

**A SHORT GUIDE  
TO THE**



**PEOPLE'S SOCIALIST REPUBLIC OF  
ALBANIA**

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ALBANIA**

by  
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## CONTENTS

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<b>INTRODUCTION: VISITING ALBANIA</b> .....	1
<b>PART ONE: ABOUT ALBANIA</b> .....	2
Geographical Sketch .....	2
Historical Sketch .....	2
Socialism .....	6
Power .....	7
Mining .....	7
Industry .....	7
Agriculture .....	7
Transport .....	8
Foreign Trade .....	8
The Struggle Against Revisionism .....	9
Prices .....	9
The Abolition of Taxes .....	9
State Structure .....	9
Education .....	10
The Emancipation of Women .....	10
The Health Service .....	11
The Language .....	11
Literature .....	11
Newspapers and Magazines .....	12
Painting and Sculpture .....	12
Music .....	13
Theatre .....	13
Cinema .....	14
Sport .....	14
<b>PART TWO: TOURING ALBANIA</b> .....	16
A1. Han i Hotit to Koplik .....	16
A2. Koplik to Theth .....	16
A3. Koplik to Shkodra .....	16
SHKODRA .....	16
B1. Shkodra to Shiroka .....	17
B2. Shkodra to Drisht .....	20
B3. Shkodra to Kukës .....	20
KUKËS .....	20
C. Shkodra to Lezha .....	20
LEZHA .....	20
D. Lezha to Shëngjin .....	21
SHËNGJIN .....	21
E1. Lezha to Fushë-Kruja .....	21
E2. Fushë-Kruja to Kruja .....	21
KRUJA .....	21
F1. Fushë-Kruja to Vora .....	22
F2. Vora to Tirana .....	22
TIRANA .....	22
G1. Vora to Durrës .....	24
G2. Tirana to Durrës (via Ndroq) .....	24
G3. Tirana to Durrës (via Vora) .....	24

DURRËS	24
H1. Tirana to Elbasan	25
H2. Durrës to Rrogozhina	26
H3. Rrogozhina to Elbasan	26
ELBASAN	26
I1. Elbasan to Çërrik	27
I2. Elbasan to Pogradec	27
POGRADEC	27
J. Pogradec to Korça	28
KORÇA	28
K1. Korça to Mborja	29
K2. Korça to Këlcyra	29
K3. Korça to Voskopoja	29
VOSKOPOJA	29
L1. Rrogozhina to Lushnja	29
L2. Çërrik to Lushnja	29
LUSHNJA	30
M. Lushnja to Fier	30
FIER	30
N. Fier to Apollonia	30
APOLLONIA	30
O1. Lushnja to Poshnje	31
O2. Fier to Poshnje	31
O3. Poshnje to Berat	32
BERAT	32
P1. Berat to Çorovada	32
P2. Berat to Këlcyra	32
P3. Fier to Vlora	33
VLORA	33
Q1. Vlora to Peshkëpi	33
Q2. Peshkëpi to Selenica	33
Q3. Peshkëpi to Kata	34
Q4. Kata to Tepelena	34
Q5. Fier to Tepelena	34
TEPELENA	34
R1. Tepelena to Këlcyra	34
R2. Vlora to Borsh	34
R3. Kata to Borsh	35
R4. Borsh to Saranda	35
SARANDA	35
S. Saranda to Butrint	36
BUTRINT	36
T1. Saranda to Mavropull	38
T2. Mavropull to Finiq	38
FINIQ	38
U. Mavropull to Gjirokastra	38
GJIROKASTRA	38
V. Gjirokastra to Tepelena	39

*A map of Albania appears on pages 18 – 19*

## INTRODUCTION: VISITING ALBANIA

The People's Socialist Republic of Albania is a unique country, so that a visit to Albania is much more than a holiday.

In the present world situation, the Albanian authorities do not permit individual tourism. Unless, therefore, you have been invited by some official body, it is possible to visit Albania only as a member of a tourist group, and the simplest way of doing this is through a tourist agency recognised by **Albturist**, the Albanian State Tourist Office. **Regent Holidays** are the appointed agents for the UK, Ireland and the Commonwealth. At present US citizens are not permitted entry into Albania.

Albania is served by **international airlines** via Athens, Belgrade, Berlin, Bucharest, Budapest and Rome to Rinas International Airport near Tirana. The most usual way for tourist parties to enter the country, however, is by **coach** from Titograd in Yugoslavia.

To enter Albania you will need a valid **passport**, together with a **group visa** furnished by an Embassy or Legation of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania; the latter will be obtained for you by the tourist agency with which you book your trip.

The Albanian authorities regard certain cultural phenomena as socially undesirable: long hair and full beards on men, short skirts on women, religious literature, literature hostile to Communism or the Albanian state, literature regarded as pornographic, pop music and records. On arrival in Albania, therefore, men whose hair or beard is regarded as unacceptable must accept the attention of a hairdresser, while women wearing skirts regarded as unacceptably short will be requested to change into more appropriate dress before being admitted into the country; literature and records regarded as objectionable will be confiscated and returned to you when you leave. (Of course, on the beaches swimming trunks for men and bikinis for women are the norm).

The unit of Albanian currency is the **lek**, divided into 100 **qindarkës**. On 1 January 1981, a lek was equivalent to approximately 7 pence:

Leks	Sterling
1	£0.07
5	£0.35
10	£0.70
25	£1.75
50	£3.50
100	£7.00

**Travellers' cheques** valid in Albania may be obtained through your bank. These, or British banknotes, may be exchanged for Albanian currency at any branch of the Albanian State Bank or at any official Bureau de Change. The import and export of Albanian currency is prohibited.

While in Albania you will stay at **hotels** operated by Albturist, each of which has its own restaurant. **Tippling** is strongly discouraged in Albania, but it is good to take some small gifts – postcards, souvenirs of Britain, etc. – as gestures of appreciation for special services.

**Food** in Albania resembles that elsewhere in the Balkan peninsula, with a strong Turkish influence.

## PART ONE: ABOUT ALBANIA

### GEOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The People's Socialist Republic of Albania is situated on the western seaboard of the Balkan Peninsula. It is bordered on the west by the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, on the north and east by Yugoslavia, and on the south by Greece.

Its area of 11,100 square miles makes it somewhat larger than Wales, and its population of 2,600,000 is about the same as that of Wales.

Albania is a mountainous country, with 77% of its territory classified as mountain or hill; its average height above sea-level is 2,219 feet (about twice the average height of Europe). The mountain chains stretch along the northern, eastern and southern frontiers, while in the west lowlands stretch inland from the coast for some 30 miles over a distance of 120 miles from north to south. These western lowlands constitute the most important region for both agriculture and industry, as well as the most densely populated. The highest mountain is Mt. Korab (9,300 feet), in the eastern chain.

The principal rivers are the Drin in northern Albania, the Shkumbin and Seman in central Albania, and the Vjosa in the south. The largest natural lakes are Lake Shkodra in the north-west, and Lakes Ohri and Prespa in the east.

In the western lowlands the winters are mild and the summers hot. Average annual temperature in Tirana, the capital, is 15°C (59°F), ranging from an average of 4°C (39°F) in January to 24°C (75°F) in July; however, temperatures as high as 44°C (111°F) have been recorded. In the highlands, however, the winters are cold, and temperatures as low as -15°C (5°F) have been recorded.

Rainfall is abundant, averaging 51 inches a year, with the highest fall in the northern Alps. Summer is, however, a dry season, and only 8% of the annual rain falls in summer, during which the sky is cloudless on most days.

### HISTORICAL SKETCH

The Albanian people are the descendants of the ancient Illyrians, who migrated from Central Europe into the Balkan Peninsula in prehistoric times. Illyrian settlements on the soil of what is now Albania have been discovered going back to the Bronze Age (c. 2,700 BC). By the 4th century BC a number of Illyrian states had come into existence, based upon slavery.

During the 2nd century BC the Romans succeeded in annexing Illyria, and when the Empire split in the 4th century AD, Illyria became a part of the Eastern or Byzantine Empire.

By the 14th century the slave system, weakened by successive invasions, had been transformed into a feudal system, and a number of aristocratic families had appeared upon the scene.

At the end of the 14th century a new invasion threatened what was now Albania (the name is derived from an Illyrian tribe of central Albania, the Albanoi) from Ottoman Turkey. By now three families of landed aristocrats dominated the country – the Dukagjins in the north, the Kastriots in central Albania, and the Arianitis in the south. These families played a leading role in the fierce resistance to the Turkish armies.

At first Turkey did not succeed in occupying the country, but was able to compel the Albanian nobles to pay an annual tribute to the Sultan. Taking advantage of the Turkish threat, Venice occupied a number of towns along the Albanian coast, including Shkodra, Lezha and Durrës.

Gjergj Kastriot, known to history as Skanderbeg, was born about 1405. Taken when still a boy to the Sultan's court as a hostage, he returned to his native land, raised an army and in November 1443 seized the fortress of Kruja, raising over it the Kastriot flag – red, with a black two-headed eagle – which later became the national flag of Albania.

In March 1444, on Skanderbeg's initiative, the Albanian nobles met in the Congress of Lezha and agreed to unite against the Turkish menace. For the next twenty-five years the Albanian armies successfully resisted those of Ottoman Turkey. But Skanderbeg died at Lezha on 17 January 1468, and ten years later, in July 1478, Kruja fell to the Turkish forces. By 1501 the Turkish occupation of Albania was virtually complete.

It was in the 16th century that the Albanians began to call their language *shqip*. Most Albanian philologists reject the view that this is derived from the word *shqiponjë* (eagle), and hold that it comes from the adverb *shqip* (clearly, intelligibly) – on the basis that someone speaking Albanian spoke clearly, intelligibly, while someone speaking a foreign language did not. From the name of the language come the words *Shqiptar* (Albanian) and *Shqipëri* (Albania).

During the four hundred years of Ottoman occupation, Albanian resistance did not cease, although during the 15th and 16th centuries tens of thousands of Albanians were forced to flee abroad, principally to southern Italy, where they retained their ethnic characteristics as the *Arbëresh*. There were frequent uprisings, and during the 18th century two feudal lords – Kara Mahmud Pasha Bushatli and Ali Pasha of Tepelena – succeeded in establishing semi-independent *Pashaliks*, centred respectively upon Shkodra in the north and Janina (now in Greece) in the south. Both these autonomous units were suppressed during the first years of the 19th century.

By the second half of the 19th century the Ottoman Empire was clearly in decline, and this was accompanied by a great awakening of Albanian national consciousness, known as the National Renaissance. Such writers as Naim Frashëri (1846-1900), his brother Sami Frashëri (1850-1904), and Andon Zako Çajupi (1856-1930) became standard bearers for Albanian culture, for Albanian patriotism, and for the demand for Albanian independence.

In 1878 a new Albanian League was set up at a congress held in Prizren (now in Yugoslavia), and branches appeared all over Albania. When the Great Powers, meeting in the Congress of Berlin, ignored the League's demand for the autonomy of Albania, it called upon the Albanian people to take up arms in defence of Albania. Although the League of Prizren, which set up a Provisional Government of Albania, was suppressed by the Turkish authorities in 1881, its call came to full fruition in 1910-12, when mass uprising spread throughout the country, leading on 28 November 1912, to the Proclamation of Independence in Vlora and the setting up of the first Albanian government, headed by Ismail Qemal.

In 1913 the Great Powers, at the London Conference of Ambassadors, arbitrarily drew the boundaries of the new state, separating from it about half its traditional territory and about half the Albanian people.

In the First World War of 1914-18, Albania became a battlefield between the armies of the warring powers. In 1915 the Allied Powers signed the secret Treaty of London, by which they agreed to carve up the territory of Albania after the war, by which time a large part of the country was occupied by the troops of Italy, which laid claim to most of central Albania.

In January 1920 Albanian patriots convened the Congress of Lushnja, which formed a new government, moved the capital to Tirana and demanded the withdrawal of the Italian forces. In June Albanian armed bands drove the Italians

from the district of Vlora, although not from the island of Sazan in the Bay of Vlora.

Albanian society was now dominated by the semi-feudal landed aristocracy, and this social class fiercely resisted any economic or political reforms which appeared to jeopardise their privileged position. Their leading representative, the chieftain Ahmet Bey Zogolli, known as Zog, was given increasingly dictatorial powers.

In June 1924 a revolution took place, bourgeois-democratic in form, led by representatives of the Albanian bourgeoisie. This overthrew the Zog regime and established a liberal-democratic government headed by the writer and historian Fan Noli. But in December Zog returned to Albania with a force of troops armed and financed by Yugoslavia; this army overthrew the Noli government and established a repressive dictatorship headed by Zog who was proclaimed President in 1925 and King in 1928. But the position of the landed aristocracy, represented politically by the Zog regime, was now so precarious that it felt obliged to turn to fascist Italy for assistance; in return for this support, the independence of Albania was compromised in many ways and the mineral wealth of the country was handed over for exploitation to Italian companies.

On 7 April 1939 Italian troops invaded Albania and, despite fierce resistance in the streets, succeeded in occupying the whole country. The royal family fled abroad, and Albania was forcibly incorporated into the Italian Empire, with 'governments' drawn from native fascist quislings.

A number of local Communist groups had been formed in Albania during the 1930s, and on 8 November 1941, meeting secretly in Tirana, representatives of these groups formed the Communist Party of Albania. In September 1942, on the initiative of the Party, a broad conference held at Peza founded the anti-fascist National Liberation Movement, with the aim of freeing Albania by force of arms from Italian and quisling rule. By the end of the year 2,000 partisans were in action against the occupation forces. In July 1943 the partisan units were united at Labinot (near Elbasan) into a National Liberation Army, now 10,000 strong, with a unified General Staff.

