania's service sector offers its wares relatively cheaply. This suggests very strongly that mafia protection is either far from suffocating (as in many parts of the ex-Soviet Union) or that the Albanian mafias charge remarkably low rates for their "protection." Certainly, the host of small-scale activities on the streets (from shoe shine boys and car washers \_ much despised by some Scandanavian observers) to the kiosks and cafes could hardly survive in such profusion if a single all-encompassing racket controlled their activities. The Russian counter-example is very revealing: there the mafia and its political protectors prefer to skim the cream from a comparative handful of high-priced outlets rather than encourage a multitude of low-profit service activities which cannot afford high cost "protection."

It would be surprising if there was not some corruption in a country like Albania. After decades of the nomenklatura's hypocritical praise of equality before climbing into an official Volvo<sup>13</sup> and enjoying the fruits of special privileges, it is more surprising how many Albanians work honestly (waiters rarely expect a tip and often find the concept confusing) than that there are dishonest examples to be found.

The reorientation of Albania's economy is still in its early phase. Certain of its classic exports like chrome will continue to be valuable and viable for the foreseeable future. The reduction of hidden subsidies to unviable heavy industry which wasted raw materials, polluted the environment and discouraged rational investments is beginning to promote market-led approaches. Albania's antiquated textile industry may yet find a niche market for exports.

Even the country's chronic foreign trade deficit might go from its current stabilised condition (c. - US\$180) to something nearer balance if tourism could be encouraged to Albania's as yet unspoilt beaches. Of course, political instability as well as poor infrastructure discourages tourism and the opposition's post-election campaign in the Western media can only harm the prospects of developing Mediterranean type tourism in Europe's last remaining venue for it. Scare stories about "dictatorship", "mafia" and crime and disorder in general are a good way of damaging Albania's otherwise rosy

economic prospects. Certainly, they have not been so good for more than five decades.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> For the British role in assisting the Communists to power out of the chaos of the war years, see Appendix N<sup>o</sup> 1 below.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Jan Myrdal & Gun Kessle, *Albania Defiant* (London, 1978). Fifteen years ago, the ex-US diplomat-turned- anti-nuclear campaigner, George Kennan reported, "I asked a Norwegian student recently what it was that the radical students at the University of Oslo most admired \_ what did they look up to as an example of a hopeful civilisation? After considerable brooding and thought-taking, he said it was... Albania! Can one think of anything more miserable than the regime in Albania?" See edited by G.R. Urban, *Stalinism: Its Impact on Russia and the World* (Aldershot, 1982), 394.

<sup>3</sup> For an assessment of Hoxha's place in the modern history of Albanian nationalism, see Bernd J. Fischer, "Albanian Nationalism in the Twentieth Century" in edited by Peter F. Sugar, *East European Nationalism in the Twentieth Century* (Washington, D.C., 1995), 21-54.

<sup>4</sup> The current chairman of the Albanian Helsinki Human Rights Committee, Professor Arben Puto, has been accused of providing the "evidence" for Shehu's exposure as a traitor, see the comments of Jon Halliday in his edition of Hoxha's memoirs, *The Artful Albania* (London, 1986), 330, who notes that Professor Puto's researches in the Public Record Office would have given him the opportunity to see reports by SOE officers giving a favourable assessment of Shehu:

"In 1981 Tirana published the book *From the Annals of British Diplomacy* by Arben Puto... It shows that Puto got past the file containing this information about Shehu (this file was then open; moreover, there are other interesting items in the file). But that file is not quoted in Puto's book. It seems certain that the Albanian researcher found this information about Shehu \_ which was undoubtedly dynamite, given Hoxha's suspicious mind; that he brought photocopies back to Tirana, which were handed over to Hoxha; and that it was the discovery of this document which detonated Hoxha's suspicions..."

Professor Puto had good connections with the Albanian Communist leadership: two of his sisters were married to members of the Politburo \_ "like me they always desired change." See "Human Rights - the Most Serious Issue: Interview with Arben Puto" in *East European Reporter* (Spring/Summer, 1991), 115-116, where Professor Puto puts a different complexion on his research activity:

"I have been involved in several political scandals, including the Mehmet Shehu business, where despite family connections I was accused of hiding material I had gathered in archives in London in order to protect Shehu." Unlike the executed victims of the post-Shehu purge, Professor Puto "was close to being expelled" from the Party, "But I was luckier..." Whether any other Albanian researcher or informant had access to the Public Record Office SOE files remains unclear.

<sup>5</sup> Radio Tirana (12 December, 1989)

<sup>6</sup> See Anthony Daniels, *The Wilder Shores of Marx*, 37.]

<sup>7</sup> See e.g. David Binder in the *New York Times* (14 & 15 May, 1990)

<sup>8</sup> See *East European Reporter* (Spring/Summer, 1991)

<sup>9</sup> See *East European Reporter* (November/December, 1992)

<sup>10</sup> See the Vienna-based International Helsinki Federation's Christina von Kohl's contretemps with President Berisha in *East European Reporter* (November/December, 1992).

<sup>11</sup> For the polls, see EIU, *Albania* (1st Quarter, 1996), 33-35.

<sup>12</sup> See the section on the media in the election campaign below. For instance, the Democratic Party's newspaper, *Rilindja Demokratike* (7 November, 1995) reported graphically on the "celebrations" of the Russian revolution inside Socialist Party headquarters: "The leaders... gathered in Pellumbi's office in

front of Marx's bust on his desk... It is known for sure that they cheered when a group of nostalgic people with Stalin's bust in their hands appeared on TV [from Moscow]... One can expect anything from those who only a few months ago considered the Sigurimi heroes..." Quoted in BBC/SWB, Balkans EE/2461 B/1, 1 (15 November, 1995). Zeri i Popullit (30 May, 1996) reported opposition leaders claims that the Albanian police were worse behaved today and more numerous [!] than under Hoxha." Claims were made that it was just like the Gestapo which betrayed a lack of sense of proportion. A British journalist complained at a post-election seminar that President Berisha's language was "harsh... sharp and still the language of anti-Communism" whereas the Socialist Party was "in the midst of reform... at least there is a party caught up in a process of reform and trying to put forward an alternative picture..."

<sup>13</sup> See Philip Ward, *Albania: A Travel Guide* (Cambridge, 1983), 131: "After the lecture, with polite questions parried neatly by the experienced lawyer, we took lunch with him in the Hotel Tirana, and he again waxed eloquent about the good life in Albania, based on the guaranteed minimum of food, shelter and public security. After an excellent meal, he was driven away in his government Volvo. The next car up was a Mercedes." Contrary to those Western observers distressed by the appearance of low-wage jobs like car cleaners on the streets of Tirana, social equality was not a feature of Communist Albania. Now there are many more Mercedes in private hands than in the government car pool. There also of course scores of thousands of other private cars.

<sup>14</sup> For the current economic figures and estimates, see Kevin Done & Anthony Robinson, "EBRD lauds nations on fast track to growth" in *The Financial Times* (2 November, 1995); and the EIU's Country Report, Albania (1st quarter, 1996).

### **THE PARTIES IN THE PRE-ELECTION PERIOD**

13 parties contested the elections covering a spectrum from left to right. Two rightist parties descended from pre- Communist counterparts: the Republicans from the Balli Kombatar and Legality from the Monarchists (also known as Zogists). Both Ballists and Zogists fought the Partisans in the Civil War.

Other parties calling themselves centrist were more problematic. The Human Rights Party is supported predominantly by the Greek minority. Although it is in opposition and allied with the Socialists in leaving the elections there were splits in its ranks over the decision. Similarly, The Democratic Alliance Party (which joined the Social Democrats in what was known as the 'Centre Pole') while supposedly centre-right, was virtually in coalition with the Socialists. The latter withdrew 10 of their candidates in favour of DA and Social Democrats in zones which they were thought to have had a chance of winning.

A debate bubbled under the surface \_ although one would not have thought so judging by Western newspaper reports<sup>1</sup> \_ about the lack of reform in the Socialist Party and the need for a proper Western-style Social Democratic Party. For example, PSSh candidate Bashkim Zeneli surmised that he was prevented from standing as a candidate for the party because of his objections to the inclusion of Marx in the party programme. Teodor Laco, chairman of the Social Democratic Union Party lamented what he called the diversion of the Albanian Social Democratic Party from Western models.

Some of the leading personalities in the PSSh have long pedigrees: Servet Pellumbi the party's vice-chairman was for many years a department head in the Central Committee of the Albanian Communist Party; Secretary-General Gramoz Ruci was party boss of the Tepelena district and later Minister of the Interior in the two Nano governments. As such he was responsible for the killing and wounding of demonstrators in Shkoder during protests after the elections of 1991; Vice- Chairman Namik Dokle was editor of the trade union paper Puna and editor of Zeri i Popullit for several months in 1991.

Interestingly on 9th June, imprisoned Socialist Party leader, Fatos Nano, criticized the party's decision to pull out of the elections [Zeri i Popullit] and Berisha himself has said that he would welcome the development of a proper, leftist opposition. Perhaps there will be a 'Blairizing' of the Albanian Socialist Party for, despite the best efforts of the OSCE/ODIHR, their tactics in this election have had mixed results.

The DP has also had its internal difficulties although none as damaging as the defections of Pashko and others in summer, 1992. In April several leading members were dropped from the ruling council.

### **Socialist Party: Pre-election**

Three members of our group visited Socialist Party headquarters on the eve of the election and talked to Namik Dokle and Etem Ruka. Within a few minutes the meeting was joined by Gramoz Pashko of the Democratic Union. Pashko was in an excitable state saying that he was "feeling good" until a few minutes previously because "they" had thought people were going to vote for the Socialists but now he was receiving evidence that the government was preparing a coup d'état. There would, he predicted, be "massive unrest" on polling day.

It is somewhat strange that Mr. Pashko should have been feeling good about people voting Socialist as his party is theoretically centrist and had its own election agenda. In fact Mr. Pashko later talked of himself as "coming from the right" (in one newspaper report he talked of having "adored" Margaret Thatcher!). He also claimed that Socialist Party members had not received authorization to enter polling stations and that party activists had been beaten up. Mr. Ruka predicted that Socialist Party representatives would not be allowed in polling stations. Protocols would be destroyed and replaced by ones already completed by the Democratic Party.

After this we were ferried in a car to Tirana zone 55 where it was alleged the commission chairman and secretary were preventing a Democratic Union commission member from taking part in the process of collating ballot papers for the following day. This incident had been presented to us as a flagrant abuse of the electoral process and one that threatened seriously to disrupt polling day.

The secretary of the Commission produced the relevant passage of the election law which, he claimed, did not permit all commission members to take part in proceedings at this stage. The incident seemed of little significance and after seeking clarification from all parties we left the building.

It is worth pointing out that the small group of people who had gathered outside seemed remarkably unperturbed by this altercation \_ despite predictions of "civil unrest". During our visit to the Socialist Party offices we were approached for comments by a reporter from the Albanian section of the German radio station, Deutsche Welle. He also accompanied us to the Zone 55's headquarters. This reporter was keen for us to comment on our views of the election, something observers are prevented from doing until voting is over. We never saw this reporter on our two visits to the Democratic Party.

### **Screening Law**

Amendments were made to the Election Law in February 1996 which required candidates to be "vetted" under the provisions of the laws "On Genocide and Crimes Against Humanity" and "On the Control of the Figure of Officials" passed in 1995.

These laws prevent Communist era government and high party officials from being election candidates and propose a commission for the purpose of vetting. It was suggested that over 100,000

people would be affected by the law although by 26th May only 139 people were prevented from standing.

Critics both domestic and foreign have made the following criticisms of this law: as 6 out of the commission's members are government appointees it will be seen by many as a partisan body; the commission has a semi-judicial character in contravention of Albanian law which bans the setting up of special courts; meetings of the commission are held in private; documents, files used as evidence in the commission's deliberations may have been tampered with; commission decisions can be overridden; the time-scale for the screening was too short.

## COMMENTS

Criticism of this law was bound to be harsh bearing in mind the hostile response from human rights groups to the adoption of vetting procedures against former Communist officials in the past 6 years. The only countries to legislate on the matter were Germany and the Czech Republic which passed a Lustration Law in 1991. Lustration from the Czech word 'lustrace' ("to throw light on") became the synonym for all such vetting procedures.

Dire predictions were made (e.g. by Jeri Laber of Helsinki Watch) of a witch-hunt and that innocent people would be dismissed from their jobs. However, to date, fewer than 200 people have lost their jobs in the Czech Republic. Arguments like the ones above were used in the Czech case, e.g. that documents would be tampered with and decisions taken by biased, government appointed commissions of enquiry. The subject has lost any resonance in the Czech Republic where, anyway, the purge was hardly thorough-going: the Communist Party is still so-named; it is legal and in possession of many of its assets.

With its diabolical history of camps, torture and repression in fact it is surprising that Albania has taken so long to pass its own legislation on the subject. For there was no perestroika and glasnost in Albania and the population passed from a form of pure Communism to freedom, literally, overnight. Enormous resentment remains between the victim and his or her alleged persecutor that goes a long way to explain much of the tension on the ground that dogged the Albanian election campaign and its aftermath.

In answering some of these criticisms: it is right that hearings should be private as this protects the names of those found not to have breached the laws' provisions; the commission is no more like a special court than any institutional governing body that recommends the dismissal or expulsion of members \_ and appeal procedures are in place; it would be impossible in country like Albania to find independent figures, people without any "past", to sit on such a body.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> See e.g. Christopher Lockwood's article in The Daily Telegraph (3 June, 1996) and the comments of a journalist at a British university seminar who seemed to take for granted that the process of transformation had been completed.

## THE ELECTION

The Group split up into two observer groups for election day. Johnathan Sunley and Dr. Daniels went south to Gjirokastër visiting polling stations in the region and on the journey back to Tirana. Christine Stone, Mark Almond and Dr. Malcolm travelled north to Shkodër observing voting there as well as in towns and villages on their journey. In all, they visited over 20 polling stations. The count was observed in Zone 55 N<sup>o</sup> 21 and N<sup>o</sup> 22 Tirana later that night.<sup>1</sup>

### General impression of polling stations

Voting proceeded calmly throughout the day. Older peasant women had dressed up for the occasion as often happens in Eastern European elections. Voters seemed to come from all age groups \_ this was not an election boycotted by the young as some elections have been, for instance in Russia in 1993, where cynicism and apathy towards the democratic process were evident.

In many places the polling rooms were too small and in others grossly inadequate \_ in one village the commission sat under a gaping ceiling from which fell 'snow flakes' of old asbestos. Most polling stations had only one polling booth. In one station (Milot) the booth was not visible to the commission being in an adjoining room. Inevitably, in some places, queues built up outside the voting room but they seemed to be, on the whole, good-natured. Either one or two policemen supervised entry into the voting room as required to prevent overcrowding.

We saw no evidence of harassment or intimidation. This was particularly interesting in Prezë a village in a rural constituency (N<sup>o</sup> 42) on the outskirts of Tirana. Its sitting MP, the Democratic Alliance candidate Gramoz Pashko had claimed the previous evening that the situation in Prezë was explosive and that civic disorder could break out due to people's distrust of the electoral process. To put it mildly, this seemed to be an exaggeration. On being questioned neither commission members, party observers or members of the public seemed aware that their community was on the verge of civil war.

### Voting system

The present Electoral Law was passed in February 1992. It was later amended (in particular, by the Law on Genocide) and complemented by various instructions issued by the CEC .

140 MPs were to be elected \_ 115 directly by the majority system the other 25 proportionally from party lists. A candidate for a majority seat had to gain over 50% of the vote; a party list had to surmount a 4% threshold to gain representation in parliament. 13 parties and over 1000 candidates were taking part in the elections.

Although President Berisha could not simultaneously sit as a deputy and hold the presidency \_ he faces a presidential election next year \_ his name was added to the DP list in an "honourary capacity". This was probably not a very sensible idea especially when accusations of autocratic behavior are rife: it merely provides an unnecessary 'hostage to fortune'. However, it was not unconstitutional.

The zoning system in the country has been changed to give a greater number of seats to the more heavily-populated urban areas. Before that a predominant number of seats were in rural areas. The new zones range from circa 15,000-25,000. The Democratic Party was criticized for manipulating the zones to its own advantage by the OSCE/ODIHR but the figures they used were those for zones in existence during the 1992 campaign and there has been a continuous influx of people into urban areas since then.

## **The Campaign**

Complaints of harassment were made during the campaign. Meetings were allegedly interrupted, sometimes violently. The majority of complaints came from the Socialist Party.

For example, a meeting in Durrës attended by the Socialist Party deputy leader Servet Pellumbi was marred by violence – a member of Mr. Pellumbi's staff was reportedly wounded with a screwdriver. The fact that Mr. Pellumbi's brother had been the security chief of Durrës for ten years might offer some explanation as to why tempers were running high.<sup>2</sup>

## **Rallies**

OSCE monitors present in the pre-election period reported that Democratic Party rallies were more lavish affairs than those of the Socialists. This is probably true but does not necessarily reflect an unfair advantage enjoyed by the ruling party in any election. Allegations were also made that DP supporters travelled around in buses to frustrate Socialist Party activities. Members of the Group attended rallies given by both DP and Socialist Party. Both seemed to go off peacefully – our observers said there was no hindrance from the police at the Socialist Party rally on 23rd May at the Ali Demi stadium in Tirana.

Much was made by the OSCE/ODIHR of a planned Socialist Party meeting blocked by a crowd of "rowdies" (in the words of the German briefer) near Vlore. It was alleged that Socialist supporters were being beaten by DP members. By chance, we met an Englishman who had come upon this meeting during his journey across Albania and who gave a different account. He described a large and apparently local crowd of DP supporters objecting to a motor convoy carrying Socialist speakers to the town. He said he saw no evidence of violence.

## **Posters**

There were many posters attached to public buildings around the country, overwhelmingly for the Democratic Party. Some posters for individual opposition party candidates had also been put up. Socialist Party posters were only visible inside and outside the party's headquarters in Tirana and regional offices. OSCE delegates stated that the Socialists had been hindered from putting up posters in the first place. However, given the expense of colour printing the posters which were visible, it is hard to believe that they had paid for such a small print run, i.e. only to decorate their party offices. There was no sign of their posters having been put up and defaced or pulled down. Even if the DP's supporters defaced them or harassed anyone trying to put them up, it is strange that no evidence of a poster campaign existed. It could be that the Socialist Party and its allies made no attempt to put up posters in public places in the first place. It would then be in a position to point to government harassment and censorship as the reason for their absence.

None of the Democratic Party posters we saw featured the President. In fact, there were few visible signs of Berisha in the capital, Tirana – members of this group spotted one photograph in the back of a small photographic studio in the centre of town. Considering the fact that the President has been labelled a 'Diktator' one would expect to see evidence of the 'cult of personality' – photographs of other strong presidents like Gaidar Aliev and Eduard Shevardnadze were ubiquitous during respective parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan and Georgia.

## The media

There is a wide variety of newspapers and magazines available in Albania not only in Tirana but in other provincial towns. Television is state run but there is an abundance of satellite dishes in the country and most people have access to Greek and Italian TV as well as the domestic channel. The rules entitled the parties to equal television time (20 minutes for each party) but 20 minutes in toto for the Democratic Party. News programmes carried long, laudatory reports of the Democratic Party's campaign rallies and the President's speeches. It would be accurate to say that Albanian television was biased in its coverage of the elections. Its coverage resembled the deferential approach of French television to the early presidents of the Fifth Republic, or the respectful treatment accorded by the BBC to Winston Churchill or Anthony Eden in the 1950s in Britain.