With the capitulation of Italy in September 1943, German troops took the place of the Italian occupying forces, but these were now met with stiff resistance.

Fearing the 'threat' of socialism if the National Liberation Army, under the leadership of the Communist Party, succeeded in its aim, other organisations professing 'nationalist' sentiments – *Balli Kombëtar* (The National Front) and the royalist *Legalitet* (Legality) – now embarked on the path of open collaboration with the Nazis against the NLA, thus exposing themselves to the people as traitors.

On 23 May 1944 the first Anti-Fascist National Liberation Congress was held in the liberated town of Përmet, and on 22 October the second Congress, meeting in now liberated Berat, elected a Provisional Government of Albania. Assisted indirectly by the Allied war effort, and particularly by the advance of the Red Army of the Soviet Union, after a fierce battle lasting 19 days the NLA was able to annihilate the German troops in the vicinity of the capital and to liberate Tirana on 17 November 1944. The new government entered the capital on 28 November, and the following day, with the freeing of Shkodra, the Liberation of Albania was complete.

Following the Liberation of Albania, two divisions of the National Liberation Army crossed into Yugoslavia and assisted the partisans there in the liberation of southern Yugoslavia.

In December 1945 elections were held in Albania to a Constituent Assembly, and the Democratic Front (as the National Liberation Front was now called) gained 93% of the votes. In January 1946 the Constituent Assembly proclaimed the

establishment of the People's Republic of Albania, and in March adopted a Constitution which declared that political power now belonged to the masses of the people.

Meanwhile, in February 1946, the 5th Plenum of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Albania adopted a new programme, for the construction of a socialist society in Albania. The first steps in this programme were taken immediately with the nationalisation of industrial enterprises, mines, banks, power stations, wholesale and foreign trade, so placing in the hands of the state the key sectors of the economy.

In 1947 the first State Plan of economic development came into effect, for two years only. This was followed in 1949 by the first Five Year Plan (1949-55), repeated every five years since at higher and higher levels.

In 1948 the 1st Congress of the Communist Party of Albania changed the name of the party to that of the Party of Labour of Albania (PLA).

During its earlier years, the people's Republic of Albania received significant economic aid from the Soviet Union. Following the death of Stalin in 1953, increasing political differences arose between the leaders of the two states, the Party of Labour of Albania charging the leaders of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union with 'revisionism' and with moving to restore capitalism in the Soviet Union. In 1961 the Soviet government terminated all aid to Albania, recalled its experts and broke off diplomatic relations.

During the next few years, the People's Republic of Albania received significant economic aid from the People's Republic of China, the leaders of which criticised the Soviet leaders in similar terms. But, particularly as China moved into ever closer relations with the United States, the PLA reached the conclusion that the leadership of the Communist Party of China was also revisionist. As a result of these political differences, in 1978 the Chinese government abruptly terminated all aid to Albania, which declared a policy of self-reliance.

Meanwhile, in 1967 all religious institutions in Albania had been closed, and in 1976 a new Constitution was adopted under which, as a result of the tremendous changes brought about since 1946, Albania became the People's Socialist Republic of Albania.

## **SOCIALISM**

The Party of Labour of Albania characterises the War of National Liberation as 'a national-democratic revolution' which, under the Party's leadership, was transformed without interruption into 'a socialist revolution' which gave political power to the working class. The Party characterises the society which has been created under its leadership since Liberation as one of 'socialism', which it defines as a society in which:

- 1) the principal means of production are owned by the state, which represents the political power of the working class;
- 2) the exploitation of man by man has been eliminated; and
- 3) production is no longer geared to the profit motive, but is planned centrally, in democratic consultation with the working people, so as to satisfy in the best way possible the needs of the working people.

The Party claims that it has been the construction of this socialist society, according to the principles of Marxism-Leninism upon which the Party bases itself, which has led to the remarkable development of production and the productive forces, to the elimination of unemployment, and to the establishment of social services which are unique in the world.

## **POWER**

Prior to Liberation, the production of electric power was very low, being confined to a few small power stations in the main towns. Since then, the development of electric power has been made a first priority, principally through the building of large hydro-electric power stations.

The whole country is now linked in a grid system, and in November 1970 the electrification of every village had been completed. Today the production of electric power is 300 times the level of 1938, enabling Albania not only to meet its internal needs for electric power, but to export it.

## **MINING**

Albania is very rich in minerals, especially in petroleum, natural gas, coal, bitumen, chromium, iron, nickel and copper. Since Liberation the mining industry has been greatly expanded, and intensive geological research has enabled new deposits to be discovered and exploited. Today copper production is 65 times the level of 1938, chromium production 112 times, and coal production 400 times.

## **INDUSTRY**

Prior to Liberation, Albania was a predominantly agricultural country, with industry confined to a few small workshops. The new regime embarked on a programme of intensive industrialisation, and in order to give this a continuing dynamic, priority was given to the production of means of production. In planning industrialisation, special attention was given to regional development, so that the more backward regions could catch up economically as quickly as possible with the more advanced.

Today the number of industrial workers is 27 times larger than in 1938, total industrial output 125 times, and engineering output 306 times. New industries, such as those of paper, glass, chemicals, iron and steel, have been created, together with large, new automated plants. Consequently, Albania today not only satisfies the needs of its people for almost all necessary manufactured consumer goods, but exports them as well.

Alongside industry proper, handicraft workers organised in cooperatives produce such things as hand-woven rugs and carpets, folk instruments, and so on.

## **AGRICULTURE**

In 1945, shortly after Liberation, the new regime introduced a Land Reform, based on the principle 'The Land to the Tiller'. By this, land was confiscated from the landlords and redistributed to peasant families with little or no land. The reform also prohibited the buying and selling of land, and cancelled all outstanding debts owed by the peasantry. At the same time State Farms were established on the large estates which had been confiscated; these were supplied with modern machinery and used as models to persuade the peasants of the advantages of large-scale farming. Today there are 25 State Farms, with an average area of 12,000 acres. The workers on a State Farm receive wages, and are regarded as members of the working class like factory workers.

It was, indeed, clear that agriculture based on small plots could never develop as the country needed. In 1956, therefore, a campaign was launched to persuade the peasants of the desirability of voluntarily pooling their plots of land into large Co-operative Farms which would enable machinery, such as tractors and combine-harvesters, to be effectively used. Collectivisation of agriculture was completed in 1967, and today there are 430 Co-operative Farms of this type, each embracing 5 to 10 villages and an average area of 2,500 acres (somewhat smaller in the highlands).

The members of a Cooperative Farm receive remuneration dependent upon the total income of the farm, in proportion to the quantity and quality of work which each performs. Collectivisation has also enabled the villagers to set up clubs, cinemas, etc., so helping to bring the rural areas up to the cultural level of the towns.

Since 1971 a new campaign has been launched to persuade cooperative farmers to merge their farms into still larger units, called Cooperative Farms of the Higher Type. These differ from those of the lower type in that the state participates in investment on the farms, and guarantees the remuneration of their members. There are today 50 Cooperative Farms of the Higher Type, with an average area of 7,000 acres; they are regarded as a transitional form on the road to the transformation of Cooperative Farms into State Farms, of cooperative farmers into workers.

Cooperative Farms do not own their own large-scale agricultural machinery. This remains the property of State Machine and Tractor Stations, which hire the machines and their operators to the farms. The purpose of this is stated to be to ensure that the working class, through the state, maintains the leading role in relation to the peasantry.

The amount of cultivable land, and its fertility, has been greatly increased since Liberation by a programme of public works, by the draining of the once extensive swamps, and by the building of irrigation canals. As a result, the area of arable land is 2.5 times that which existed in 1938, and more than 50% of this is irrigated.

The development of agriculture has been assisted by the development of industry, which provides it with machinery, chemical fertilisers, etc. It has also been directly assisted by the establishment of a network of Agricultural Research Stations, which have enabled both the State and Cooperative Farms greatly to increase their agricultural and livestock yields, and by the provision to the Cooperative Farms by the state of credits at a nominal rate of interest (interest-free in the case of the highland areas).

In consequence of all this, total agricultural production is today 5 times what it was in 1938.

## **TRANSPORT**

In the field of transport, the most important place is held by road transport, which carries 75% of the total of goods and 80% of the total of passengers. Since Liberation the length of motor roads has been more than doubled, giving access by motor vehicles to mountain roads previously accessible only to pack animals.

The first railway in Albania was built only in 1948, but there is now a network of railways which is being rapidly expanded. Today the railways carry 25% of the total of goods and 20% of the total of passengers.

Albania's tiny fleet of merchant ships was destroyed during the Second World War, and its ports badly damaged. Now these ports have been restored and enlarged, and the new merchant ships which have been built or imported carry goods not only along the Albanian coast but over the oceans of the world.

## **FOREIGN TRADE**

Prior to Liberation, Albania exported only minerals and a limited quantity of agricultural produce, while it imported almost all its requirements in manufactured goods, from paper to needles.

As the economy has developed since then, so has the quantity of foreign trade, the value of which is now more than 22 times the level of 1938. Today Albania exports not only chrome, iron-nickel, crude oil, bitumen, copper and other minerals, but also electric wire and cables, building materials, clothing, leather and plastic

goods, chemicals, carpets, rugs, fresh and preserved food products, wines, and electric power. Today processed goods account for more than 62% of the total volume of exports.

## **THE STRUGGLE AGAINST REVISIONISM**

The leadership of the Party of Labour of Albania holds that a number of countries which formerly had socialist systems – the Soviet Union and other countries of Eastern Europe – have degenerated into capitalist systems, in which the state officials and industrial managers have become a new capitalist class, in which the profit motive has become the motive and regulator of production, in which the working class has become once more an exploited class.

To guard against this danger in the People's Socialist Republic of Albania and to prevent the emergence of a privileged stratum which is seen as the breeding ground for revisionism, all officials, enterprise managers, army officers and intellectuals are required to take part for definite periods in production (unless their health does not permit this). Furthermore, the differential between the remuneration of the lowest-paid worker and the highest-paid official or intellectual has been limited by law to 1:2.

## **PRICES**

In Albania all prices are fixed by the state, and are uniform throughout the country. While the prices of goods reflect in general their value (the amount of work needed for their production), some goods (such as pharmaceuticals and clothing) are sold below their value, while others (e.g. luxury goods, wines and spirits) are sold above their value.

As production has increased, wage levels have been increased and prices reduced so that all goods produced may be sold. There is therefore no inflation in Albania; price levels today are some 20% below those of 1958. There are also no economic crises of over-production such as afflict most other countries.

## **THE ABOLITION OF TAXES**

In November 1969 all taxation on incomes or sales was abolished, and the absence of taxes is now embodied in the 1976 Constitution. The state now receives all its necessary revenue from productive enterprises and foreign trade.

## **STATE STRUCTURE**

Since the adoption of the new Constitution in December 1976, Albania has been officially the People's Socialist Republic of Albania, in which Marxism-Leninism is defined as the dominant ideology. This state is described, using the words of Karl Marx, as 'the dictatorship of the proletariat', meaning one in which political power is in the hands of the working people.

The highest organ of state power, and the sole law-making body, is the People's Assembly of 250 deputies, elected every four years by all citizens aged 18 and over by secret voting. Electors have the right to recall any deputy with whom they are dissatisfied. Between sessions of the People's Assembly, its functions are exercised by its Presidium, elected by and responsible to the full Assembly. The highest executive organ of the state is the Council of Ministers, or Government, elected by and responsible to the People's Assembly.

In the sphere of local government, state power is exercised by People's Councils, elected every three years on the same basis as the People's Assembly.

Justice is administered by People's Courts. The highest court, the Supreme Court, is elected by the People's Assembly, while the lower courts are elected by the



People's Councils.

A fourth organ of the state consists of the Office of the Attorney-General, who is also elected by the People's Assembly. It has the function of ensuring that both citizens and state organs operate within the law.

The sole political party is the Party of Labour of Albania, which is defined as the 'leading political force of the state and society'. The Party does not contest elections directly, but through a broader political organisation called the Democratic Front, a continuation of the wartime National Liberation Front; this is an alliance between the Party and non-Party socialists in which the Party plays the leading rôle.

## EDUCATION

Under the Ottoman occupation, Albanian culture was suppressed. It was only after a long struggle that the first school in the Albanian language was opened in Korça on 7 March 1887 (7 March is now celebrated each year as Teachers' Day). It was also in Korça that, in 1892, the first school in the Albanian language for girls was inaugurated.

After Independence in 1912 Albanian education developed to some extent, but was cut back once more under the Zog regime (1924-1939) and still more under the Italian-German occupation (1939-44).

In 1944 85% of the population was illiterate, and the Communist Party of Albania made the establishment of schools a first priority in each liberated district.

In 1946 education was made free and secular, and a large-scale campaign undertaken to eliminate illiteracy. In 1952 elementary education was made compulsory, and a few years later this was extended to eight years, from ages 6 to 14.

It is considered that 6-7 pupils is the minimum necessary to operate a school. In scattered mountain districts where a locality does not have this minimum number of children, the pupils are sent to boarding schools from which they return home at the week-ends.

There is also an extensive network of nursery schools, such that a place is available to every pre-school child whose family lives in a town or village.

After completing compulsory education at the age of 14, most pupils choose to proceed to a secondary school for a further four years. Many secondary schools have a vocational character, training for specific occupations. The curriculum of all secondary schools, both general and vocational, is, however, designed to fit the student for higher education if he/she so decides.

The first higher educational institution was set up in 1957. Now the University of Tirana has 8 faculties with 45 Departments, and some 16,000 students. Other higher educational institutions are the Higher Institute of Agriculture and the Higher Institute of Arts.

Education at all levels is completely free; the family pays only towards the cost of school meals (29% of their actual cost) and of textbooks (the cost of these for a school year is equivalent to the average wage for 1½ days). Students at secondary schools and higher educational establishments are entitled to grants to cover all or part (this depending on the income of the student's family) of his or her living expenses.

A few years ago the educational system was revolutionised, to be based on three components: learning, physical and military training, and vocational training.

## THE EMANCIPATION OF WOMEN

Prior to Liberation the status of a woman in Albania was appalling. In addition to suffering the poverty which afflicted the majority of the population, she was, with rare exceptions, treated as a chattel, a servant confined to the house, in certain

regions compelled to conceal her face behind a veil.

In 1944 Albania had only 21 women teachers and only 3 women doctors. There were no women Members of Parliament, no women engineers, no women chemists, no women agronomists. Girls made up only 2.4% of the pupils at secondary schools, and the burden of illiteracy weighed even more heavily upon girls and women than upon men.

During the War of National Liberation, the Communist Party called upon the women of Albania to join the National Liberation Army in order to emancipate not only their country, but themselves; in consequence, more than 6,000 girls and women joined its ranks. In September 1943 the Anti-Fascist Organisation of Albanian Women was set up to carry forward this mobilisation.

Since Liberation, the programme for the emancipation of women has achieved considerable successes. The equal status of women is enshrined in the Constitution, and an unremitting campaign has been waged to make this a social reality — a campaign directed at backward ideas which maintain that 'a woman's place is in the home', that the man is 'the head of the family', that housework and the care of children is 'women's work', etc. Today, 47% of the working population are females, and women make up 33% of the members of the People's Assembly, 41% of the leaders of mass organisations.

## THE HEALTH SERVICE

Prior to Liberation, there was much disease among the mass of the people, and the average expectation of life in 1938 was only 38 years. What health services existed were available only at fees which were beyond the means of most working people.

Today, as a result of the greatly improved standard of living, of the measures taken to protect the environment from pollution, of the remarkable extension of the health service, diseases such as malaria, cholera, smallpox and syphilis, which were widespread before Liberation, have virtually been eliminated, and the average expectation of life has been raised from 38 to 69 years.

While in 1938 there was only one doctor for every 8,527 of the population, today there is a doctor for every 780 people. The health services are available through a network of 3,557 Health Centres, which are located within reach of every inhabitant and where the emphasis is on the prevention of disease. The number of hospital beds has been increased 21 times since 1938.

The health service is entirely non-contributory and free to every inhabitant (and foreign visitor), apart from a nominal charge for the dispensing of prescriptions.

## THE LANGUAGE

The Albanian language is a member of the family of Indo-European languages, as was first proved by the German philologist Franz Bopp (1791-1867) in the 19th century. It is the sole surviving language derived from Illyrian.

Albanian is spoken not only by the people living within the borders of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania, but also by Albanians living in what is now southern Yugoslavia and northern Greece. An older form of the Albanian language is spoken by the Arbëresh of southern Italy, whose ancestors settled there in the 15th and 16th centuries.

## LITERATURE

Although the Albanian language has been spoken for 3,000 years, the earliest written document which has come down to us dates only from 1462. The first book in Albanian to have been published was Gjon Buzuku's *Missal* of 1555. From

the 17th century we have a number of religious books by Pjetër Budi, Franco Bardhi, Pjetër Bogdani and others.

The National Renaissance of the 19th century produced a flowering of secular, romantic literature, typified by the poem *Milosao's Songs* by Jeronim De Rada (1815-1903). But the writer who dominated Albanian literature in this period was the poet Naim Frashëri (1846-1900), author of the pastoral poem *Flocks and Farming* and the collection of poems *Summer Flowers*. Naim's brother Sami Frashëri wrote *Albania: What It Was, What It Is, and What It Will Be* (1899), which became the manifesto of the national movement.

The period following Independence in 1912 was dominated by Fan Noli (1882-1965), who translated many foreign masterpieces into Albanian, and was the author of *The History of Skanderbeg* and *Beethoven and the French Revolution*. The culmination of the trend of critical realism was reached in the work of Migjeni (1911-1938), who wrote both poems and short stories.

Following Liberation, with the construction of a socialist society in Albania, the dominant literary trend was that of socialist realism. Among contemporary poets whose work is permeated with a socialist outlook are Dritëro Agolli, Ismail Kadare, Llazar Siliqi and Fatos Arapi.

Today the novel has emerged as the leading literary form, and a number of Albanian novels have, in translation, achieved world recognition: Ismail Kadare's *The Castle* and *The General of the Dead Army*, Fatmir Gjata's *The Marsh* and Dritëro Agolli's *The Bronze Bust*.

## NEWSPAPERS AND MAGAZINES

Prior to Liberation 85% of the population of Albania was illiterate. There were then only six newspapers in the country, and the largest of these – *Drita* (Light) – was published in an edition of only 6,000 copies.

Today the country has 25 newspapers which total 47 million copies a year. The two daily newspapers are *Zëri i Popullit* (The People's Voice), the organ of the Party of Labour, and *Bashkimi* (Union), organ of the government. A number of other newspapers appear twice weekly, such as *Puna* (Labour), organ of the trades unions; *Zëri i Rinisë* (The Voice of Youth), organ of the Labour Youth Union; and *Luftëtari* (The Warrior), organ of the People's Army. In addition to these national newspapers, local newspapers are published in 14 districts.

Among the most important magazines are *Rruga e Partisë* (The Road of the Party), the theoretical journal of the Party; *Drita* (Light) and *Nëntori* (November), organs of the League of Writers and Artists; *Shqiptarja e Re* (The New Albanian Woman), organ of the Women's Union; and the illustrated magazine *Ylli* (The Star).

Intended primarily for the foreign reader are the magazines *New Albania* and *Albania Today*, both of which are published in English editions. The scientific journal *Studia Albanica* and the literary magazine *Les Lettres Albanaises* are published in French.

## PAINTING AND SCULPTURE

The museums of Albania, as well as those buildings of the past which are preserved as cultural monuments, contain a great number of works of painting and sculpture created in Albania from earliest times.

In the 16th century Albania gave birth to the mural painter Onufre; his works, and those of his son Nikolla, are found in many parts of the Balkans.

The National Renaissance of the 19th century led to the rise of secular painting on patriotic themes, in which Kole Idromeneo (1860-1939) is the outstanding figure.

The years after Independence in 1912 were not very favourable to artistic activity. Nevertheless this period saw the creation of a number of outstanding works by the painters Zef Kolombi (1907-1949) and Vangjush Mio (1891-1957) and the sculptor Odhise Paskali (born 1903).

Following Liberation in 1944, however, the new state power gave great support to the arts, and painting and sculpture flourished. The statues found in every town and in many villages testify to this encouragement. In 1965 the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania reached the conclusion that the artistic concept of socialist realism had proved itself, and should be the basis of officially encouraged Albanian art.

In 1974 the National Gallery of Figurative Arts was opened in Tirana, and provides a panorama of Albanian painting and sculpture of the past hundred years.

## MUSIC

Albania has a rich tradition of folk music, expressing the thoughts and feelings, the dreams and the suffering, of the people. South of the river Shkumbin this folk music is polyphonic in form.

Folk music receives strong encouragement from the state, both in itself and as a basis for national idioms in contemporary music. In 1957 the State Ensemble of Folk Song and Dance was established to bring the beauties of Albania's folk music to audiences at home and abroad, and in 1960 the Institute of Folklore was set up to collect and record this music.

Among early Albanian composers and musicians must be mentioned Niketa of Rameziana (4th century) and Jan Kukuzeli (12th century).

Under the Zog regime the arts were not supported, and talented composers like Fan Noli and Thoma Nasi were compelled to emigrate. Abroad, Noli composed a number of symphonic poems based on Albanian themes and published his famous study on *Beethoven and the French Revolution*.

During the War of National Liberation, patriotic and partisan songs provided inspiration to the Albanian fighters, and at the height of the war, in July 1944, the Ensemble of the People's Army was set up. Immediately after Liberation, the State Choir was established, and later incorporated in the Albanian Philharmonia; and 1947 marked the inauguration in Tirana of the Lyceum of Arts, with a department for the teaching of music. The Conservatory of Music, a department of the Higher Institute of Arts, was opened in 1961 for the training of singers and musicians, composers and conductors, and teachers of music.

In 1950 the first ballet group was set up, and later incorporated in the Opera and Ballet Theatre. In 1958 the Theatre staged the first Albanian opera – *Mrika*, composed by Prenk Jakova with libretto by Lazar Siliqi – and in 1963 the first Albanian ballet – *Halili and Hajrija*, composed by Tish Dala with choreography by Panajot Kanaçi.

Today, in addition to the orchestras of the Opera and Ballet Theatre, of Radio-Television, of the Higher Institute of Arts, and of the Secondary Art Schools, there are symphony orchestras in Shkodra, Korça, Elbasan and Durrës. There are also 13 smaller orchestras attached to the variety theatres, and more than 40 bands. In the amateur field, hundreds of factories and clubs have their own instrumental ensembles and choirs.

Among the most popular annual musical events are the Festival of New Songs organised by the Radio and Television Service, and the May Concerts in Tirana.

## THEATRE

Prior to Liberation there were a number of amateur dramatic societies in the

main towns of Albania, but their activities were not encouraged by the authorities. At the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, Albania produced a world-famous actor, Aleksandër Moisiu (1879-1935), who, failing to realise his dream of setting up a national theatre, was compelled to perform all his life abroad.

During the war of National Liberation, the partisans set up a number of agit-prop theatrical groups to present the cause of the anti-fascist struggle to the people in dramatic terms. On 24 May 1944, on the eve of Liberation, the first professional theatre in the history of Albania was established in the historic town of Përmet.

Today the country has 8 professional drama companies, 15 variety theatre companies, and 26 puppet theatre companies. In addition, almost every factory, cooperative farm and institution has its own amateur theatrical group, the professional and amateur theatres operating on the basis of mutual help.

In 1946 the first secondary school specialising in the drama, the Jordan Misja School, came into being, and in 1959 the Aleksandër Moisiu Higher School for Actors was opened as a Department of the Higher Institute of Arts.

Although each professional theatre company has its own well-equipped premises, it must stage at least 40% of its annual performances in the enterprises and villages.

In addition to translations from the treasury of world drama – from the works of Shakespeare, Molière, Schiller, Ibsen, Brecht, and many others – there is now an extensive and growing repertoire of Albanian plays based on the artistic concept of socialist realism.

## CINEMA

In May 1947 all cinemas in Albania were nationalised, and in the same month the first Albanian film, a newsreel of the May Day celebrations, was screened.

In 1952 the state-owned New Albania Film Studio came into existence in Tirana, and in 1958 this produced the first Albanian full-length feature film, *Tana*, based on a novel by Fatmir Gjata. Today the studio produces more than a dozen feature films each year, together with newsreels and documentaries.

## SPORT

Sporting activity in Albania begins at school, where physical training forms an important part of the curriculum.

At Liberation, there existed only 3 sports parks, 5 practice grounds, and a few football and volleyball grounds and tennis courts. No more than 5,000 people altogether participated in sport, all of them males. Today there are 21 sports stadiums, 81 sports centres, 3 sports palaces (with 2 more under construction), 36 shooting ranges, 375 practice grounds, 271 gymnasias, 366 football grounds, 339 basketball grounds and 476 volleyball grounds.

Today hundreds of thousands of sportsmen and sportswomen are organised in sports clubs based on locality, workplace, military detachment, etc. There are National Championships in football, basketball, volleyball, athletics, swimming, shooting, table tennis, wrestling, weightlifting, chess and other sports. One of the most popular sporting events is the Tour of Albania, a cycle race over 789 miles, while the highest degree of mass participation is to be found in the Spartakiads, in the last of which there were more than 300,000 participants.

The Vojo Kushi Higher Institute of Physical Culture in Tirana is an institute of higher education which specialises in the training of PT teachers and of sportsmen and sportswomen.

## PART TWO: TOURING ALBANIA

### A1. HAN I HOTIT to KOPLIK (10 miles)

From the frontier post of **Han i Hotit** the road to Shkodra follows the track of an ancient highway through the mountain region of Kastrati and the village of **Buzë Ujit** into a small plain that stretches along the shores of **Lake Shkodra**.

Although it lies only partly within the borders of Albania, this lake – which can be seen from the road – is the country's largest lake, with an area of 144 square miles. It is, however, relatively shallow, with a maximum depth of 42 feet. The lake communicates with the sea through the River Buna, and is a rich source of fish.

Near to the lake lies the small town of **Koplik** (the ancient Cinna).

### A2. KOPLIK to THETH (46 miles)

From **Koplik** another road runs in a north-easterly direction into the Northern Alps. This steep and picturesque route passes through the gorge of **Përroi i Thatë**, which is in places only 7 feet wide.

On a hilltop overlooking the gorge stand the ruins of the small Illyrian town of **Marshenjt**, built in the 7th century BC. Parts of its stone walls, 11 feet thick, still stand.

As the gorge widens into a broad valley, with villages along its slopes, the road reaches the village of **Boga**, 3,051 feet above sea-level and now a health resort.

After **Boga** the road traverses the Pass of Thores – at 5,351 feet above sea-level one of the highest passes in the country – and then descends to the valley of the River Shala to reach the attractive village of **Theth**, now a health resort and a base for mountaineering. Nearby are the peaks of **Mt. Popullka** (8,530 feet), **Mt. Radohina** (8,428 feet), **Mt. Alia** (7,874 feet) and **Mt. Harap** (7,270 feet). The mountains here have a peculiar beauty at sunset, when they assume a pink colour.