However, the results of biased election coverage of elections are not necessarily beneficial to the governing party. It was accepted that the glossy television campaign mounted by the governing Russia's Choice Party in the 1993 Russian elections were counter-productive putting voters off the party. Members of the Albanian Democratic Party themselves admitted that saturation television coverage of the Constitutional referendum (in favour) in 1994 alienated many voters and probably contributed to the no vote. It is probably true to say that the state media's approach is inappropriate and should be changed in the future.

Styles of presentation are a matter of taste and the sound-bite generations of the West tend to become restive when confronted by more prolix politicians. The President himself gave a long-winded speech at his first post-election press conference reminiscent of party meetings of the past. Western journalists find this alien and tend to associate it with dictatorial behavior \_ if only because it delays their own questions.

Albania's newspapers, on the other hand, presented a much wider variety of opinion than radio or television. The two newspapers with the largest circulations the independent *Koha Jone* and the Socialist paper *Zeri i Popullit* were remorselessly critical of the government and the election campaign. *Zeri's* back English-language page, no doubt, helped to fuel anti-government sentiment among visiting foreigners both journalists and observers. Another English language publication, the *Albanian Daily News* (200 lek = US\$2) was available in leading hotels. This was also hostile to the governing party. It has been a cornerstone of the opposition approach to appeal to Western opinion for support a tactic that seems to have worked remarkably well, if not with the local population.

If the Albanian broadcast media is tame and deferential, the printed press has often carried fierce and even threatening criticisms of the President. Sometimes these have crossed the bounds of normal free speech. For instance, in November, 1995,

Ylli Polovina, a journalist on the daily *Populli Po*<sup>3</sup> seemed to suggest or even threaten that Albania might witness a similar car-bomb assassination attempt on its President to that on Macedonia's Kiro Gligorov. This resulted in a fine of US\$300 for "inciting terrorism". At the very least it was provocative and tasteless.

Albania suffered a brief wave of terrorism in early, 1996, and it was not entirely surprising that Ylli Polovina was also detained after a car bomb went off in Tirana killing 4 people in late February, 1996. The government accused the ex-Sigurimi of committing the crime. Police raided offices of the vehemently oppositionist, *Koha Jone*, briefly detaining 6 employees. It also impounded the paper's vehicles \_ earlier it had impounded 4 cars during an investigation of *Koha Jone's* alleged links to the Serbian secret service. According to its publisher, Nikolle Lesi, *Koha Jone* could only be saved by scrapping its other publications, including a sports title. Since it received aid from Western NGOs and patrons and so could employ 60 personnel as well as having the advantage of an early arrival on the newsstands, a sympathetic commentator could remark, "In January, state-owned media began a campaign to discredit the independent daily, *Koha Jone* and the Socialist daily *Zeri i Popullit*, accusing

them of being financed by the Serbian secret police."<sup>4</sup>

Whatever the influence of TV and radio, the circulations of newsprint are roughly as follows:

4 dailies	Zeri i Popullit 25,000
	Koha Jone 25,000
	Gazetta Shqiptare 16,000 (owned by Italian Gazzetta del Mezzogiorno)
	Rilindja Demokratike 8,000 (down from 30,000).

In the fiercely partisan atmosphere of the Albanian press, some Albanian journalists seem to have convinced themselves that the Socialist Party would win the elections. At a meeting with Armand Shkullaku and Andi Bushoti of Koha Jone's editorial staff on the 24th May an opposition victory was predicted even though this contradicted a widely respected Western opinion poll (IRI) taken earlier in the campaign. This over-confidence in their own prospects may account for the failure of the Socialist Party to cry foul at an earlier stage \_ something they might have felt entitled to do if the election campaign and preparations for the vote were as irregular as they subsequently claimed. (British observers familiar with the journalistic scene in their own country in the 1980s could not avoid the comparison with the inability of left-wing journalists then to contemplate, let alone anticipate, Mrs Thatcher's stunning victories at the polls in 1983 and 1987.)

### **Registration of voters**

Registration of voters is covered by Article 26 of the Electoral Law. People are entitled to vote if they have reached 18 years of age. The difficulty for the registration process was always going to be the large numbers of migrant workers especially those working in nearby Greece who would still be entitled to vote \_ at least as many as 200,00 people.

Registration should have been completed 30 days before polling day but, it was claimed by the Socialists, the lists were only made public a week before the elections. In fact, the law made it possible for names to be added to the list up to 24 hours before polling began to accommodate those coming back from abroad.

The process of registration was undertaken by local councils not by the local or zonal electoral commissions. The OSCE/ODIHR gave the impression that the latter was the case (although they have corrected this in their final report). As the Socialist Party has dominated local councils since the local elections of 1992 their representatives bear responsibility for much of the voter registration including, presumably, the time-scale in which the registers were completed. Criticism of the registers was voiced in the pre- election period by a German judge (Wolfgang Stoppel)<sup>5</sup> who claimed that people's names had been entered twice on the register and that many registers contained 'dead souls'.

It would be interesting to know what evidence he had for this assertion. Few Westerners speak Albanian and must rely on interpreters. While accepting that bogus registration is a possibility the difficulties of establishing the fact without local knowledge should be borne in mind. No-one (i.e. Commission members, party observers or voters) suggested to any BHHRG observer that the registers were fundamentally inaccurate or had been tampered with. Although Dr. Malcolm, an Albanian speaker, found that extra names had been added to the register since 26th May (see later report on second round) he could not be sure that it had been done illegally.

Although some registers were hand-written reflecting the poor level of technical equipment in some areas, this does not necessarily mean they are adulterated \_ many such registers are the norm in the former Soviet republics too yet they have attracted little comment from international observers in the

past.

The real problem for the compilation of registers both quickly and accurately was the large number of people working abroad who were entitled to return and vote in the country along with internal migration within Albania. It would be very difficult to accommodate this state of affairs in the best run election. If Albania continues to make economic progress fewer people should seek work abroad; the problem these migrants cause in compiling voting registers and issuing certificates to those failing to register would then disappear.

However, most countries make provisions for citizens who reside abroad. In its recent election the fact that the Czech Republic did not permit such people to vote attracted much criticism.<sup>6</sup> It would be irrational to impose such a criterion on other countries. At least the Albanians did not resort to the dubious practice followed in Croatia, the Baltic States and Russia where emigrés living abroad as citizens of second countries were allowed votes in the domestic poll.

### **Voter Identification**

Because of the fluid nature of a large part of the voting population provision was made for those not on the register to vote. As is often the case the handling of these additional voters was one of the least satisfactory aspects of the elections. Article 65 of the Electoral Law makes provisions for this eventuality. It states that a special voting certificate will be issued for those without proper identification (a military card for soldiers and a passport for those coming from abroad). This obviously opens the door to abuse.

Observers from this group found an inconsistent interpretation of this section of the law in the polling stations they visited. Some commission chairman said they made no such provisions, others did. In one area (Milot) we suspected abuse of the system. Although we were told at Zone 21 N<sup>o</sup> 16 that only 40 people had used these certificates to vote a pile of them on a table behind the Commission seemed to indicate many more than 40 (the number given by officials). On the whole up to 10 people per polling station made use of the facility.

The use of certificates was always going to be more widespread in the south where migrant workers from Greece tended to live. Our observers found a station in Gjirokastër where 50 extra people voted but they were told of a place where there were 470 extra voters. They did note, however, that IDs or passports were always stamped when people voted.

### **Ballot papers**

The ballot paper was a single sheet in two parts. On the left side appeared the names of individual candidates for the district denoted by their party names and symbols on the right the names and symbols of the parties for the proportional part of the list. Voters had to cross out the names and parties they did not want leaving the one voter's choice. No one seemed to find this system unsatisfactory or unnecessarily complicated and we saw no evidence of voters seeking advice on completing the ballot from members of the Commission as often happens in other ex-Communist countries. Occasionally elderly people were helped by relatives. (Although the OSCE/ODIHR seemed to accept that illiteracy was impossible in Albania – Enver Hoxha had officially "liquidated" it like so much else – among the old poor levels of literacy are perfectly understandable.) It is somewhat wry to see the OSCE/ODIHR criticizing this method of voting which is widespread in the ex-Soviet Union and rarely (if ever) commented upon by their counterparts there or other observers. It seems to have been generally accepted that whatever the shortcomings of its coverage of the campaign voter education on television had been successful.

Detailed provision was made for spoilt ballots and the handing out of replacements. At the counts very few spoilt ballots appeared suggesting that voters (in central Tirana) generally understood the system well.

Allegations were made by Socialist Party representatives that commission members were not being allowed to check ballot papers on presenting themselves at polling stations on the eve of the elections. Three members of the group were taken to Tirana Zone 55 headquarters to meet the members in question. They questioned the commission secretary in the presence of the chairman about these allegations. He produced a copy of the law which does not allow all commission members at this stage to handle ballot papers. (It was because of these complaints that our observers returned to watch the count at two polling stations in Zone 55.)

The law (Article 67) allowed polling stations to have 10% extra ballot papers. Some chairmen said they had more than this others less and yet others the same amount as voters on their register. Unlike OSCE/ODIHR, BHHRG members saw no evidence of ballot stuffing during voting day or at the count. This applied to the second and third rounds as well. As the results tallied with previous opinion polls this cannot have been as widespread as suggested. Presumably if ballot stuffing had been so widespread the ruling party would have achieved more than 64% of the poll.