### A3. KOPLIK to SHKODRA (11 miles)

The main road from **Koplik** to Shkodra passes by a number of villages which are today organised into cooperative farms, here specialising particularly in wheat and tobacco.

On the outskirts of Shkodra the highway passes through the **Perlat Rexhepi State Vineyards**, embracing some 2,500 acres of vines and other fruit trees and named after a hero of the War of National Liberation.

## SHKODRA

**Shkodra** (formerly Scutari) is the largest town of northern Albania, with a population of 50,000.

It is one of the oldest towns in Europe, having been, in the middle of the last millennium BC, the capital of the state of the Ardians and an important river port.

In 168 BC the Romans occupied Shkodra, and from the 5th to the 11th century AD it formed part of the Byzantine Empire. In 1350 it became for a time the capital of the state of the Albanian feudal lords, the Balshas, only to be occupied in 1396 by the Venetians, who held the city for almost a hundred years. In 1478 the fortress was besieged by the armies of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, which finally overcame the heroic resistance of the defenders.

With the decline of Ottoman power, in the 18th century Shkodra became the capital of a semi-independent *Pashalik* administered by the Albanian feudal lords, the Bushatlis, under whom it underwent a revival as a trade and handicraft centre.

On the top of a rocky hill overlooking the town rises the **Fortress of Rozafat**,

the foundations of which were laid by the Illyrians in the last millennium BC. Remnants of these ancient foundations are to be found near the entrance to the fortress, but most of its existing walls were constructed during the Middle Ages by the Venetians and Turks. The fortress is oval in shape, with seven towers. Three sets of walls divide the fortress into three parts: in the first part there are no buildings; in the second part stand the remains of a mosque built upon the ruins of a church, together with those of what is believed to have been the barracks; in the third part rise the ruins of a palace, later turned into a munitions dump by the Turks, the entrance to an underground passage which once linked the fortress with the river Drin, and water cisterns which supplied the occupants with water during the many sieges.

According to an old legend, three brothers were engaged on the building of the original walls of the fortress, but found that everything they constructed collapsed during the night. An old seer informed them that the successful building of the walls demanded a human sacrifice, and the brothers agreed to sacrifice whichever of their wives brought them their lunch next day. But the two elder brothers warned their wives, so that the lunch was brought by the wife of the youngest brother. The young woman, **Rozafa**, agreed to be immured within the walls, provided a hole were left through which she could feed her baby. And still today milky water flows from a spring within the walls of the castle – from, it is said, the breast of the entombed mother.

One of Shkodra's most interesting buildings is the **Leaden Mosque**, so-called from the lead with which its one large and nineteen smaller cupolas are covered. Opened in 1768, it is identical in design and relative proportions with **St. Sophia** in Istanbul. The iron grilles at its windows are also an interesting feature.

Shkodra has a number of **museums**: a historical and ethnographic museum; one dedicated to three communist heroes – **Përlat Rexhepi**, **Branko Kadia** and **Jordan Misia** – who fought a brave resistance to the Italian occupation forces within the confines of a small house; another devoted to the writer **Migjeni** (1911-1938), and still another to the patriot **Luigj Gurakuqi** (1879-1925). Perhaps the most interesting of Shkodra's museums, however, is the **Museum of Atheism**, opened in 1973, at the entrance to which is written Marx's famous dictum: 'Religion is the opium of the people'. The museum aims to demonstrate the role of religious institutions in Albania in holding back the development of science and social progress, the collaboration of priests and mullahs with the former ruling classes and the foreign occupiers of the country, the role of church and mosque in the subjection of women, and so on.

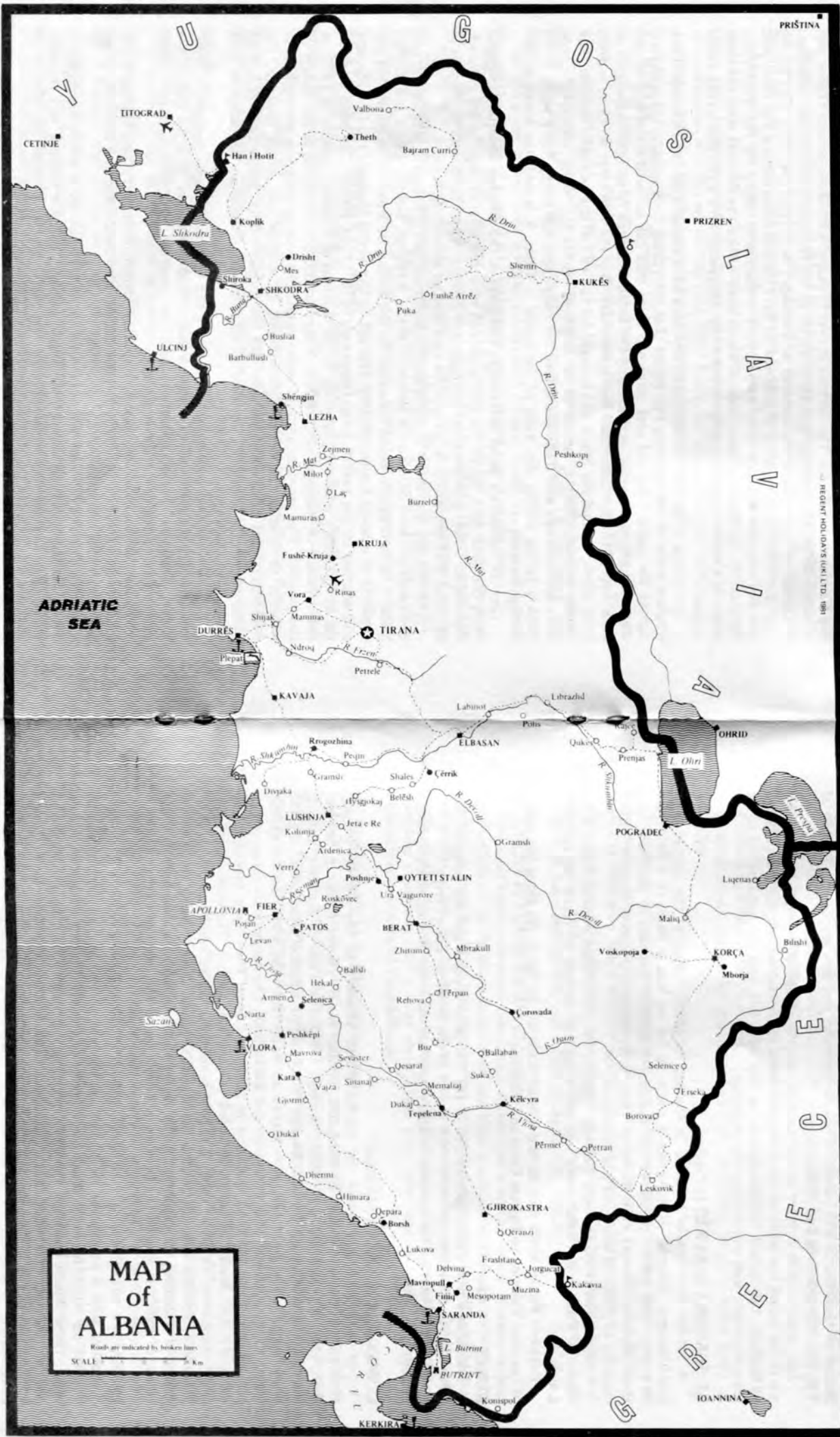
Shkodra has two professional theatres – the **Migjeni Theatre**, opened in 1949, and a variety theatre – a radio station and a local newspaper. It is the seat of the **Higher Teachers' Training Institute** and the **Institute of Zootechnology**, which carries on research in veterinary science.

Today the Shkodra district is an important centre of industry, specialising in the production of copper wire and electric cables, processed food and tobacco, wines and spirits, and electric power.

On 15 April 1979 the Shkodra district was struck by a severe earthquake, which caused many casualties and much damage. All this damage was repaired within five months at the expense of the state, and as a result the district of Shkodra was awarded the decoration 'Hero of Socialist Labour'.

### B1. SHKODRA to SHIROKA (4 miles)

A road leaves Shkodra to the west to **Shiroka**, a fishing village and summer bathing resort on the shores of Lake Shkodra.



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### B2. SHKODRA to DRISHT (7 miles)

Another road leaves Shkodra to the north-east. Just beyond the village of **Mes** (6 miles from Shkodra) the road crosses the river Kiri by the beautiful mediaeval **Bridge of Mes**; this is 123 yards long and composed of five arches, the longest of which is 30 yards long and 49 feet high.

Just under a mile further along the road lies the village of **Drisht**, near to which are to be found the ruins of the mediaeval town of **Drivastum**, originally an Illyrian settlement; the ruined fortress stands on top of a hill, and the remains are to be seen of a triple wall which encircled the town.

### B3. SHKODRA to KUKËS (47 miles)

A further road leaves Shkodra to the east in the direction of the highlands of north-eastern Albania. It traverses a plain as far as **Vau i Dejës** (6 miles from Shkodra); here are to be found the remains of ancient **Dagnum** in the form of a small fortress. Nearby, on the river Drin, a hydroelectric power station with a capacity of 250,000 kilowatts has been built.

Crossing the river, the road ascends through the mountains, passing through the towns of **Puka** and **Fushë Arrëz** and the village of **Shemri** to reach the town of **Kukës**.

Between **Fushë Arrëz** and **Shemri** a road leads off to the north along the valley of the river **Valbona** to **Bajram Curri** and **Valbona**.

### KUKËS

**Kukës** is a new town, constructed in the 1960s to replace the old town of the same name, now submerged below the waters of the artificial Lake Fierza.

It is the centre of the mineral industry, specialising in the mining and treatment of copper.

### C. SHKODRA to LEZHA (25 miles)

The road leading towards the capital leaves Shkodra to the South, passing through the pleasant suburb of **Bahçallëk**, famous for its grapes. Crossing the river Drin, the road runs along its bank, through the fertile Plain of **Zadrime**, passing through the villages of **Bërdica**, **Bushat** (the name of which is linked with a great feudal family, the **Bushatlis**, who played an important role in the history of this region in the 17th and 18th centuries) and **Barbullush**. The cooperative farms which can be seen from the road specialise in olives and other fruit trees, including the mulberry (the leaves of which are used to feed silkworms). The road continues along the foot of the low, rocky **Kakarriq** mountains, where beekeepers bring their hives to enable the bees to feed on the sage that grows there. Passing through the village of **Kakarriq**, the road eventually leaves the mountains behind and, after the village of **Ballëdren**, crosses the Drin once more to enter the town of **Lezha**.

### LEZHA

**Lezha**, with a population of 10,000, is the site of the ancient city of **Lissus**. Upon a hill near the town stand the remains of the old Illyrian walls and, below them, those which encircled the old Greek colony, said to have been founded in 385 BC by the Syracusan tyrant **Dionysus**. The colony was short-lived: **Lissus** became part of the Illyrian state of the **Ardians** and remained such until the Roman conquest.

During the Middle Ages a new fortress was erected here, but the city fell successively to the Serbs, to the Albanian feudal lords, the **Dukagjins**, to the **Venetians** and finally to the **Turks**.

It was in **Lezha** that in 1444 the Albanian League was formed and appointed **Skanderbeg** Supreme Commander in the war of resistance against the **Turks**; and it was here that **Skanderbeg** died on 17 January 1468.

In 1968 – on the 500th anniversary of **Skanderbeg's** death – what remained of the ruins of **Shënkoll Cathedral**, where he was buried, were reconstructed and transformed into a monument to the national hero.

**Lezha** has also a small historical museum.

### D. LEZHA to SHËNGJIN (4 miles)

A road leaves **Lezha** to the north-west to reach the coast 4 miles away at **Shëngjin**.

### SHËNGJIN

**Shëngjin** is Albania's northernmost port, known in ancient times by the name of **Nymphaeon** and, later, **Caesarea**. It was here that, during the civil war between **Caesar** and **Pompey**, **Mark Antony** landed with reinforcements for **Caesar**.

Before Liberation, **Shëngjin** was almost uninhabited, the only building being a customs house. Today it is a thriving little port which serves the northern parts of Albania. It has a fishing fleet and a fine, sandy bathing beach.

### E1. LEZHA to FUSHË-KRUJA (27 miles)

The road leading towards the capital leaves **Lezha** to the south. It ascends into the foothills of the **Pëdhana** mountains, and then passes down through the village of **Zejmen** to cross the river **Mat** by a bridge. It continues through the village of **Milot** (where there is a metallurgical plant and a woodworking combine), through the town of **Laç** (where there is a large superphosphate plant) and the village of **Mamuras** (the centre of a large state farm), past farms and orchards to reach the administrative centre of **Fushë-Kruja**.

### E2. FUSHË-KRUJA to KRUJA (4 miles)

From **Fushë-Kruja** a road travels in a north-easterly direction, leaving the plain to climb into limestone hills which have provided building stone for centuries. Passing through olive groves and past quarries, lime kilns and a cement factory, it arrives at the legendary town of **Kruja**.

### KRUJA

Near to **Kruja** stood the ancient city of **Albanopolis**, the capital of the Illyrian tribe of the **Albanoi**. Some time before the 7th century AD the **Albanoi** abandoned **Albanopolis** and moved their capital higher up to the more easily defensible position of **Kruja**, which had by the 8th century become an important fortified town.

By the 14th century **Kruja** had become the capital of the principality administered by the Albanian feudal lords, the **Thopias**, who rebuilt the walls of the fortress.

The most glorious period of **Kruja's** history took place in the 15th century, during the 25-year-long Albanian war of resistance against the invaders of the Turkish Ottoman Empire, a war in which the leading role was taken by **Skanderbeg**. The Turkish armies besieged the fortress of **Kruja** four times: in 1450, 1466 and 1467 they were driven off, but in 1478 (ten years after the death of **Skanderbeg**) the defenders were forced to surrender through lack of provisions.

Modern **Kruja** is a small town of 6,000 inhabitants. From its altitude of 1,985 feet above sea-level, it commands a wonderful view of the coastal plain of Albania.

— a view which has given it the name of 'the Balcony of the Adriatic'.

One enters the town through a small square in which stands an equestrian **Statue of Skanderbeg** by the Albanian sculptor Janaq Paço, unveiled in 1959. One of the most interesting features of Kruja is the **Old Bazaar**, consisting of two rows of shops covered by eaves dating from the 18th and 19th centuries and painstakingly restored in 1965-67.

Little remains of the old fortress of Skanderbeg's time, the walls having been reconstructed by the Turks. A tower known as the 'eyrie' still stands, and outside the North Gate is a fountain bearing pre-Turkish inscriptions and the date 1434. Within the fortress is a small **museum** dedicated to the national struggle of the Albanian people through the ages, with particular emphasis on the Kastriots, the family of Skanderbeg.

#### **F1. FUSHË-KRUJA to VORA (10 miles)**

The road from Fushë-Kruja towards the capital passes through a plain: to the east cooperative farms stretch away into the distance, while to the west is a range of hills. Four miles from Fushë-Kruja a road leads off to the east to the international airport at **Rinas**.

After passing a brickworks, one reaches the road and rail junction of **Vora**, the centre of a large state farm.

#### **F2. VORA to TIRANA (11 miles)**

The road to the capital leaves Vora to the south-east; to its north lies a broad plain, to its south a range of hills under cultivation. Just before **Tirana** is reached, the houses and coal mines of **Mëzezi** can be seen.

### **TIRANA**

**Tirana**, surrounded on three sides by hills, is the capital of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania and its largest town, with a population of 300,000. It has an area of 12 square miles, and is situated almost at the geographical centre of the country at an altitude of 361 feet above sea-level. It has an average temperature throughout the year of 59°F, ranging from an average of 45°F in January to 75°F in July and August.

According to legend, Tirana was founded in 1614 by the feudal lord of the region, Sulejman Pasha Mulleti, who built there a mosque, a bath-house and a bakery. It began to develop into a town, however, only in the 18th century.

In 1920 the Congress of Lushnja proclaimed Tirana the capital of Albania, and it underwent further growth as the administrative centre of the country, its population increasing from 15,000 in 1911 to 25,000 in 1938.

The Communist Party of Albania (now the Party of Labour of Albania) was founded secretly in Tirana on 8 November 1941, and led the national liberation struggle against the Italian and German occupation forces. Tirana was liberated, after a fierce struggle lasting three weeks, on 29 November 1944.

The centre of Tirana is **Skanderbeg Square**; in a garden in the centre of the square stands the **Statue of Skanderbeg** (cover illustration), the work of a group of sculptors, unveiled in 1968.

On the eastern side of the square stands the marble-faced **Palace of Culture**, which contains 240 halls and rooms. Among the largest of these is the **Opera and Ballet Theatre**, which has a revolving stage and seats 1,000 people. There is also a large exhibition hall, two conference halls, a concert hall, a drama theatre, a variety theatre and a puppet theatre, together with rehearsal rooms, restaurants, and so on. The Palace of Culture also houses the **National Library**, which has a priceless

collection of manuscripts and more than 800,000 books; it specialises in material relating to Albania.

Leading north from Skanderbeg Square is **Stalin Boulevard**, a broad tree-shaded avenue which leads to the **Railway Station** and the **Maternity Hospital**. On its eastern side stands the **Hotel Tirana**, and on its western side there is a stamp shop for philatelists.

Leading east from Skanderbeg Square is **28 November Street**, on the corner of which stands the **Mosque of Haxhi Ethem-Bey**, one of the finest examples of 19th century Albanian architecture. It is rectangular in shape, with a single, slender minaret. The portico at the entrance rests on polychromatic capitals decorated with acanthus leaves; the mural paintings of this portico are unusual for an Islamic building in that they portray buildings, trees, bridges, waterfalls, etc. The tombs of the Bey and his wife lie within wrought iron railings. Next to the mosque stands the **Clock Tower**, built at the same time but reconstructed later.

Leading west from Skanderbeg Square is the **Avenue of the Peza Conference**, on the corner of which stands the **State Bank**. It leads to the industrial quarter of the city, and to the south of it lies 'New Tirana', composed of flats and shops with parks and gardens.

Leading north-west off the Avenue of the Peza Conference is the **Durrës Road**, which also leads to the airport. Along it lie new blocks of flats and shops.

Leading south from Skanderbeg Square is the **Avenue of the Martyrs of the Nation**, with the **Park of Youth**, planted by the youth of the capital, on its western side. In a garden on its eastern side stands the **Statue of Lenin** by Kristina Hoshi, unveiled in 1954; behind the garden is the **Pioneers' Palace**, a centre for the children of the Pioneer organisation. Further south on the eastern side stands the new two-storeyed **Art Gallery** and the **Hotel Dajti**. The Avenue of the Martyrs of the Nation leads to the **University of Tirana**, opened in 1957; it has 8 faculties, 41 departments and 16,000 students (41% of them female).

Within the university grounds is to be found the **Archaeological and Ethnographical Museum**, opened in 1957. The archaeological rooms of the museum portray the history of the Albanian people from earliest times by means of objects uncovered during archaeological excavations. The ethnographical rooms show the tools, furniture, pottery, carpets, embroidery etc. made and used in Albania, and the costumes of different regions.

The **Museum of Natural Sciences** contains exhibits of Albanian fauna, flora, minerals and fossils.

Two smaller museums are the **Party Museum**, in the house where the Communist Party of Albania was founded in 1941; and the **Lenin-Stalin Museum**, devoted to the life and work of these two figures.

Other higher educational institutions situated in the capital are the **Higher Institute of Agriculture**; the **Higher Institute of Arts** where painting, sculpture, music and drama are taught; and the **Vojo Kushi Higher Institute of Physical Culture** where sports and physical training are taught.

Running parallel with the Avenue of the Martyrs of the Nation to the east is the **Elbasan Road**, with the **Academy of Sciences** and the **People's Assembly** on its western side. This intersects 28 November Street at **Partisan Place**, which has a small garden containing the statue of a partisan.

Leading north-westwards from Partisan Place is the **Road of the Barricades**, which leads to the **Tirana Hospital**, the **New Albania Film Studios** and the **Lenin Hydroelectric Power Station**. On its eastern side is the **Museum of National Liberation** which tells, by means of documents, photographs, press cuttings and other exhibits, the story of the War of National Liberation of 1940-44; it also touches

upon earlier national uprisings and the development of the labour movement.

In a large building near the centre of the city is housed the **Migjeni Artistic Craftmanship Cooperative**, the various departments of which produce national costumes and all kinds of handicraft articles.

Tirana has four large hospitals, together with a central and local health centres. It has 3 sports stadia, 7 football fields, 60 basketball field, 90 volleyball fields and 41 gymnasia, in addition to those attached to educational institutions. The city has seven cinemas, and is the seat of the New Albania Film Studios opened in 1952, where feature and documentary films are made.

At the foot of the hills to the south-west of the city are the **Botanical Gardens**, covering an area of 37 acres and exhibiting 1,500 plants native to Albania; and the **Zoo**.

### G1. VORA to DURRËS (15 miles)

The road to Durrës leaves Vora to the west. After passing through the village of **Maminas**, the fields of the extensive **Sukth State Farm** (famous for its wines) can be seen to the north. Crossing a bridge over the River Erzen, the road then passes through the administrative centre of **Shijak** and, after climbing a low range of hills, descends to the Bay of Durrës.

### G2. TIRANA to DURRËS (via Ndroq) (23 miles)

The shortest route from Tirana to Durrës leaves the capital via Conference of Peza Street and goes through the industrial quarter of the capital, past the Enver Engineering Works, the Ali Kelmendi Food Processing Plant, the Misto Name Woodworking Plant, the glassworks and the Stalin Textile Mills.

Eleven miles from Durrës, the road passes through the village of **Ndroq**, where a mediaeval fortress stands on a hill overlooking the village. It then follows the course of the River Erzen to reach the bathing beach area of Durrës called **Plepat** (The Poplars), where numerous hotels and holiday camps are to be found. The town of **Durrës** lies two miles further along the road.

### G3. TIRANA to DURRËS (via Vora) (26 miles)

The other, slightly longer road from the capital to Durrës joins the main Shkodra-Durrës road at the village of **Vora** (see F2).

## DURRËS

In 626 BC a Greek colony from Corinth was established on the site of what is now **Durrës**; its residential area was known as **Epidamnos** and its commercial area as **Dyrrachion**. By reason of its favourable position on the natural harbour of the Bay of Durrës, the city quickly became the largest seaport and trading centre on the eastern Adriatic. Stately buildings were erected, and the city was surrounded with defensive walls. By the 5th century BC Dyrrachion had become an independent city-state, and its coins were circulating throughout the ancient world.

Under Roman rule, from the 2nd century BC, the city, now called **Dyrrachium**, became the starting point of the Via Egnatia linking Rome with the East. After the partition of the Empire in the 4th century AD, Durrës became the chief port of the Eastern or Byzantine Empire.

In the early 6th century AD, under the Byzantine Emperor Anastasius I (who was born in Durrës), the city was refortified with three sets of powerful walls. Nevertheless, it fell to several conquering forces, and in 1501 to the Turks.

On 7 April 1939 the armies of fascist Italy invaded Albania, landing at Durrës, which became the scene of savage street fighting. In one of these battles fell the

sailor **Mujo Ulqinaku**, regarded as the first martyr of the War of National Liberation and posthumously made a Hero of the People in 1969.

No trace remains today of the earliest walls that surrounded Durrës, but there are extensive remains of those of the 6th century, together with some later additions of the 13th and 14th centuries. The most interesting monument that has survived from ancient times is the large **Amphitheatre**, 130 yards in diameter. This was built at the beginning of the 2nd century AD, but in the 10th century a chapel and a cemetery were placed on top of it; the chapel contains a polychromatic mural mosaic.

Under a dwelling in the residential quarter of the city is one of the oldest and most exquisite polychromatic mosaics yet discovered in Albania; it dates from the 4th or 3rd century BC and depicts a woman's head amid flowers.

In 1962, during the construction of the Palace of Culture, there were brought to light the **Roman Thermal Baths**, which have now been restored. The hall is paved with black and white marble flagstones, which give the floor the appearance of a chessboard. The baths have a hypocaust, or heating system, and a pool 23 feet long and 17 feet wide.

Another interesting relic of the ancient city which has been preserved is a part of the **sewage system**.

The Durrës 'underground', as it is called, has been declared a Cultural Monument, and no new construction is permitted without the approval of the Institute of Cultural Monuments.

Today Durrës (formerly **Durazzo**) has a population of 52,000, and is Albania's principal port and seaside resort. The port lies next to the railway station; there is also a **shipyard** for the repair and construction of ships.

On the promenade that runs by the sea is the **Archaeological Museum**, one of the richest in the country. Here are on view objects uncovered in the archaeological excavations in the district; the collection is particularly rich in its ceramics and its tombstones, many of which bear Illyrian names. There is also a **Museum of the National Liberation War**.

In the centre of the city, facing the **Town Hall**, stands the **Palace of Culture**, which houses the **Aleksandër Moisiu Theatre** as well as smaller halls and studios.

The Durrës district is now important for its industry, producing more than 10% of the industrial output of the country. Its principal products are chemicals, radio and TV sets, processed food and machines. The town has its own local newspaper.

The **seaside resort** of Durrës lies about two miles south of the town. It has a magnificent sandy beach, set among pine trees, and many fine hotels and villas; in the summer season it is well furnished with cafés, bars and open-air entertainment.

### H1. TIRANA to ELBASAN (33 miles)

The road to Elbasan leaves the capital in a south-easterly direction past the **Palace of the Brigades**: here in 1943 the Albanian quislings were summoned to a meeting by the Nazis and, when they had assembled, were shelled by partisans from Mount Dajti. The road continues through the **Georgi Dimitrov State Farm** to cross the River Erzen.

Just beyond the river a 2-mile road leads off to the south to climb through thickly-wooded country and olive groves to the village of **Petrole**. On a rocky hill overlooking the village, protected on three sides by sheer cliffs, stands the **Fortress of Petrole**, said to have been built in the time of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian (6th century AD) to defend the road to Durrës. The walls are of stone interspersed with brick, and the citadel itself is built in the form of a triangle with watch-towers on the corners. Outer walls protect an inner wall, which encloses the remains of



another tower and two wells. Petrele was at one time the property of the Kastriot family. Under Skanderbeg it was one of the outposts for the defence of Kruja, and Skanderbeg's sister Mamice lived in the fortress.

The road to Elbasan continues along the course of the river Erzen, and then begins to ascend in a series of zigzag bends into the Krraba mountains, passing through the village of **Iba**, where there are famous springs of ice-cold water. The road then traverses the **Kaçulita Pass**, after which it descends to the Plain of Elbasan, in the valley of the river Shkumbin, to the town of **Elbasan**.

## H2. DURRËS to RROGOZHINA (22 miles)

The road south from Durrës passes sandy beaches and then, close to the road, the **Rock of Kavaja**, with only a narrow strip of land between itself and the sea. This is the ancient Petra, where Caesar and Pompey established the camps of their respective armies during the civil war.