### **Electoral Commissions**

Articles 35-45 of the Electoral Law cover the duties of the Central, Zonal and Precinct electoral commissions. The CEC was established in April when the date for the election was fixed. It was composed of members chosen by the President of Albania on advice from the Council of Ministers (9) and opposition parties (8). Zonal Commission chairmen are appointed by the CEC; the secretary and non-party person determined by the local prefect. At local level the precinct chairman is appointed by the Zonal chairman; the secretary and deputy by the local prefect. Allegations were made that all these appointments were basically in the hands of the President and that many prefects (Presidential appointments) were standing as DP candidates. In fact, only two prefects stood in the elections and their constituencies were far from their prefectures. Representatives of political parties fielding candidates are allowed representation at each level.

The CEC was to be appointed no later than 45 days (zone commissions, 30 and precinct commissions 25 days) before election day. It was suggested that the CEC should be a permanent body. However, it is difficult to imagine a future opposition government accepting the previous administration's CEC especially if its composition was as political as suggested. The OSCE/ODIHR report also criticized the short time frame allowed for the electoral process: in the United Kingdom and other European countries this is often as little as 3 weeks. A long-drawn out campaign may achieve little in terms of electoral debate while the population becomes bored and alienated from the process.

In polling stations the chairman and secretary dealt with the register and the handing out of ballot papers while the other members of the Commission sat on chairs around the room. Normally, all Commission members supervise part of the register and hand out ballot papers between them, probably a preferable system. Commission members with little to do can become bored and inattentive and, therefore, unlikely to spot procedural irregularities or abuse. A small DP poster was displayed illegally on the outside of a polling station in Mammuras. The Socialist Party commission member, however, had not noticed it and seemed unperturbed when we pointed it out to him. This was the only occasion when we saw posters or other party materials inside or on the walls outside a polling station.

We gave all the electoral commissions we visited the opportunity to comment on the election campaign and voice any concerns they might have. Often, in the past, we have found Commission chairmen keen to 'muscle in' on these private chats but none of them seemed concerned by our

presence or method of questioning in the polling stations we visited. In many places we were struck by the seeming harmony between commission members \_ from pre-election briefings and newspaper articles we would have expected antagonisms to be evident.

In Lazarat, south of Gjirokastër Mr. Sunley and Dr. Daniels came upon the kind of tense situation we had, frankly, expected to see more of in Albania. The Socialist member complained of constantly being voted down by other members of the commission. Outside the polling station some elderly Bektashi Muslims, complained that the Socialist observer had taken part in the destruction of their tekke (the religious building unique to the order) in 1967. They had now reconstructed the building.

In some places (but by no means all) Commission members sat under a sign designating their party affiliation. This provoked intense criticism from the OSCE/ODIHR on the grounds that it was akin to propaganda. Article 48 of the Election Law states that "members of election commissions and observers cannot display any distinguishing sign or symbol of a party". None of the Commission members we saw wore badges or displayed signs that could be deemed propaganda. However, it is probably the case that this practice is, strictly speaking, in contravention of the letter if not the spirit of the law. (In one polling station, a DP observer was using a ballpoint with a DP logo on it to make notes. This is in breach of the electoral law, but the other observers did not complain about it even when it became obvious that a British observer had noted the fact.)

The designation of each observer's affiliation may not have been a bad thing. It could be argued that tensions were so high and rumours of foul practice so rife that voters could have gained some confidence by seeing that their party was represented on the Commission. We saw no signs of agitation from Commission members and the practice of identifying party members was neither widespread enough nor did it interfere with voters freedom of choice to deserve the overall condemnation passed by the OSCE.

Critics like US Helsinki Watch complained that precinct chairmen and secretaries made all the decisions, thus by-passing the other Commission members.<sup>7</sup> However, we have never observed an election where all the commission members are consulted during polling day on every matter \_ the chairman settles most disputes that arise but in the public room so anyone can take an interest if they wish or the discussion becomes heated enough to warrant involvement, or if the voter asks them to. It would be logistically impossible for endless deliberations to take place as voting proceeded.

The authority of these chairman over their fellow commission members seems to have been exaggerated. If the commission chairmen and their deputies were so powerful (backed up by a terrifying police presence) how is that opposition members managed to leave polling stations later in the day without hindrance?

### **Domestic observers**

A set of regulations was added to the Electoral Law regulating the deployment of foreign and domestic observers in the polling stations. The American National Democratic Institute helped train local Albanian observers from the Society for Democratic Culture as they had successfully done in Armenia and Georgia last year.

The OSCE/ODIHR criticized the various authorities (zonal and precinct) for preventing the participation of domestic observers. In most of the polling stations we visited there were several domestic observers. In some others disputes had arisen about the propriety of their registration documents. In one station (Zejman) the chairman told us that the local zone committee had not registered any domestic observers, a decision with which he did not agree. It may be the case that observers were excluded improperly \_ all sorts of local as well as personal animosities could have

contributed to this. But we cannot say that the absence of domestic observers was widespread enough to be worthy of serious criticism.

Those domestic observers with whom we spoke voiced various criticisms \_ particularly about the omnipresence of the ruling party on television. In one place (Milot) the observers said they were kept too far from the table where the register and ballot papers were laid out. But, on the whole they seemed to be satisfied (including Socialist Party representatives). No one appeared to be afraid to talk; neither police nor commission chairmen attempted to listen in to our conversations. Many opposition observers expressed satisfaction with how the voting was proceeding in their polling station.

### **Opinion Polls**

Various opinion polls were taken in the months leading up to election day. Without exception, they put the DP in the lead. More interestingly, their conclusions about the margin of victory for the DP were remarkably accurate making some mockery of the observers' claims that there had been massive ballot stuffing. IRI (International Republican Institute) conducted a poll in the Spring before campaigning began and detailed survey on election day itself. Both these polls predicted a DP victory. The latter found that 62% approved of the President and 71% were satisfied with the development of democracy. It predicted that the DP would win 56% of the vote. In fact, the party won 68% which is not outside the margin of error bearing in mind that the Socialists pulled out of the elections before polls closed.

### **Police presence**

One of the major allegations made about the conduct of the Albanian elections was the violent and unauthorized behavior of the police and armed personnel. In their preliminary report OSCE observers stated that the presence of armed individuals and unidentified persons inside polling stations had an intimidating effect on voters and polling commission officials. It was also stated that the police had placed road-blocks all over the country on polling day thus hindering people's free passage.

While it is impossible to verify or deny other people's experiences it is rather bizarre if such intimidation was as widespread as stated since members of our Group saw nothing of it. There were one or two policemen in the polling stations but during our visits their duties seemed almost exclusively devoted to controlling queues waiting to enter the building. Policemen were armed but \_ apart from Britain and Ireland \_ all European police forces wear sidearms routinely. In most polling stations we visited the only people in the voting room were the commission members and identifiable observers from the parties along with the people voting at the time.

However, in Milot, Zone 21 N<sup>O</sup> 16 there were a number of men strolling in and out of the polling station. We have already identified this place as unsatisfactory for the suspected abuse of voting certificates. In Zejmen (Zone 18, N<sup>O</sup> 21) a man approached the observers and told them that there were a number of the armed men in the voting room and that the place was crawling with police. This turned out not to be the case when we visited the polling station and when challenged later he claimed that such people 'came and went'. He also added that he had seen a policeman helping his elderly parents to vote. Such alleged violations of the rules would not have troubled international election observers in the past.

It might be added that all BHRG observers in Albania have had experience in monitoring elections in the former Soviet Union. In several places, e.g. Armenia, Georgia, Azerbaijan they have been aware of the presence of informers/plain clothes policemen in polling stations. Even in the Caucasus where

widespread human rights abuses and lack of openness are widely acknowledged some people will still manage to alert our observers if there are, for instance, unauthorized people taking part in the electoral process, particularly police – often by approaching them outside the polling station on the way back to their cars, though this has not been acknowledged in ODIHR reports. Apart from the example mentioned no one made such allegations to us in Albania: neither Commission members, observers or voters. All were given the opportunity to talk privately if they so wished.

As for ubiquitous police roadblocks etc., again we encountered no such thing. Albania has few main thoroughfares and our two groups used the major roads going north and south in the country. It would have been very difficult, in fact, for people including observers to travel anywhere on 26th May if traffic was being constantly stopped. The presence of peasants, carts and animals on the roads as well as numerous vehicles would have snarled the country up very quickly.

### **The Count**

Observed at Tirana Zone 55, polling stations 20 and 21. This zone was chosen because on the eve of the election Socialist Party and Democratic Alliance representatives had predicted widespread improprieties in its polling stations.

At c. 6.00 pm the major opposition parties (the Socialist Party, Agrarians, Democratic Union, Human Rights) pulled out of the election on the grounds of widespread electoral fraud. Instructions from their respective party headquarters ordered commission members to leave their polling stations forthwith. While many obliged without asking any further questions others were angry and even went as far as writing on the voters' register that they endorsed the conduct of the proceedings up to their departure.<sup>8</sup> Mr Sunley and Dr. Daniels stopped at Dushku outside Lushnje c. 6.30 p.m. and found that commission members Ali Qamo (SP) and Vladimir Liko (Agrarians) had signed a declaration before leaving the polling station stating that they had been ordered by their parties to leave and that they had seen no incidents or irregularities up to their departure. The DP later said that 40% of opposition commission members had signed similar endorsements. This is probably an exaggeration but nevertheless our observer in the third round of voting found many Socialist supporters critical of the decision to abandon the elections.

Some refused to go – a member of the Human Rights Party continued with her duties in Zone 55 No 20. Some commission members from that Party in other parts of the country also stayed. Members of the Commissions in both No. 20 and 21 voiced sadness at their colleagues departure as they had worked together closely for most of the day.