The road then passes through the town of **Kavaja**, with 20,000 inhabitants, the centre of a fertile, well-irrigated and well-drained agricultural district. In the centre of the town is the **Mosque**, with an exquisite pillared portico. Kavaja is also a centre of pottery manufacture, and has factories producing nails, belts, paper and glass.

Beyond Kavaja the road passes through the village of **Gosa**, where there is a large state farm specialising in pig-raising, to reach the road and rail junction of **Rrogozhina**, which has a cotton gin and a soap factory and is also a centre of olive production.

## H3. RROGOZHINA to ELBASAN (25 miles)

The road to Elbasan leaves Rrogozhina to the east and follows the course of the river Shkumbin through the small town of **Peqin**, where are the remains of a square mediaeval fortress, together with a mosque and clock tower dating from the 17th - 18th centuries. It joins the Tirana-Elbasan road near the iron works.

## ELBASAN

**Elbasan** is the site of the ancient city of **Skampa**, founded in the 1st century AD as a station on the Via Egnatia.

The **Fortress of Elbasan** was built during the reign of the Byzantine Emperor Justinian I (6th century) and rebuilt in 1466 after the Turkish occupation under Sultan Mohammed II, who renamed it Elbasan. It is rectangular in shape, measuring 396 by 358 yards.

In the 16th and 17th centuries Elbasan became an important centre of trade and handicrafts. In the 19th century local feudal lords led an uprising against the Turks, who destroyed the walls of the fortress in 1832, so that only the southern part still stands. One of the gates of the fortress is still in use. A **museum** telling the story of the Elbasan district is located within the fortress; its exhibits include the tomb of an Illyrian warrior, with helmet, arms and household utensils, and two statues of Apollo.

Elbasan is the birthplace of the mediaeval painter Onufre (16th century) and the lexicographer Konstandin Kristoforidhi (19th century).

Elbasan is now a town with a population of 40,000 and one of the main industrial centres of the country. It has a tobacco processing factory, an ironworks, a brickworks, a woodworking plant, and is now the seat of the great **Steel of the Party Metallurgical Combine**. It has a Teachers' Training College, opened in 1909 (the first in Albania), a professional theatre and a local newspaper.

## II. ELBASAN to ÇËRRIK (7 miles)

A road leaves Elbasan to the south-west in the direction of the small town of Çërrik.

Three miles out of Elbasan a minor road leads off to the south-west to the village of **Lixhat**, where there are sulphurous thermal baths at a temperature of 120°F.

The main road continues to **Çërrik**, the seat of Albania's largest oil refinery.

## II. ELBASAN to POGRADEC (53 miles)

The road to Pogradec leaves Elbasan to the east and follows the course of the river Shkumbin, past red-soil fields of rice, cotton, tobacco and other crops. This is the route of the ancient Via Egnatia, along which passed invading armies, the Crusaders and caravans of merchants.

Five miles out of Elbasan we reach the village of **Labinot**, where in July 1943 the General Staff of the National Liberation Army was formed and where the First National Conference of the Communist Party of Albania was held: a **museum** tells the story of both these events.

Here the river runs tranquilly in its bed, in marked contrast to its turbulence up in the mountains. A local legend tells that a shepherd girl from Labinot was in love with a young shepherd from **Polis**, a hamlet just across the river, but the lovers were unable to speak to each other because they could not make themselves heard above the roar of the waters. The girl begged the river to be silent so that she could say a few words to her lover, and from that day the waters have been calm.

Seven miles further on we reach the small town of **Librazhd**, which has a winery and a fruit cannery. From here a road leads off to the north through the mountains of Çermenika to the districts of Peshkop and Dibra.

The Pogradec road now turns south-east, through a valley rich in lumber, past the village of **Qukës**, once a station on the Via Egnatia known as 'The Three Inns'. It then turns east through the town of **Prenjas**, where there are important iron and nickel mines. Here the road enters the **Plain of Domosdova**, where the first battle took place in 1444 between the Albanian army commanded by Skanderbeg and the invading Turks.

A side road runs north two miles beyond Prenjas to the village of **Rajce**, two miles away. Here there are the ruins of an old fortress. According to legend, the Turks surrounded Skanderbeg in this fortress; when he realised that he could not fight his way out, Skanderbeg ordered the women to sing and dance to the music of tambourine and drum, so that the Turks thought a wedding was being celebrated; meanwhile, the men cut a way down a cliff on the other side, a cliff so sheer that it had been considered impassable and left unguarded; next day every Albanian soldier got safely out of the fortress down the path still known as 'Skanderbeg's Staircase'.

The road to Pogradec now runs uphill to the **Pass of Thana**, at 3,153 feet above sea-level one of the highest passes in the country. As we leave the pass, there can be seen below **Lake Ohri**, one of Albania's largest lakes (although not entirely within the frontiers of the state) with a surface area of 139 square miles and a maximum depth of 938 feet.

Passing a memorial which commemorates six partisans who fell in a battle with an Italian armoured column in July 1943, the road passes through the village of **Memëlisht** to reach the town of **Pogradec** on the south-western corner of the lake.

## POGRADEC

A hill overlooking Pogradec is the site of an ancient Illyrian fortress believed to have been known as **Encheleana**. In the early Middle Ages this fortress was recon-

structed, and the place was renamed by the Bulgarians, who invaded south-eastern Albania at this time, **Pogradec**, 'the place beneath the fortress'.

During the 18th century, under the Turkish occupation, the town became an administrative centre, but was largely destroyed during the First World War and again during the Italian-Greek war of 1940-41. The Pogradec of today is thus very much a new town, noted for its furniture and wines. Situated at an altitude of 1,297 feet above sea level on the edge of the crystal-clear waters of Lake Ohri, it has an excellent bathing beach and has become a popular holiday resort.

#### **J. POGRADEC to KORÇA (24 miles)**

The road toward Korça leaves Pogradec in a south-easterly direction. Leaving the lake behind, it passes fields, vineyards and a dense chestnut forest to traverse the **Pliçqa Pass**, with **Mali i Thatë** (the Dry Mountain) on the east.

Entering the **Plain of Korça**, watered by the river Devoll and one of the most fertile districts of Albania, it reaches the small town of **Maliq**, the centre of a large state farm. Prior to Liberation, this whole area formed a great marsh and one of the first major projects of the post-Liberation regime was to drain this marsh, creating 15,000 acres of new cultivable land. Much of this was sown with sugar beet, and a sugar refinery was opened at Maliq in 1951 on this basis.

Seven miles beyond Maliq we reach the town of **Korça**.

#### **KORÇA**

In the 15th century a local feudal lord built, on the site of what became the town of **Korça**, a mosque, a public bath and some other buildings in order to attract settlers. From the 17th to the 19th centuries this settlement grew into an important centre of trade and handicrafts.

It was here that, in 1887, the first school teaching in the Albanian language was opened, and the building in which it was housed is now a **Museum of Education**. In 1917 a High School was opened, with teaching in French.

Korça gave birth to two distinguished figures of the 19th century National Renaissance, **Mihal Grameno** and **Themostokli Gërmenji**, as well as to an eminent Communist, **Ali Kelmendi**.

The town was occupied by the French in 1916, but the population rebelled and set up the Autonomous Republic of **Korça**, which later merged with the Albanian state.

The first trade union in Albania was established here and, in 1930, the first Communist group.

In 1936 a number of workers and peasants, demonstrating in **Korça** for bread and work, were shot and killed by police. In 1943, 70 demonstrators were shot and killed on the same spot by the Italian fascists. This square is now known as the **Square of Demonstrations**.

The oldest building now standing in the town is the **Mosque of Mirahori**, mentioned above, built in 1454; it is rectangular in shape.

In the main square of the town stands the monument **The Warrior** by the Albanian sculptor **Odhise Paskali**.

Korça is today the principal town in south-eastern Albania, with a population of 50,000. It has its own radio station, two theatres — the **A.Z. Cajupi Theatre** and a variety theatre — a **Palace of Culture**, an **art gallery** (in the house where the landscape painter **Vangush Mio** lived and worked), four **museums**, including one relating the history of the Korça district, and a local newspaper.

The Korça district is an important centre of industry, producing knitwear, engineering products, sugar, processed food, beer, leather goods and shoes, glass,

rugs and carpets.

#### **K1. KORÇA to MBORJA (2 miles)**

Two miles south-east of **Korça** is the village of **Mborja**, the centre of an important coalfield. Here stands the **Church of Ristos**, an exquisite example of Byzantine architecture built at the end of the 14th century; in the form of a cross with a vault in the centre, it has wall paintings both inside and outside.

#### **K2. KORÇA to KËLCYRA (61 miles)**

A road leaving **Korça** to the south leads to the mountainous region of **Kolonja** in south-eastern Albania. It passes through the villages of **Qinam**, **Selenice** and **Psar** to the small town of **Erseka**.

Four miles beyond **Erseka** is the village of **Borova**; in 1943 the Germans burned down this village and slaughtered all its inhabitants; a monument to 'The Martyrs of **Borova**' was erected here in 1968.

The road continues southwards nearly to the Greek border, turning westwards through the small town of **Leskovik** and then north-westwards through the village of **Petran** to the small town of **Përmet**. Here on 24 May 1944 (the date is inscribed on the coat-of-arms of the People's Socialist Republic of Albania) the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Congress met and elected the Provisional Government of Albania. A monument was erected here in 1964 to 'The Liberating Partisan'.

The road continues in a north-westerly direction to the small town of **Këlcyra**.

#### **K3. KORÇA to VOSKOPOJA (15 miles)**

A road leaves **Korça** to the west to the village of **Voskopojë**.

#### **VOSKOPOJA**

During the 17th and 18th centuries **Voskopojë** (3,568 feet above sea-level) was a flourishing town. It had an academy and was a noted art centre where some of the most talented Albanian painters practised their profession. In the second half of the 18th century, however, the town's wealth made it the object of attacks and pillage by local feudal lords, causing most of its inhabitants to leave and reducing it to the size of a village.

There remain only a few of the many churches built here during the 17th and 18th centuries. The most interesting of these are the **Church of St. Nikolla** (with murals by the Albanian painter **David of Selenica**) and the **Monastery of St. Prodhom**, burnt down by the Italians but still with some of its beautiful murals intact.

#### **L1. RROGOZHINA to LUSHNJA (11 miles)**

The road to **Lushnja** leaves **Rrogozhina** to the south, crossing the river **Shkumbin**. Shortly after the river crossing, a road leads off to the west towards the coast and the bathing beaches of **Divjaka**.

The road to the south then enters the **Plain of Myzeqe**, most of which was swamp land prior to Liberation but is now a fertile agricultural region, and, passing through the village of **Gramsh**, proceeds to **Lushnja**.

#### **L2. CËRRIK to LUSHNJA (16 miles)**

The road to **Lushnja** leaves **Cërrik** to the west, and passes through the villages of **Shales**, **Belësh** and **Hysgjokaj** before reaching **Lushnja**.

## LUSHNJA

Lushnja is a relatively new town, built entirely in the 20th century. Here in 1920 was convened the historic Congress of Lushnja, which formally deposed the pro-Italian government in Durrës, rejected the proposed Italian protectorate over Albania, and proclaimed Tirana the capital of the country.

On reclaimed land to the west of the town is the extensive 29 November State Farm.

Lushnja is the seat of the Agricultural Research Institute, which has branches throughout the country. It has factories producing paper and cardboard, plastics, canned vegetables, olive oil and flour. It has a variety theatre, a puppet theatre and a local paper.

### M. LUSHNJA to FIER (18 miles)

The road to Fier leaves Lushnja to the south and passes through the centre of the Plain of Myzeqe. A mile after the village of Kolonja is Ardenica, where stands a monastery which, in the distant past, had a famous school attached to it. The church has mural paintings by the Korca artists Konstantin and Athanas: one of these depicts the 12th century musicologist Jan Kukuzel, and an old icon by the 18th century painter Konstantin Shpataraku portrays the Albanian prince Karl Thopia.

The highway continues through the village of Verri, and then crosses the river Seman at the village of Mbrostar before entering Fier.

## FIER

Fier is a relatively young town, founded only in 1870, but is now the administrative centre for a large region and a centre for the cereal and cotton produce of Myzeqe. It has a large oil refinery and chemical plant, together with a cotton-ginning mill and factories producing machines, bricks and tiles.

### N. FIER to APOLLONIA (7 miles)

Seven miles west of Fier, near the village of Pojan, lies the most important archaeological site in Albania, that of Apollonia.

## APOLLONIA

The ancient city of Apollonia was founded in 588 BC by colonists from Greece, who dedicated it to the god Apollo. It grew rapidly into an important commercial centre, and already by the 5th century BC was minting its own coins, which circulated throughout Illyria and beyond.

By the 3rd century BC the city had a population of some 55,000, with Illyrians living within its walls on an equal footing with Greeks. It was also a notable cultural centre, and in the 1st century BC Augustus (the first Roman Emperor) and his friend Agrippa studied in the city.

In the 3rd century AD, however, the river Vjosa (then called the Aoos), on which Apollonia's commerce depended, shifted its course six miles to the south as a result of an earthquake, and this brought about the ruin of the city.

The encircling wall of the city was 11 feet thick, with a perimeter in excess of 3 miles. It was constructed in the 4th century BC. In some sectors the wall was constructed entirely of stone; in others the upper part was built out of bricks. At intervals there were towers to reinforce the fortifications, and channels to drain rainwater from within the fortress. A good part of this encircling wall has been excavated.