Another surprise development was the government's decision to replace the voting protocols all over the country. We learned about this in the late afternoon of 26th May. The government had intercepted a car belonging to the Socialist Party allegedly containing a large number of completed protocols (4700). This fraud, discovered late the previous evening led to the decision to replace the original documents. The President ordered polling stations to remain open for a further 2 hours for the new protocols to be delivered. (The OSCE/ODIHR criticized this decision as a breach of the Electoral Law whereas it was taken, legitimately, according to the provisions of another law allowing presidential decrees to verify documents, etc.).

The two counts proceeded according to the provisions of the law (Articles 73 and 74). Ballot papers were taken from the box and shown to all the Commission members present. Those that gave rise to doubt were put in a separate pile and discussed and voted on later. We saw no evidence of ballot stuffing or any attempts to add ballot papers to the 'wrong' pile. In fact, a tabulation of the votes taken at these stations reflected the most accurate opinion polls for the whole country.

We heard stories, including from our interpreter, that people had heard about how some commissions had indulged in ballot stuffing after their colleagues left. This may have taken place \_ and certainly may be believed by some people \_ but the opposition must take some blame for leaving early and polarising attitudes which might have encouraged such falsification.

The opposition had also complained about the government's failure to provide a sufficient number of protocols for signing by each commission member, despite the Electoral Law making no provision for this: see Instruction 6 in support of Article 88, Election Law , Article 12: "The final report will be signed by the Chairman and the Secretary of the Polling Station. Each member of the local polling station commission has the right to sign the final report. Absence of these signatures does not make the final report invalid". There is no obligation on the authorities to provide protocols for each commission member but they have the right to sign the final report. They also had the right to make their own copies of the tabulation of results which other members could sign to authenticate them. (At the OSCE/ODIHR post-election debriefing, it became apparent that some ODIHR observers were unfamiliar with the Albanian term for the protocol of election results \_ the "procès-verbal" \_ which was strange because in our experience it was one of the most commonly used terms encountered in discussions inside polling stations and even ignorance of the Albanian language could not disguise its French origins.)

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> For the localities/polling stations visited, see Appendix 2 below.
- <sup>2</sup> See BBC/SWB, Balkans EE/2621 B/2 (25 May, 1996)
- <sup>3</sup> According to Transition ( ) the paper's "political stance is similar to that of the opposition Socialist Party, another target of government harassment".
- <sup>4</sup> The Prague-based Transition prefers Reuters claims that the bomb was linked to the Italian mafia. See "Albania: Round Up the Usual Suspects" in Transition (5 April, 1996), 2-3. For Koha Jone's case, see "Independent Albanian Daily Weathering a Storm" in Transition (5 April, 1996), 62.
- <sup>5</sup> For Stoppel, see OMRI Daily Digest
- <sup>6</sup> See "Election Law unfair to Czech citizens unable to vote here" in Prague Post (5-11 June, 1996).
- <sup>7</sup> See Helsinki Watch Report on the 1996 elections, 7.
- <sup>8</sup> According to the newspaper, Tribuna Demokratike (31 May, 1996), 40% of opposition members of electoral commissions said proceedings were "free and fair" until the withdrawal of the opposition commission members and observers. Quoted from ATA news agency in BBC/SWB, Balkans EE/2628 B/7 (3 June, 1996).

## **POST-ELECTION EVENTS**

The 24 hours after the election were peaceful apart from the noisy celebrations of Democratic Party supporters.<sup>1</sup> The Socialist Party had suffered a serious set-back in the eyes of many Albanians even if representatives of the international community regarded it as the victim of the ruling party's fraud and violence.

On the morning of Tuesday 28th May about 1000 members of the Socialist Party attempted to hold a demonstration at the entrance of the Tirana International Hotel in the capital's Skanderbeg Square. Large numbers of police, including riot formations, patrolled the square and prevented the demonstrators from assembling. In the melée several people were beaten and leading opposition politicians including Gramoz Pashko arrested and held in custody for several hours. Dr. Daniels was also arrested as he attempted to photograph the demonstration; he was hit several times by police batons and taken with Pashko et al. into custody.

Many foreign observers still in the Tirana International waiting for flights that departed in the afternoon witnessed the breaking up of the demonstration from the terrace bar. It was the final confirmation, if they needed it, that Albanian democracy was severely flawed.

While deploring the violence used to disperse peaceful, public gatherings in any functioning democracy perhaps the following points should be made about the events of 28th May:

1. The demonstration was undoubtedly provocative and staged for the benefit of the foreign observers resident in Tirana's premier hotel who took ample opportunity to report (and exaggerate) its significance. Despite alarming photographs in papers (front page) like The Financial Times and The New York Times it was a small affair. Compared with the behavior of riot police in France and Germany, for example, the authorities were relatively restrained: they did not use tear-gas or water cannons, nor were firearms removed from holsters. It was not Tianenmen Square or even the post-election mineriade in Bucharest in June, 1990. Those detained in custody were released by the end of the day. Seven policemen have been disciplined and sacked for their behaviour.

2. Had the demonstration been allowed to go ahead the possibility existed of even more violence being unleashed. Passions are high in Albania and fighting could easily have broken out between the Socialists and supporters of the Democratic Party. A serious riot and possibly a blood-bath could then have ensued.

3. Some observers who acknowledged that the elections had been peaceful now began to question their original perceptions. This was, no doubt, part of the strategy of the opposition. Alarming scenarios were painted by the opposition and certain newspapers of unrest as it was claimed that large sections of the Albanian population had been 'robbed' of victory by the Democratic Party's tactics. However, compared with the reactions to the Party of Labour's victory in 1991 – 4 demonstrators shot dead in Shkoder, riots and strikes – Albania has remained remarkably peaceful to date.

### **The international observers**

A number of international observers monitored the elections – the OSCE parliamentary assembly and OSCE/ODIHR sending the largest delegations. The Council of Europe did not send a team of monitors – a strange decision if one bears in mind that criticism of the Democratic Party's alleged autocratic ways had been circulating in human rights reports and parts of the media for some time. The American National Democratic Institute also sent a group to help train domestic observers an initiative that has proved successful in places like Georgia and Armenia.

### OSCE/ODIHR in previous elections

At this stage it is worth looking back at some of the other elections in post-Communist countries observed by BHHRG monitors under the auspices of the OSCE/ODIHR:

1. Georgia (1992). One presidential candidate; opposition parties prevented from taking part; armed personnel everywhere; gunfire audible at night; armed men on patrol in the observers' hotel; saturation media coverage of government party.

2. Russia (1993). at least 6 million extra votes added to the Constitutional referendum; saturation media coverage of government party.

3. Armenia (1995). Main opposition party prevented from standing (leading members in prison); pre-poll violence; omnipresence of police in polling stations; constitution published before the elections in booklet form recommending 'yes' vote; saturation media coverage of government party.

4. Azerbaijan (1993). Foreign observers 'voted' in this election: Mr. Almond (of this group) had a vote cast for him against his protestations by election commission members in the country's presidential elections. This provoked no comment \_ let alone outrage \_ from the OSCE/ODIHR. Saturation media coverage etc.

5. Azerbaijan (1995). Opposition parties prevented from standing; a very low real turnout (inflated in the official results) despite widespread multiple voting; domestic observers expelled from polling stations; violence in some areas, including two people killed in polling stations; saturation media coverage of government party.

The elections in Georgia and Russia received 'rave' reviews from the OSCE (and other international observers). There was much criticism of the polls in Armenia and Azerbaijan but in the OSCE/ODIHR's final reports a positive 'spin' was conjured up: the 1995 elections in both countries were viewed as positive steps towards democracy. Even in 1995 in Russia, the murder of 3 candidates went unremarked in the OSCE/ODIHR report; nor apparently did it raise any doubts in Russia when 3 election officials were killed in polling stations on 16th June, 1996.

Let us now turn to Albania:

Members of the BHHRG attended briefings given by the OSCE/ODIHR both before and after the election. Both occasions were of a markedly different character to any such meetings we have attended in the past. The following observations can be made:

1. Briefing materials handed out to observers were scanty. For example, no information was provided about the parties contesting the elections neither their addresses nor contact numbers. The electoral law was only partially translated. To be fair to the OSCE/ODIHR in the past, normally, a detailed briefing-pack is available which often proves invaluable even if those using it come to very different conclusions from the official ODIHR.

2. The tone of the pre-election meeting was overwhelmingly negative towards the electoral process in Albania. The remorselessly upbeat atmosphere of past OSCE/ODIHR briefings was markedly absent. Despite the fact that Albania has emerged from one of the world's worst dictatorships less than five years ago no effort was made to relate the present to the past. Those observers who had been chosen to give "expert briefings" trooped up to the podium to recite a litany of violence, fraud and harassment. Information about the technicalities of the election was often wrong or misleading: for example, the fact that many voter registers had been drawn up by local (Socialist) councils rather than

presidential nominees was conveniently omitted.

3. Unsurprisingly, the de-briefing meeting held on 27th May was no different. In fact, as one observer after another reported acts of violence, ballot stuffing and tampering with the register the atmosphere became more charged and the impression gained was more of a revivalist meeting than a sober recitation of the facts. Laughter and sneering grew as the day wore on. These initial accounts set the tone and made it psychologically challenging to go against the grain by saying that one had not seen the flagrant abuses reported from the beginning by others who were also more "expert". Only Dr. Malcolm (on behalf of this group) and a Canadian observer gave a low-key account of polling day.

Why was this the approach of this group of observers so markedly different to ones encountered in the past? Perhaps one of the clues might lie in the close association some of them had with the opposition Socialist Party. 9 observers from Norway had already been in contact with the PSSH \_ a document seeking help in arranging cars and interpreters for "the comrades who are coming" was shown to 3 members of this Group by Januz Begaj in the party headquarters on 27th May. Of course, it is perfectly in order for those with party affiliations to observe elections but their political complexion should be made plain. More to the point, how did such a group of people become part of the supposedly 'independent and objective' OSCE/ODIHR delegation?

Other observers, from Germany and Denmark, had visited Hoxha's Albania regularly \_ something rare and difficult to organize in those reclusive times. Albanian newspapers have since published various articles claiming that they had close relations with the old order. Whatever may have been the case, one of these people or a Norwegian tended to accompany other observers with less knowledge of the region.

This state of affairs becomes even less satisfactory when one considers that the observers were 'deployed' in advance: their routes and destinations had been pre-arranged. Deployment has only recently become the norm on OSCE/ODIHR election missions \_ it used to be the case that an observer chose when and where to go in the host country. This must be the preferred method. If either the ruling party or its opponents knows in advance where observers will be, or worse still provides officials (interpreters, drivers, etc.) to accompany them, and probably warn polling stations in advance of their coming, then their observations risk being thoroughly compromised. Where accusations of pressure on the electoral process are being traded, particularly against the party of power, the ability to drop in anywhere 'unannounced' is vital.

BHHRG observers usually refuse to be 'deployed' and they did so again in Albania. Cars and taxis were hired privately and interpreters provided via a member of the English faculty at Tirana University who had worked with Dr. Malcolm when he observed the 1992 elections as part of the Council of Europe delegation. This may account for the fact that our experiences on election day were markedly different from the other observers. For the suspicion must arise that if at least some observers were ferried to pre-arranged destinations in cars provided by the PSSH (who may also have provided their translators) many of the 'spontaneous' demonstrations, allegations of violence, etc., which they witnessed or heard about may not have been spontaneous at all.

Conversations with observers at the post-election briefing tended to reveal a certain pattern: 'yes' allegations of acts of violence had been made to the observers at polling stations, 'yes' they had seen evidence of acts of violence, but 'no' they had not actually seen these acts being committed. The observers tended to travel in pairs and sometimes the other observer spoke Albanian and did the translating: as one British observer said "I left all the talking to Adelheid [German observer] as she speaks Albanian".

The level of outrage about electoral irregularities generated led to a completely unprecedented decision on the part of the OSCE/ODIHR to pull out of any further observation of the Albanian elections \_ they refused to monitor the second round of voting as (they said) it would give the

proceedings "legitimacy". As news leaked out of the observers' shock decision, 11 were already "going public" in an unprecedented fashion putting out their own report on the elections (see Appendix 3). This statement was signed by the 9 Norwegians plus 2 British monitors.

It seems that some pressure may have been put on the OSCE/ODIHR to return and monitor the second round of voting. However, on return from Albania several days later Mrs. Stone was telephoned from Warsaw and asked if she could provide observers because "people (sic) here are refusing to go for political reasons". In fact, Dr. Malcolm had remained in Albania and had arranged to monitor the second round of the elections on 1st June anyway.

## CONCLUSION

Normally there would be no need for one observer mission to comment on the approach of another but, unusually, this episode needs to be set out in some detail because it might help to clarify the unique nature of the OSCE/ODIHR team's controversial reaction to the Albanian elections. Put crudely, their behavior had the quality of a classic "beat up". Even if these observers saw what they claimed to have done the decision not to return to Albania for "political reasons" was wholly outside the spirit and rules within which the OSCE operates. The Code of Conduct handed out to observers states that "observers will maintain strict impartiality in the conduct of their duties, and shall at no time express any bias or preference in relation to national authorities, parties, candidates or with any issues in contention in the election process".

Unfortunately, too many people who were not present in the country rushed to judgement of the Albanians without analysing by whom and why these decisions had been taken. No doubt, the violence surrounding the demonstration of 28th May clouded the issue \_ one young American observer from another group felt that the peaceful scenes he had seen on polling day were now tainted. But, however reprehensible those events may have been it cannot alter the fact that the Democratic Party polled a similar percentage of votes as that predicted by the most professional pollsters in Albania at the time.

Despite the publicity given to the ODIHR other observers were more cautious. For example, the report of the OSCE parliamentary delegation takes a more moderate tone. But the US NGO Human Rights Watch/Helsinki published a highly critical report which was, basically, a recitation of the OSCE/ODIHR's "findings". As this organization had no observers on the ground constructing its report from telephone calls with ODIHR observers and newspaper reports it has added nothing more (other than an extra dose of hyperbolic hearsay) to the argument.

It would be comforting to think that the international community took a dim view of this fiasco \_ perhaps some countries do. But the Americans, the Albanians' most important ally in the region, have reacted somewhat passively. A spokesman for the US Embassy in Tirana played down the lack of impartiality displayed by the OSCE/ODIHR observers saying that the whole affair was an "internal matter" (to Albania) and should not be exaggerated. However, the OSCE is an international body whose manipulation whether accidental or intentional is of grave concern to everyone. It has the task of organizing the Bosnian elections . No doubt, Radovan Karadzic and others who may want to criticize the conduct of those elections will have valuable ammunition from the ODIHR's conduct in Albania.

## NOTES

- 1 Although our observers only heard firecrackers going off, Bob Hand, an American observer with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, told Human Rights Watch/Helsinki that "I didn't see [emphasis added], but heard them firing guns into the air." See "Albania: Democracy Derailed", 8.

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### SECOND ROUND OF VOTING, 2nd JUNE, 1996

Dr. Noel Malcolm monitored the second round of voting. These are his observations:

Out of 115 zones (constituencies), ten failed to produce a winning candidate with more than 50% of the vote in the first round. The electoral law dictated that the two candidates with the most votes in these zones would compete in the second round. However, the withdrawal of the Socialist Party (and some of the other opposition parties) meant that in most cases the contest in the second round was between the highest-scoring candidate and the third - or fourth-ranking.

In addition, one of these 10 zones (No.67) was declared by the CEC to have suffered irregularities in the first round which invalidated that vote. It was added to the other three zones which had already been disqualified in this way: all 4 would have to re-take the first round vote on Sunday 9th June.

Out of the 9 remaining second-round zones, I visited 2: No.68, in the Elbasan area (centering on the small town of Cerrik, to the west of Elbasan), and no. 71, centering on the town of Librazhd (to the east of Elbasan). In each case the leading candidate in the first round had been the Democratic Party candidate, with 45.81% in zone 68 and 45.14% in zone 71. In zone 68 the runner-up in the first round had been the Republican Party candidate (19.45%); in zone 71 the runner-up had been the Socialist Party candidate (28.01%), and the contestant in the second round was therefore the candidate who had come third (Republican Party, 8.99%).

I visited 5 polling stations in zone 68 (3 in the town of Cerrik, 2 in outlying villages), and 4 in zone 71 (2 in the town of Librazhd, 2 in outlying villages). I found no major violations of the electoral law in any of these; no complaints were expressed by any of the representatives of the parties (or any of the ordinary voters I spoke to), and the atmosphere both inside and outside each of the polling stations was calm and peaceful. In each polling station the Democratic and Republican Parties had representatives on the electoral commissions; in the majority of them, both parties also had observers.

In each place I asked whether or not there had been any violence or intimidation of any kind; the answers were negative. Of course, the DP and RP are politically close, and had they both connived at violence they would presumably not have told me about it; but the impression of calm and regular elections, in both rounds, was confirmed by others I spoke to outside the polling stations. When I asked whether or not the Socialist Party had used any form of intimidation to prevent people from voting, the answer was also negative. Interestingly, in most of these polling stations the electoral commission members observed that many people who had, during the campaign, publicly identified themselves as SP supporters had been turning up during the second round to vote (or, at least, to collect a ballotpaper, perhaps mark it in some way, and deposit it in the ballot box). In most cases, they also said that the SP representatives on the commission during the first round had been unhappy about the order from their party to abandon polling stations before the end of voting, and that they had written, of their own initiative, declarations that they were not leaving because of any irregularities they had observed during the day.

I encountered only two problems. The first concerned the number of 'procès-verbal' forms (the final declaration of results, to be completed at the polling station after the counting of the vote there). In

some cases only two had been issued to the polling station, both of which would have to be returned (one to the zone commission, the other to the CEC). In other cases extra copies had been issued, in order to enable each party representative on the polling station commission to retain a copy (as the law seems to require).

The second problem concerned the adding of names to the electoral lists between the first and second rounds. In one polling station (zone 71, No.24) I was told that between 10 and 15 people who had forgotten to register in time for the first round had now been added to the list. In another (zone 71, No.3), I was told that 61 had been added to the list (raising it from 849 to 910). Some of these, I was told, had been observers, or policemen on duty, in other zones during the first round; the rest were people who had just returned from Greece. The polling station officials who told me about this assured me that the addition of these names had been regulated by the civil authorities, and that everything was legally in order. Since the relevant laws are not contained in the Electoral Law, this is hard for me to verify.

Apart from some doubts about these two features of the second round, I have no hesitation in saying that everything I observed about the conduct of the election on 2nd June was peaceful, orderly and correct.

### **THIRD ROUND OF VOTING 16th JUNE, 1996**

Daniel McAdams visited Albania on behalf of the BHHRG to monitor the third round of voting on 16th June. He visited 7 polling stations in the Elbasan, Peqin and Fier regions. These are his observations:

Voting Procedures: The turnout seemed high \_ by mid-morning several constituencies reported that a high percentage had already voted, over 60%. Voting proceeded in an orderly manner although as previously noted the polling station facilities in many places were inadequate. In two cases party posters and/or graffiti appeared on or near the polling stations. Members of the electoral commissions were interviewed and no one reported any problems. However, there were no members of the opposition parties on the electoral commissions They were all given the opportunity to talk in private but no one felt it necessary.

Registers : As previously noted in some places (Elbasan) they were handwritten, elsewhere they were printed. No new names seemed to have been added to the end of the registers. There appeared to be very few cases where more than one person had signed \_ the same registers were used on 26th May. The only cases seemed to be husbands and wives signing on each others' behalf.