In what was the centre of the city, a second wall ran from the encircling wall

around the hill, about half way up. A gate in this wall allowed entrance to the hilltop where stood the Temple of Artemis, of which the remains can still be seen. In front of this wall is an altar where people offered sacrifices before entering the precincts of the temple. Near this altar stands an obelisk and four pedestals of a triumphal arch.

Just to the west of the obelisk stand the remains of the Hall of the Agonothetes (the organisers of the games). An inscription dating from the 2nd century AD states that this building was constructed on the orders of a high-ranking official, Quintus Vellius, to commemorate the death of his soldier brother. Its facade is decorated with six pillars crowned with Corinthian capitals. Semi-circular in shape, the hall served as an assembly point for the city council.

Opposite the Hall of the Agonothetes are the remains of a colonnade, decorated with marble statues. Behind the colonnade are the remains of a library or archive, and of a small theatre dating from the 3rd century BC; the latter, the tiers of which follow the slope of the hill, seated some 200 spectators.

Adjoining the theatre is the portico, 80 yards long and 40 feet wide, built in the 3rd century BC but reconstructed in the 1st century AD. On one side this has a wall with 17 oval niches for statues, on the other a balustrade. It is partly covered, the roof resting on columns of Ionic style on the outer side and of Doric style on the inner side.

Just to the south of the portico, some Roman shops and dwelling houses have been unearthed; these run along a street 20 feet wide which ran from one of the western gates of the city to the Hall of the Agonothetes. A few yards from this street has been excavated the House with the Mosaics dating from the 3rd century AD. It has a central courtyard with columns, and its niches and corridors are paved with slates and multicoloured mosaics. One of these mosaics depicts Achilles holding in his arms the Queen of the Amazons.

The Museum of Apollonia is built in part of what was an orthodox monastery, built in 1350. It has seven rooms, a gallery and two porticos where are exhibited objects excavated at Apollonia in recent years (most of the treasures uncovered before Liberation were taken abroad).

The Refectory of the monastery has partly preserved mural paintings.

Between the refectory and the monastery itself stands the Church of St. Mary; this is Byzantine in style, with a central vault resting upon four pillars. The inner walls of the church once had mural paintings, but only fragments of these have survived; according to one of these, the church was built in the 14th century on the orders of the Byzantine Emperor Andronicus III Palaeologus.

To the south-east of the site is the necropolis, in which a number of very ancient tombs dating from the 6th century BC have been found.

### O1. LUSHNJA to POSHNJE (14 miles)

The road leading from Lushnja to Berat forks off to the east from the road to Fier (M1) just outside the town. It passes through the villages of Karbunara, Jeta e Re (The New Life) and Fier-Shegan to the road junction near the village of Poshnje.

### O2. FIER to POSHNJE (17 miles)

The road leading towards Berat leaves Fier to the east, and passes through the villages of Kuman and Roskovec to join the road from Lushnja (O1) near to Poshnje.

### **O3. POSHNJE to BERAT (9 miles)**

The road from Poshnje to Berat traverses the oilfields, the derricks of which can be seen from the road.

At **Ura Vajgurore** (Oil Bridge), 3 miles out of Poshnje, a road leads eastwards to **Qyteti Stalin** (Stalin Town), the centre of the oilfields, 3 miles away.

The main road then continues through the village of **Orizaj** to the town of **Berat**.

### **BERAT**

**Berat** is the site of the ancient city of **Antipatra**, an Illyrian stronghold as early as the 2nd century BC. In the 9th century AD the city was captured by the Bulgarians, who renamed it **Belgrad**, from which the present name of Berat is derived. During the 13th century Berat was incorporated into the principality of the feudal lord **Michelangelo Comnenius**. Then, after passing through the hands of various invaders, it fell to Turkey in the 15th century.

The **Fortress of Berat** was built during the 3rd century BC on a rocky hill accessible only from the south. After being burned down by the Romans in 200 BC, the walls were rebuilt during the 6th century under the Byzantine Emperor **Justinian the Great**, and again in the 13th century under **Comnenius**. It is still in an excellent state of preservation.

Within the fortress are a number of churches built during the 13th and 14th centuries: the **Church of St. Mary of Vilaherna**, dating from the 13th century, has 16th century mural paintings by the painter **Nikolla of Elbasan**, the son of Albania's most famous mediaeval painter **Onufre**; the **Church of the Holy Trinity** is built in the form of a Greek cross and has Byzantine murals.

Three Islamic religious buildings date from the 16th century: the **minaret** of the mosque within the fortress; the **Mbret (King) Mosque**; and the **Plumbi (Lead) Mosque**.

Other important cultural monuments date from the 18th century: the **Cathedral of Our Lady** with its two domes and, inside, a beautiful iconostasis carved from wood; the **Monastery of the Helvetii**; the **Clock Tower**; and the **Bridge** over the river **Osum** with its seven arches, built under **Kurt Pasha** in 1777-80.

The residential quarter below the fortress dates from the 18th and 19th centuries. The houses, with their white facades, are built almost one on top of the other on the incline of the hill, giving Berat the name of 'The Town of 1,000 Windows'. It has been designated officially a 'Museum Town'.

Today Berat has a population of 30,000. It is not only the centre of an important agricultural region, but has a large textile plant and smaller factories producing jams and canned food. It has a Palace of Culture.

### **P1. BERAT to ÇOROVADA (22 miles)**

A road leaves Berat to the south-east along the course of the river **Osum**. It passes through the villages of **Fushë-Peshtan**, **Polican** and **Mbrakull** to the small town of **Çorovada**, the centre of the mountainous region of **Skrapar**.

### **P2. BERAT to KËLCYRA (32 miles)**

Another road leaves Berat towards the south. Passing through the villages of **Zhitom**, **Tërpan** and **Rehova**, it traverses the **Gilava Pass** (2,963 feet above sea-level) to descend through the village of **Buz** (famous as the centre of peasant uprisings in 1837-47) into a valley with thickly-wooded sides famous for wild boar hunting.

The road continues through the **Kiçok Pass** (1,314 feet above sea-level), past wineries and distilleries and the occasional inn, through the villages of **Ballaban** and **Suka** (centre of goat- and sheep-rearing) to the road junction of **Këlcyra**.

### **P3. FIER to VLORA (21 miles)**

The road to Vlorë leaves Fier to the south-west. Passing through the village of **Levan**, it crosses the river **Vjosa** at the village of **Mifol**, and continues on to the village of **Narta**, famous for its grapes and wines and the beautiful costumes of its women; to the west of the road lies **Lake Narta**, a large salt lake from which salt has been extracted since the Middle Ages.

The highway then climbs into hills covered with olive trees belonging to the largest state farm in Albania, and then descends toward the **Bay of Vlorë** (where can be seen the Peninsula of **Karabarun** and the island of **Sazan**) to reach the town of **Vlorë**.

### **VLORA**

Just to the north of what is now the town of **Vlorë** stands the site of ancient **Aulon**, originally a port but by the 1st century AD an important city. **Aulon** was famous for its olive groves, of which the Latin poet **Martial** sings in his verses.

After the downfall of **Apollonia**, **Aulon's** importance increased and in the 5th century it became the centre of a diocese. After **Aulon** had been overrun by successive invading armies, the remains of its population moved two miles to the south and the town of **Vlorë** became a prosperous trade and handicrafts centre as well as a port, particularly famous for its salt, its swords, its silken fabrics and its ships.

It was in **Vlorë** that there was convened in 1912 an Assembly which proclaimed the independence of Albania and set up the first Albanian government, headed by **Ismail Qemal**, on 28 November 1912. The government remained here until January 1914.

During the First World War the **Vlorë** district was occupied by Italian armies, and after the war Italy tried to retain the town. But on 5 June 1920 the people of **Vlorë** rose in a national revolt which threw the invaders from the mainland; they succeeded, however, in holding on to the island of **Sazan**, in the **Bay of Vlorë**.

During the War of National Liberation the first partisan units were formed in **Vlorë** district. **Vlorë** was liberated on 15 October 1944, and this time the National Liberation Army succeeded in freeing also the island of **Sazan**.

In 1962 the 50th Anniversary of the proclamation of independence was celebrated in **Vlorë**, which was by special decree awarded the title of 'Hero City'.

Today **Vlorë** (formerly **Valona**) is the second most important port of the country, and its main naval base. It is also a fishing port and an important industrial centre, producing cement, asbestos, chemicals, canned food, and electric lamps. In the town centre stands the **Independence Monument**, erected in 1972.

The **Museum of Independence**, which tells the story of the events leading up to the proclamation of Albanian independence in 1912, is housed in the building where the original proclamation was made. The **Town Museum's** exhibits relate the history of the **Vlorë** district from ancient times.

**Vlorë** has a drama theatre and a variety theatre, as well as its own local newspaper. Near to the busy port area is a beautiful **bathing beach**, linked to the town centre by a boulevard lined with trees and flowers and known to the local inhabitants as 'Orange Tree Avenue'.

### **Q1. VLORA to PESHKËPI (7 miles)**

A road leaves **Vlorë** to the east to the village of **Peshkëpi**.

### **Q2. PESHKËPI to SELENICA (9 miles)**

From **Peshkëpi** a road goes north, turning eastwards at the river **Vjosa** through

the village of **Armen** to the small town of **Selenica**. Here a natural bitumen mine has been exploited since the Middle Ages.

### Q3. PESHKËPI to KATA (7 miles)

Another road leaves Peshkëpi to the south along the course of the river Shushica through the village of **Mavrova** to the village of **Kata**.

### Q4. KATA to TEPELENA (23 miles)

From **Kata** a road goes in an easterly direction through the village of **Vajza** to that of **Ploça**, where the ruins of the ancient Illyrian city of **Amantia** are to be found.

The road continues through the village of **Sevaster**, and then along the valley of the river **Vjosa** through the villages of **Sinanaj** and **Dukaj** to the small town of **Tepelena**.

### Q5. FIER to TEPELENA (40 miles)

The highway from **Fier** towards **Tepelena** leaves the road to **Poshnje** (O2) some 4 miles out of the town, to run through the oil town of **Patos** through the region of **Mallakastra**. At the small town of **Ballsh** are the ruins of a mediaeval church; here stood **Glavinica**, a famous religious centre in the early Middle Ages.

Just beyond **Ballsh**, off the road to the west, lies the village of **Hekal**. This is the site of the ancient Illyrian city of **Bylis**, which was established in the 4th century BC and was minting its own coins a hundred years later. The people of this district still sing of the peasant leader **Rapo Hekali**, who was killed in the 19th century during a rebellion against the Turks.

The road runs on through the village of **Qesarat**, and crosses the river **Vjosa** near the coal mining town of **Memaliaj** to enter **Tepelena**.

## TEPELENA

**Tepelena** is situated at the strategic point where the valley of the river **Drino** joins that of the **Vjosa**. Once these two valleys were dominated by the ancient Illyrian city of **Antigonea**, the ruins of which are to be found at the neighbouring village of **Lekël**.

The present **Fortress of Tepelena** was built upon the ruins of a mediaeval one on the orders of **Ali Pasha of Tepelena**, a powerful Albanian lord who set up in the 19th century an autonomous *Pashalik* centred upon **Janina** (now in Greece). **Ali Pasha** also commanded the building of a sumptuous palace (no longer standing) where in 1810 he entertained the poet **Byron**; the visit is commemorated by a plaque on the wall of the fortress, as well as in the pages of **Byron's Childe Harold**.

**Tepelena** was badly damaged in 1914 by invading bands from Greece. In 1920, following the **Vlora** uprising, the local peasants rose in revolt and forced the Italian garrison to surrender. During the Greek-Italian War of 1940-41, and even more during the War of National Liberation, the **Tepelena** district became a battleground. In front of the new **Palace of Culture** are placed busts of the men of **Tepelena** who fell in the latter war.

### R1. TEPELENA to KËLCYRA (10 miles)

From **Tepelena** a road goes east through the **Gorge of Këlcyra** to join the **Berat-Korca** highway (K2/P2) at **Këlcyra**.

### R2. VLORA to BORSH (55 miles)

Leaving **Vlora** via 'Orange Tree Avenue', the coastal road to the south passes

through the seaside resort of **Uji i Ftohtë** (Cold Water), and then follows the course of the river **Dukat** to the village of that name. It then ascends through tall pine forests to traverse the **Llogara Pass** (3,445 feet above sea-level), where there is a tourist hut. South of the pass, the Alpine scenery suddenly changes to that of the Mediterranean; far below can be seen the dark blue of the **Ionian Sea**. We have entered the **Albanian Riviera**, which runs for some forty miles in a narrow belt along the coast, separated from the interior by mountain ranges, the maritime slopes of which are covered with citrus and olive plantations.

The first village we enter after the Pass is that of **Palasa**, where **Caesar** landed his armies in 48 BC to face those of **Pompey**. The next village, **Dhermi**, lies on both sides of a deep ravine at the foot of **Mt. Çika** (6,726 feet); the **Church of St. Mary** nearby has interesting mediaeval wall paintings.

Eleven miles further on the road passes through the village of **Vuno**, perched again on both sides of a ravine; this village was razed to the ground during the War of National Liberation, but rebuilt afterwards. Five miles further on, on a hill, stands the village of **Himara**, which has a small harbour and is noted for its red wine. **Himara** gave its name to the entire region, and was in the Middle Ages the seat of a diocese. On the very top of a hill are to be found the ruins of the ancient Illyrian fortress of **Chimaera**, from which the village derives its name. The **Himara** district was one of the few in Albania which the Ottoman conquerors never succeeded in occupying; as a result its inhabitants were exempt from Turkish taxes and from conscription into the Ottoman army.