Ballot papers and boxes : the ballot papers still featured all the candidates, including those parties and candidates boy- coting the election. Some polling stations had a surplus number of papers. The ballot boxes were checked and sealed properly.

Mr. McAdams talked to many voters in private including between 20 and 25 Socialist supporters. No one, without exception, reported tension or intimidation of any kind either on 26th May or 16th June. They were unanimous in their disappointment that some parties had chosen to boycott the elections. There seemed to be a sense of local pride in ensuring that there was no trouble on voting day.

Each electoral commission was asked whether or not international observers had been present on 26th May. All but one replied in the negative. Some claimed to have been singled out by the observers but do not recall them being present in the zone.

No infractions of the electoral process were observed on 16th June and conclude that the voting procedure was conducted fairly and in accordance with the will of the people.

## RESULTS

First Round: According to the CEC the Democratic Party won 95 out of 115 direct seats to the parliament. The Socialist Party received 5 seats and the Human Rights Party 2 (in Gjirokastrë and Saranda).

Second round: On 7th June the CEC announced the following results of the follow-up elections held on 6th June in 9 constituencies. The DP won all the seats.

Third Round: There was a 64% turn-out in the third round of elections held on 16th June. The DP won 67% of the vote and all the seats.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

The BHHRG would like to make the following recommendations to the Albanian authorities for the conduct of future polls:

- it is necessary to find more suitable accommodation for polling stations. The conditions in some of the places we visited were inadequate both for the voting public and those who had to work there during the election period

- similarly, more polling booths with better screening and proper shelves/tables should be provided in the future. Allegations of multiple voting and lack of privacy are less easy to refute when arrangements for voting are so flimsy and inadequate.

- while accepting that it is the norm for polling stations to have a percentage of extra ballot papers a more consistent approach should be taken in the future. Until ballot papers are produced as they are in countries like the UK (numbered and with serrated edges) it will be possible for allegations to be made of ballot stuffing. (Of course, in the hyper-suspicious atmosphere of the last Albanian election, such measures would certainly have led to allegations that the government was trying to find out how individuals voted!)

- ballot boxes should have proper seals. The plasticine used to seal the ballot boxes in many places in Albania lays commissions more easily open to allegations of tampering with the box even if a multi party and non-partisan body commission members and observers may be present.

- the system of issuing certificates to those voting away from home should also be harmonized. We found one polling station in particular where we suspected there had been abuse in the handing out of these certificates.

- Commission members should be more closely involved in the voting procedures. It is normal for each member to supervise a part of the register and we would recommend this practice in the future. It would help alleviate fears that, apart from the chairman and his or her deputy, other members of the commission are mere 'window dressing'.

- the coverage of the election campaign on television (newspapers reported a wide variety of opinion) should be more transparent. Although the parties were allowed their 'slots' strictly in accordance with the law news programmes devoted most of their election coverage to the activities of the President. DP rallies were covered in much greater length than those of the SP.

- although we do not think that personnel in the CEC deliberately hampered the activities and requests of observers there was an atmosphere of Schlamperei in the Commission's headquarters

which meant that information was dispatched irregularly and inefficiently.

Despite these criticisms we have no hesitation in saying that the all three rounds of the parliamentary elections in Albania were free and fair. Compared with elections observed by this group over the past 5 years in the East-Central Europe and the CIS, they were models of propriety.

That they were a great disappointment to the opposition may make the Albanian Socialists and their allies pause for thought. The country needs a functioning opposition, preferably a modern Socialist Party based on Western models. Disappointing election results ought not to be the basis of the accusations of a coup d'état, especially as the allegations of Pinochet-like behaviour on the part of the government suggest an extraordinarily benign view of the events in Chile in 1973 – then no delegations were allowed to make their way to Brussels and Strasbourg to protest against their treatment. It may be that a change of generation in the party might persuade more Albanians to vote for them in the future.

### **THE INTERNATIONAL SITUATION**

As a Balkan state, Albania is located in a region of high international tension because of the collapse of Yugoslavia in 1991. Because many Albanians lived beyond the boundaries of the Republic in Yugoslavia, Albania was one of the country's most affected by the violence there. International sanctions against Rump Yugoslavia had an impact on Albania (where they encouraged smuggling across the border).

The problem of minorities faced Albania immediately it achieved independence in 1913. The Serb regime established a harsh rule over Kosovo whose Orthodox monasteries and site of the 1389 battle were of great importance to Serbs although the population was already 60%+ Albanian. During the Second World War, nationalist resisters hoped that Kosovo would be incorporated in Albania in the event of an Allied victory, but the post-war Communist regime accepted its continued rule from Belgrade, something which the Western Allies also did not challenge.

Under Tito's 1974 Constitution, the status of Kosovo within Yugoslavia was improved when it was raised to the rank of Autonomous Province of the Federated Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. After the death of Tito, economic hardships were exacerbated by the tensions in Kosovo between its growing Albanian majority and the ambitions of Serb politicians to reassert their domination. In 1989, the Milosevic regime in Belgrade staged a coup d'état and annexed the province of Kosovo despite – or because of – the fact that Albanians constituted 87% of the population. In newly-independent Macedonia, Albanians make up about one-quarter of the population. Tirana has used its influence there to calm the potential tensions between them and the Slavic majority.

The harsh treatment of the Albanians in Kosovo by the Serbian authorities has created a permanent state of tension there. Although US political leaders, like Robert Dole, have expressed a close interest in the human rights situation in Kosovo, European politicians have tended to ignore or misunderstand the legal and constitutional issues. For instance, during his tenure as EC peace mediator, Lord Carrington allowed himself to be filmed lecturing the Kosovan President Ibrahim Rugova on the precise constitutional status of Kosovo: Lord Carrington insisted that it was a province of Serbia under the 1974 Yugoslav constitution. In fact, of course, it was an autonomous province of Yugoslavia. Carrington's ignorant self-assurance is typical of the British establishment's blundering approach to Balkan issues in which it has regularly sided with the Communist or in Milosevic's case post-Communist authorities against their subjects.

The Kosovo question was not raised during the Dayton Peace Conference in late autumn, 1995 – the USA and the Contact Group seem to have decided that it was important to ignore human rights issues in Kosovo as part of their inducements to get the Milosevic regime to collaborate in the calming of the situation in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

After Dayton, the EU states, led by Germany, have pursued a policy of rewarding Milosevic's support for the Bosnian settlement with international recognition of the Serbs' right to suppress the Albanian majority in Kosovo. This indifference to the long-standing and large-scale denial of democracy and human rights in Kosovo is in marked and puzzling contrast to the EU's prompt response to the criticisms of the Albanian elections at the end of May, 1996. In fact, in the run-up to the Albanian elections, the German Foreign Minister, Klaus Kinkel, even signed an agreement with Belgrade envisaging the deportation back to the so-called New Yugoslavia of 125,000 largely Kosovan refugees. (Deserters from the Serb-led Yugoslav People's Army who had refused to fight in Bosnia were also specifically included by Kinkel in his list of obligatory returnees.)

After the Albanian opposition delegation had visited the EU Commission to protest against the alleged coup d'état on 26th May, the Commission President, Jacques Santer, and the Italian Foreign Minister, Lamberto Dini, as chairman of the EU Council of Ministers, cancelled their planned visit to Tirana. However, they went ahead with a so-called fact-finding visit to Serbia. In Belgrade, Santer announced, "It is very important that we normalize our relations in this region," adding, "We see very positive prospects for Yugoslavia for the near future."<sup>1</sup> How promoting abnormal relations with Albania could be harmonised with the EU's attitude to the post-Communist regime in Belgrade will remain to be seen.

Western states might have feared that Albania would de-stabilise the region by raising the Kosovo issue in a nationalistic way and demanding reunification. Western governments might even suspect that the Albanian Socialists would be on better terms with their post-Communist counterparts in Belgrade. However, there is no evidence that the Berisha government has done anything other than seek to resolve the Kosovo issue peacefully and in accordance with the policy norms laid down by the West. (In fact, by failing to stop smuggling into Montenegro and Serbia during the UN sanctions regime, Albania might be accused of helping Serbia rather than provoking conflict with her.)

Even in the heated atmosphere of the election campaign, President Berisha emphasised his commitment to the international and peaceful approach to the Kosovo problem when he told an audience in Katund i Ri, an area settled by Kosovans in the past, "Your vote in the 22nd March, 1992 elections was a vote for our national question. During the last four years the question of Kosovo preoccupied all the chancelleries of the world and Albanian diplomacy helped pass two resolutions in the United Nations regarding these questions. The consolidation of democracy,... [Albania's] integration into Euro-Atlantic institutions.... are the most reliable way for the solution to the Kosovo issue."<sup>2</sup>

However, the evidence is that the West may not want to solve the Kosovo question, merely to keep the lid on it. Whether continued denial of democracy in the new Yugoslavia will achieve the goal of stability in the region may be doubted. Certainly EU and US collusion in the denial of democracy and human rights there makes rhetorical indignation about Serbia's neighbours from Brussels and Washington ring hollow. Recklessly de-stabilising Albania cannot promote either democracy or human rights in the Balkans. All it will do is promote disillusionment with the West and cynicism about its professed principles.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in OMRI - Daily Digest II N<sup>o</sup> 114 (12 June, 1996)

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in BBC/SWB, Balkans EE/2615 (18 May, 1996), B/1,1.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. The Albanian Parliamentary Elections in May/June, 1996, easily met the criteria usually set by international observers from the OSCE/ODIHR elsewhere in the former Communist world.
2. The minor irregularities and shortcomings noted in this report ought to be rectified before the forthcoming presidential elections. It is hoped that the television and radio in Albania will then be less deferential. If private stations are allowed, they should operate a non-partisan approach similar to that recommended for state media.
3. The polarised atmosphere of Albanian politics seemed to infect some of the observers who polemicised on behalf of the opposition and became emotional in their commitment to it.
4. Foreigners should avoid intensifying the partisanship of Albanian politics and instead encourage the "give and take" more typical of Western democracies, even in election campaigns. Supporting boycotts and unfounded allegations of coups d'états may become self-fulfilling rather than helpful to the development of democracy
5. The key institutions of the international community, like the EU, the OSCE and Western governments should be careful to avoid allowing their own assessment of Albania's democracy, or any other country's, from being hi-jacked by interested parties for their own ends. If the international institutions charged with upholding human rights and the countries most associated with the success of democracy and the free market allow themselves to become parti pris in the internal politics of new democracies and to disqualify one or other part of the political spectrum at the behest of its local opponents and their sympathisers, then the outlook for democracy there will be bleak and the reputation of the West will suffer.

## APPENDIX No1: Britain's Relations with Albania, 1941-48

Albania played only a subordinate part in Britain's wartime anti-Axis strategy, nonetheless some of the British special services officers sent to assist the resistance there have argued that British policy played an important role in determining the outcome of the intra-Albanian struggle over the likely character of their country post-occupation. In effect, left-wing sympathies among key British personnel at SOE headquarters in Bari and Cairo overrode the negative attitude of SOE officers on the ground towards Enver Hoxha's embryonic regime. Later on, during the early Cold War years quixotic attempts to use Albanian exiles to infiltrate the country and start a guerrilla resistance to Hoxha's regime were betrayed by Kim Philby, though given the regime's brutal control of the country by the late 1940s they probably stood little chance in any case.

For British readers, the refusal to help former non- communist allies like Abas Kupa in their hour of need is particularly distasteful. After Britain decided to pull out its SOE personnel, Bari HQ would not countenance the rescue of such men. One influential officer, Reginald Hibbert, expressed a contemptuous attitude towards Julian Amery's desire to rescue Abas Kupa who had helped the British so much: "I am totally unmoved by Amery's outburst about Abas Kupa. We could all have played that game. Every mission had people to whom it was under some personal obligation. Kupa had no right to any special claim." British security officers supervised the evacuation of SOE personnel to ensure that no Albanian escaped from Hoxha's clutches to Italy. Kupa escaped using the same skills and courage which had impressed those British officers whom he had helped.<sup>1</sup>

British field officers serving in SOE in Albania frequently found returning to HQ in Bari depressing. There left-wing desk officers who had never parachuted behind enemy lines but who held control of the lines of communication and analysis upwards to Whitehall referred to the survivors of the mission who distrusted Hoxha's Stalinist partisans as "the fascists".<sup>2</sup> Peter Kemp noted "In the eyes of the new [communist] rulers of Albania collaboration with the British was a far greater crime than collaboration with the Germans. The fury of the new regime was directed especially against those Albanians who, as our allies, had submerged their political differences with the communists in a united effort to win their country's freedom. Such men were marked for destruction because their fighting record gave the lie to the communist claim that the Communist Party alone represented the Albanian people in their fight for independence. From the madness that followed only a few of my friends escaped. The partisans murdered Hasan Kryeziu and all my Kosovar friends who fell into their hands."<sup>3</sup>

Elsewhere Kemp notes that the Balli Kombetar foresaw that the communists would come to power unless the Allies switched their aid policy. But the Balli did not side with Germans: "The Balli refrained from collaboration with the Germans against us; indeed they gave us much covert help; but they did sit on the fence... They were naively convinced that the British and Americans would be glad to entrust the government to them, in preference to the Communist alternative of the LNC."<sup>4</sup>

In winter, 1943, Kemp was told to break relations with Kosovar irredentist resistance to the Germans. Cairo radioed, "Our relations with Yugoslav partisans are of overriding importance." Kemp: "Only a very special type of staff officer would suppose we could 'tactfully' abandon men who had risked their lives and families to help and shelter us."<sup>5</sup>

Colonel David Smiley has argued, "[The partisans] were successful entirely thanks to the help that they had received from the British. This help took the form of arms and ammunition, mines and explosives, clothing and food, money (sovereigns), communications equipment, as well as the help and advice given by the British Liaison Officers and NCOs. They also received favourable publicity on the BBC. Without this help, bearing in mind that they received none whatever from the Russians, they would not have overcome the Ballists and Zogists in the civil war. Had British aid gone the other way Albania would be a pro-western democracy today."

Smiley had a similarly frustrating and sinister experience when he appealed to Sir Anthony Eden himself with the aid of his immediate superior Bill McLean to permit Albanians who had helped them depart for Bari to leave with the SOE contingent. "Mr Eden never received this signal; on my return to

Bari I discovered that it had been deliberately suppressed in the SOE office. While some of the officers in the Albanian section of the SOE office were well-intentioned, if led astray by insidious Communist propaganda, others were Communist agents. One was an officer in the Albanian Section, and I was told he stood as an unsuccessful Communist candidate in the 1945 election... On our return I overheard him refer to our mission as 'Fascists'. I was told by one of the secretaries that it was he who had prevented further transmission of McLean's signal to Mr Eden, and that he had deliberately disposed of the message."<sup>7</sup>

Anyone who has written more recently to the Minister of State at the Foreign Office responsible for the Eastern Adriatic, Sir Nicholas Bonsor, Bt., MP, about the risk of betraying Albanian democrats will recognise the ominous silence at the ministerial end of the line of communication.

### NOTES

- 1 See Bethell, *The Great Betrayal: the untold story of Kim Philby's biggest coup* (London, 1984), 24-5.
- 2 See Peter Kemp, *The Thorns of Memory* (London, 1990), 236.
- 3 *Ibid.*, 231-32.
- 4 *Ibid.*, 200.
- 5 *Ibid.*, 223.
- 6 See Smiley's *Albanian Assignment* (London, 1984), 137.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 155.

### APPENDIX 2

Statement of OSCE monitors from Norway and the UK on the Albanian elections. Tirana, 28th May 1996

This statement expresses the view of the Norwegian and British teams in the OSCE election observer delegation to the second multiparty elections in Albania, 26th May 1996:

The elections did not meet international standards for the free and fair elections and they did not conform with the requirements of the elections and they did not comply with the requirements of the election law. The election law guarantees transparency in the election process, freedom from intimidation and multi-party representation in the election commissions, and these provisions were to a large extent violated.

The key positions in the election commissions at all levels were occupied by the ruling party which did not assure an atmosphere of trust and reliability during the polling. Decisions were in many instances taken only by the government-appointed chairman and secretaries. The opposition party representatives in the commissions were often not allowed to participate in the process, if not outright evicted from the premises. The pattern was also visible in the zone commissions.

The accuracy and proper keeping of the voter registers failed to meet the standards prescribed by law. In many cases, the number of ballots cast exceeded the number of signatures on the voters lists. During the count we observed the changing of the registers to make them in line with the number of ballots in the ballot boxes.

Moreover, ballots case [sic] were altered and invalidated. The number of void votes were in a large number of polling stations extremely high, up to fifty per cent. In some places, ballots bundled together inside the boxes indicated that the boxes had been tampered with and votes added.

The presence of armed police and unauthorized persons around and inside the polling stations in many cases made an atmosphere of intimidation and coercion. Observers also witnessed cases of

beatings and threats. The general pattern of intimidation had a significant impact on the election process.

It is our concluding [sic] that the will of the Albanian people was not expressed in a free manner in the election of 26 May 1996.

Paul Keetch, John Dransfield (UK); Trone Jensrud, Anne Marie Bjornflaten, Ulf Tore Isaken, Bjorn Engesland, Oyvind Dahl, Erlend Broli, Kare Vollan, Age Borghrevink, Marianne Oren (Norway)

## Chronology

28 November, 1912	Albania becomes independent
1 September, 1928	Zog declared King of Albania
7 April, 1939	Italian occupation of Albania
29 November, 1944	German retreat from Albania
August, 1945	Private land ownership abolished
2 December, 1945	Rigged elections endorse Hoxha's rule
11 January, 1946	Proclamation of people's Republic of Albania
22 October, 1946	Corfu Channel Incident
28 December, 1976	New "Stalinist" Constitution
18 December 1981	Death of Mehmet Shehu _ start of purge
11 April, 1985	Death of Enver Hoxha _ Ramiz Alia new leader
December, 1989	Student protests at poor conditions in Tirana
January, 1990	Protestors attack Stalin's statue in Shkodra
28 June, 1990	Demonstrators begin to enter embassies
12 December, 1990	Democratic Party founded
17 December, 1990	Multi-party system conceded by Ramiz Alia
20 February, 1991	Crowd pulls down Hoxha's statue in Tirana
22 February, 1991	Fatos Nano named prime minister
6 March, 1991	Another wave of emigration by sea begins
31 March, 1991	First multi-party election marred by fraud
6 April, 1991	General strike in protest at election result
16 May, 1991	Second general strike
June-Dec. 1991	Socialist-DP coalition government
22 June, 1991	US Secretary of State, Baker, visits Tirana
5 November, 1991	Renewed attempts at mass flight from Durrës
22 March, 1992	Democratic Party landslide election victory
3 April, 1992	Ramiz Alia resigns _ election of Sali Berisha
June, 1992	Splits in the Democratic Party
July, 1992	Local elections _ Socialists gain ground
April, 1993	Visit of Pope John Paul II
16 June, 1993	Opposition parties boycott parliament
November, 1993	Albanian-Greek dialogue resumed
3 December, 1993	End of Italian-led aid "Operation Pelikan"
4 November, 1994	Referendum rejects constitutional draft
July, 1995	Albania joins Council of Europe
September, 1995	Law on Genocide
26 May, 1996	First Round of Parliamentary Elections
28 May, 1996	Police break up opposition rally in Tirana
June, 1996	Second Round of Parliamentary Elections
16 June, 1996	17 re-runs in Parliamentary Elections

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