Just beyond **Himara** lies the picturesque **Gulf of Porto Palermo**, on the shores of which stood the ancient city of **Panormon**; here, in the Middle Ages, there was a small seaport, while a fortress (built in the 19th century on the orders of **Ali Pasha of Tepelena**) still stands.

Some two miles along the highway, the village of **Qeparo** can be seen, perched on a rock in a mountain gorge. The road then continues to the village of **Borsh**, where a mountain stream has cut a rugged ravine and there are a number of cold springs; not far from **Borsh**, on a rocky hill, stand the remains of the Illyrian fortress of **Sopot**, built in the 4th century BC and still in use in the Middle Ages.

### R3. KATA to BORSH (46 miles)

The road to **Borsh** leaves **Kata** to the south and passes along the valley of the river **Shushica**, through the region of **Kurvelesh**. After going through the villages of **Gjorm**, **Brataj** and **Kuq**, it descends to the coastal plain to join the **Vlora-Saranda** coastal road (R2/R4) at **Borsh**.

### R4. BORSH to SARANDA (22 miles)

The **Saranda** road leaves **Borsh** to the south and goes past terraces of citrus and olive trees, through the villages of **Piqeras**, **Lukova** and **Shënvasi** to traverse the **Gjashta Pass** and then descend to the **Bay of Saranda** and the town of that name.

## SARANDA

**Saranda** was the site of the ancient Illyrian seaport of **Onchesmos**, as well as of a mediaeval monastery dedicated to the 'Santi Quaranta' (Forty Saints), from which the modern name of the town is derived. On a hill just to the south of the town stand the ruins of the **Fortress of Lëkurësi**, built in the 19th century to the orders of **Ali Pasha of Tepelena**.

Modern **Saranda**, with a population of 9,000, has been built almost entirely during the last thirty years. Its long hours of sunshine (averaging 3,000 a year), its setting on the blue sea with the Greek island of **Corfu** opposite, its glorious sunsets,

its beautiful sandy beach, its palms and evergreens – all these have combined to make Saranda an extremely popular seaside resort, and it is well furnished with hotels.

It is, however, also Albania's southernmost port, the centre of an important agricultural region, and has a number of small factories.

#### S. SARANDA to BUTRINT (10 miles)

The road to the archaeological centre of Butrint leaves Saranda to the south and proceeds along the **Ksamil Peninsula**, with the Ionian Sea to the west and the waters of Lake Butrint to the east. Before Liberation, this peninsula was rocky desert, but it has been transformed into a huge orchard. The island of Corfu is clearly visible, together with the smaller islands nearer the coast.

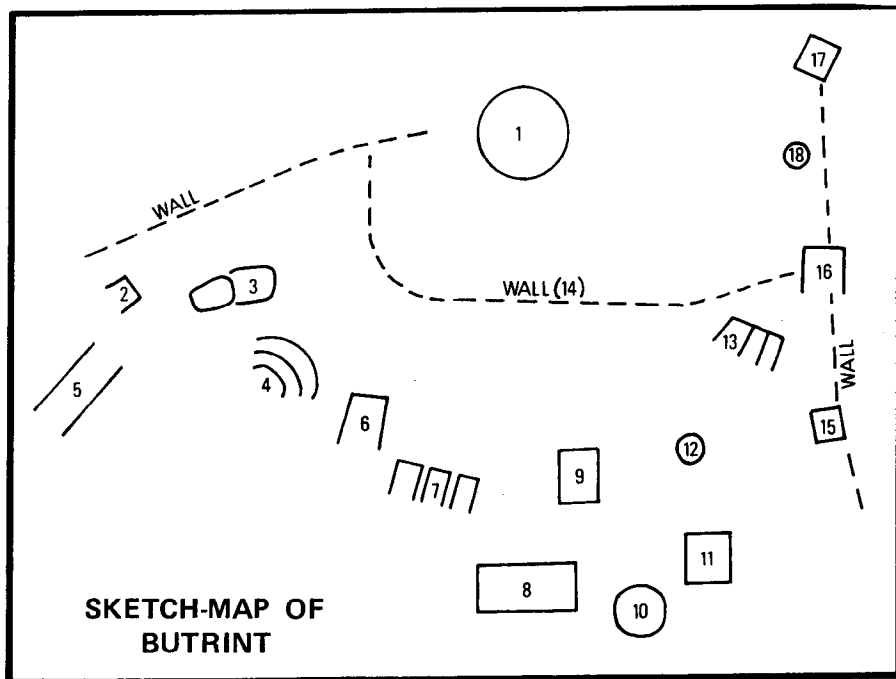
Alternatively, Butrint may be reached from Saranda by motor launch through the Corfu Channel, the journey taking about two hours.

#### BUTRINT

Upon a hill at the end of the Ksamil Peninsula stand the remains of the ancient city of **Buthroton**. According to Virgil, Buthroton was founded by the Trojans during their voyage to Italy, but archaeological evidence gives no support to this legend.

The site was certainly inhabited as early as the Palaeolithic period, and by the 1st millennium BC Buthroton was an Illyrian fortified centre. During the 6th century BC Greeks from the nearby island of Corfu settled here alongside the Illyrians, and the new colony grew and prospered as a result of trade, especially in cattle, sheep and goats.

By the 4th century BC, however, Buthroton had fallen to Epirus, and in 44 BC it became a Roman colony; now Roman landowners settled in and around the city,



and it began to mint its own coins.

Under Byzantium, Butrint (as it was now called) became the seat of a diocese. But it was now declining in importance, and passed from one conquering army to another.

Approaching the archaeological site from the west, the visitor notices first two small fortresses and a hunting tower, built in the 18th century on the orders of Ali Pasha of Tepelena.

In order to obtain a comprehensive view of the whole site, it is best first to climb the hill to the **Museum (1)**; from here one can see the temples, baths and other buildings spread out below, with the lake gleaming beyond. Descending the hill in order to make a detailed inspection, one comes to a **Fountain (2)**, set within a niche, which formed part of the city's water supply.

Adjacent to the fountain are the ruins of the **Temple of Asclepius (3)**, dedicated to the god of medicine and built in the 2nd century AD on the foundations of an earlier structure. It consists of a covered portico and an inner chamber, in which hundreds of votive objects made of terra-cotta were discovered.

Next to the temple is the small **Theatre (4)**, built at the beginning of the 3rd century BC. It had 19 tiers of seats running round the curve of the hill, the first tier having special seats for the nobles of the city. The background to the stage consisted of a high wall, containing niches for works of sculpture.

Close by the theatre is the **Public Bath (5)**, the largest building so far excavated in Butrint. One of its rooms, the frigidarium, is paved with black and white mosaic stones, arranged in geometrical patterns.

To the east of the theatre are the remains of a **Roman dwelling house (6)** of the peristylar type, and beyond it some **Roman shops (7)** have been unearthed. To the south-east of these shops stand two two-storeyed **warehouses (8)**, crowned with vaults, and to the east of the shops a **Church (9)** of the early Middle Ages, converted from a Roman temple.

To the east of the warehouses is the **Baptistery (10)**, built in the 6th century AD and one of the most beautiful examples of early Christian architecture in Butrint. It is circular, 67 feet in diameter, with a dome supported on a double row of granite pillars and a baptismal font in the centre. Its floor is decorated with multicoloured mosaics which form seven concentric circles: five of these have geometrical figures and plant motifs; in the other two, birds and animals are depicted.

The next building is a **Thermal Bath (11)** with, adjacent to it, the **Nymphs' Fountain (12)**, dating from the beginning of the 2nd century AD; it has three niches for sculptures, two of which – of Apollo and Dionysios – are to be found in the museum.

Beyond the fountain, the visitor reaches the high walls of a **Basilica (13)**, built during the 14th century, and, close by, the remains of the **walls (14)** that surrounded the Acropolis.

The **Southern Gate** of the town (15) is reinforced by two towers, and a shrubbery of laurels leads northward to the **Main Gate (16)**, sixteen feet high. Continuing northwards, we reach the **Lion Gate (17)**, so-called from a bas-relief which portrays an encounter between a lion and a bull. From here, stairs lead up to a **well (18)** dedicated to the nymphs.

Climbing the hill, one reaches the **Butrint Museum (1)**, which is entered through a portico. Here are exhibited the objects excavated at Butrint in recent years.

Finally, leaving the museum, one finds oneself in the square in front of the **Acropolis or Fortress of Butrint**, which was reconstructed in the 14th century. From this vantage point there can be seen to the south canals running to the sea, and the state farm centred upon the village of Vrina.

## **T1. SARANDA to MAVROPULL (7 miles)**

The road from Saranda towards Gjirokastra follows the road towards Vlora (R4) up through the **Gjashta Pass**, and then leaves this road to descend to the **Plain of Vurgu**, where the rivers Kalasa and Bistrica have now been confined to a common channel. Passing through vineyards, and plantations of citrus, olive and fig trees, the road travels first north and then east to reach the village of **Mavropull**.

## **T2. MAVROPULL to FINIQ (3 miles)**

A road leaves Mavropull to the south, passing through the village of **Finiq**.

### **FINIQ**

On the hill of **Finiq** are to be found the ruins of the ancient city of **Phoinike**, founded in the 4th century BC, which became the capital of the state of Epirus. The historian Polybius (2nd century BC) describes it as the richest and best fortified city in the region. Taken by the Illyrians, it continued to be an important centre into the Middle Ages.

The ruins of the city walls, which stretch for almost a mile, testify to its greatness: standing 23 feet high, they are built from great blocks of stone, and form a zigzag complex with gates and towers. One of the most beautiful buildings so far excavated is the **Treasury**, dating from the 4th century BC. A number of sculptures from Phoinike are exhibited in the Butrint Museum.

Near to Finiq lies the village of **Mesopotam**, where there is a pre-Ottoman church of quite remarkable architecture.

## **U. MAVROPULL to GJIROKASTRA (33 miles)**

Four miles beyond Mavropull the Gjirokastra road reaches the small town of **Delvina**, where stand the ruins of a fortress built in the late 18th century on the orders of Ali Pasha of Tepelena; the town now has a cannery and a freezing works.

Leaving **Delvina**, the road climbs steeply. At the village of **Muzina** can be seen the artificial lake in front of the tunnel of the J.V. Stalin Hydroelectric Station on the river Bistrica.

After traversing the **Muzina Pass** (1,870 feet above sea-level), the highway descends into the valley of the river Drino and the broad **Plain of Dropull**.

At the village of **Jorgucat**, a road runs south to the frontier post of **Kakavia**, on the Greek border; here have been excavated a number of tombs belonging to the 1st millennium BC.

From Jorgucat, the road to Gjirokastra proceeds in a north-westerly direction along the Drino valley. It passes through a number of picturesque villages lying at the foot of the Gjerë Mountains – **Gramsh**, **Frashtan**, **Sofratika**, **Qeranzi** and **Derviçan**, many of whose houses have two storeys – to reach the town of Gjirokastra.

### **GJIROKASTRA**

The first mention of **Gjirokastra** in historical records dates from the 14th century, but the town is believed to have been founded in the 12th century. According to legend, the town's name is derived from a Princess Argjiro, who is said to have hurled herself to her death from a tower in order to avoid falling into the hands of invaders. It is more probable, however, that the name comes from the Illyrian tribe of the Argyres, who are known to have lived in the region.

The **Fortress of Gjirokastra** was originally built in the Middle Ages, but added to by various occupiers and reconstructed in the 18th century under Ali Pasha of Tepelena. Measuring 500 by 75 yards, it is large enough to hold 5,000 men and

85 cannon; it had an aqueduct (no longer in existence) which supplied the fortress with 28,000 gallons of water a day. The fortress, which contains many dungeons, has been restored and is in excellent condition. It is reached up a street paved with three-coloured stones, the pattern consisting of two rows white, two rows black and two rows red. Within the fortress is now the **National Museum of Arms**, telling the story of Albanian weapons through the ages.

The **houses** of Gjirokastra are of special interest. The typical house is square and of two or three storeys, with the thick slate roof projecting out over the walls. For purposes of defence, there are no windows on the ground floor (which is used for storage), so that each house resembles a small fortress. The house is entered by a flight of stone steps outside the building. The interiors of these houses are highly ornamented: the fireplaces are covered with plaster and decorated with plant and fruit motifs, while the ceiling and divans are made of carved wood. Each house has about twenty windows, large and small.

Because of its unique architectural interest, Gjirokastra – sometimes called 'The Town of a Thousand Steps' – has been proclaimed a Museum Town, and all new building is carried out in materials and to designs which harmonise with the old. The typical building material is a rose-coloured stone, which turns grey with the passage of time.

The **Museum of the National Liberation War** is sited in the house in Palorto suburb where, on 16 October 1908, was born Enver Hoxha, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania.

Similarly, the **Topulli Museum** is housed in the mansion that was the home of the brothers Bajo Topulli (1863-1930) and Çerçiz Topulli (1880-1915), who led an uprising against the Turks in 1908; it tells the story of the local struggle against the Turkish occupiers.

In the past, Gjirokastra, which was a battleground during the Italian-Greek war of 1940-41, was principally a trading centre for the agricultural produce of the district, particularly famous for its white cheeses. Now, with a population of 20,000, it has factories producing leather goods, footwear, chemicals, tobacco and cigarettes, and machines. It has a Palace of Culture, a theatre, a local newspaper and a radio station, and is the seat of a Higher Teachers' Training College.

## **V. GJIROKASTRA to TEPELENA (19 miles)**

If we take the road towards Berat, but 15 miles from Gjirokastra continue in a north-westerly direction instead of turning east towards Këlcyra, 4 miles further on we reach Tepelena.

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