

ALBANIAN LIFE

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EDITORIAL

Firstly, apologies to all members for the lateness of this issue. It is unfortunate that the resignation of the two most active officers of the Society coincided with a time when members will have wanted some clarification on the situation in Albania. This is a combined no 3 1990 and no 1 1991 ; we plan to bring out three more issues this year and then publish quarterly.

We welcome any contributions from members to the magazine, whether letters or articles on any aspect of Albanian life. Just as different opinions are being expressed in Albania, so friends of Albania abroad have different views of the recent events. In this issue Hardial Bains, a frequent visitor to Albania over many years, gives his interpretation. It is hoped that this will not just serve as an antidote to some of the reporting in the national media , but also stimulate some of our readers to respond.

The political problems in Albania have also diverted attention from the appalling situation in Kosova, where the Serbian authorities have consistently attacked the majority Albanian population and denied them their rights. We publish the Constitutional Declaration of July 2nd 1990, which sets out the political demands of the Albanians of Kosova.

The Society is planning a twelve day tour in September, to be led by Dave Smith, who has extensive knowledge of Albania and many contacts there, especially in his own field of music. Details of this and other special interest and general tours this year are in the centre pages.

We hope this was worth waiting for and look forward to receiving your letters and articles (typed double spaced if possible).

A.G.M. & SOCIAL

The AGM was held on 1st December at Holborn Library Hall in London. There was a very full programme beginning with the address by the President which is printed in this issue. There followed the report of the delegation which visited Albania in October and discussion.

In response to a request from members, Bill Bland explained his reasons for resigning as Secretary, which he said was due to the refusal of the committee to publish his analysis of events in Albania, comparing quotes from Enver Hoxha and Ramiz Alia, and an interview Kadare had with Voice of the Youth. Norberto Steinmayr also explained his reasons for resigning, saying that whilst he agreed with the committee decisions, after his visit to Albania and in view of recent policy changes he felt unwilling to devote the necessary time involved in being Secretary or an active committee member. Other committee members defended the refusal to publish Mr Bland's article on the basis that it was not factual and was taken out of historical context. On the Kadare interview committee members had offered to publish it as a compromise to prevent the resignation.

There followed an attempt from the floor to challenge the ruling of the President on a motion offering advice to Albania on how best to run its affairs. After discussion it was agreed that such a motion was contrary to our aims.

The election of Officers took place after each candidate had introduced themselves and the results were as follows :-

President: Professor M.Smith, Secretary: S.Day.
Committee: H.Davis, D.Ellis, L.McDowall, S.Monro, B.Pearce.
R.Pierce, L.Prescott, D.Smith, N.Taylor.

The Social began with refreshments and music from Liria and some impromptu dancing by Kosovar friends, and continued in the local pub where Albanian folk music made an impressive debut.

ADDRESS BY PROFESSOR MARTIN SMITH

Ladies and Gentlemen, Friends,

First I welcome you all, members and non-members alike, very warmly to this national meeting of the Albanian Society, which is being held to mark the 78th anniversary of Albania's declaration of independence (28th November 1912) and the 46th anniversary of her liberation from enemy occupation (29th November 1944).

During the past year important changes have taken place in Albania, as well as elsewhere in Europe. When the corrupt, so-called socialist regimes in the former Soviet empire in Eastern Europe were swept away, it seemed at first as though Albania, which was not part of that empire, was going to continue steadily on her course - a course much more principled than that pursued by the regimes to which I have just referred. In January 1990 Yugoslav sources fabricated reports of riots and even public executions in Albania, but foreign diplomats and visitors to the country declared that the situation seemed calm and normal.

However, it soon became apparent that Albania was facing problems of both an economic and a political nature.

Economic problems were inevitable in view of the abrupt termination of the barter trade agreements which Albania had had with countries like the G.D.R., Czechoslovakia, and Romania. In this situation the Albanian Government has considered it desirable, in an attempt to increase efficiency and boost productivity, to allow a certain amount of private activity, to adjust wages in such a way as to give workers more incentive to work hard, and to allow some foreign investment - changes which of course have political as well as economic implications.

On the socio-political front the Government has introduced measures to increase the rights of the individual citizen and to advance the democratisation of the country's life.

However, the economic and political changes proposed and implemented, though considerable, have not satisfied all who desire change, and regrettably some Albanian citizens have felt impelled to quit their country. In July several thousand young dissidents, including some with criminal records, occupied foreign embassies in Tirana and some days later were evacuated abroad. More surprisingly, in October an eminent individual, Albania's best known writer Ismail Kadare, sought political asylum in France.

Debate inside Albania continues. Some members of the Party of Labour of Albania (PLA) are undoubtedly opposed to radical change, but there is pressure from other quarters, both inside and outside the PLA, for further changes. The elections planned for next February will be multi-candidate though not multi-party, and the period of the PLA's complete dominance of the political scene may be drawing to a close.¹

No less great than the changes in Albania's domestic policies are the changes in her foreign policy. Until recently the Albanian Government's position was that it should not seek or establish diplomatic relations with either of the two superpowers. Now that position has changed : diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union have already been resumed, after a break of nearly thirty years ; diplomatic relations with the United States, and also with Britain (I shall come back to that later), are likely to be re-established soon. Albania is looking to establish relations also with the European Community and to participate fully in the process of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). Her interest in involving herself more fully in international affairs was reflected in President Ramiz Alia's visit to the United States in September and his address to the UN General Assembly.

So on all fronts this is a time of change for Albania, and also a time of uncertainty. It is not yet clear precisely what the outcome is going to be : if the present Government has its way, it seems that Albania will continue to have a socialist system, but a much less rigid one than in the past.

Although friends of Albania abroad are bound to take a close interest in her fortunes and to debate whether the changes taking place are for the better or for the worse, whether they go too far or not far enough, it is not the business of our Society to offer advice to the Albanian Government and people on the conduct of their affairs. This is a non-political organisation, its declared aims being to disseminate factual information about Albania and to promote friendship between the British and Albanian peoples. This being so, there is no call for the Society to behave any differently now from the way it was behaving a few months ago. Members of the Society differ in political outlook and have been attracted to our ranks for a great variety of reasons, often nothing to do with politics. It has always been so, and I should like to stress that what bound us together in the past will continue to bind us together in the future - a common interest in Albania, a common concern for her welfare, and a common desire to promote friendship and understanding between the British and Albanian peoples.

In the past the Society, with limited resources, has done an excellent job in informing the British people about Albanian affairs. In the absence of diplomatic relations between Britain and Albania, it was particularly important and valuable that the Society existed to provide reliable information. Over the years the British mass media have given little serious attention to Albania: either they have been silent or the reports which they have provided have too often exhibited a hostility which has been matched only by their inaccuracy. They have said little or nothing about the remarkable advances made in all sorts of fields, including health and education; nor have they given the Albanians credit for refusing to belong to any military alliance or to allow foreign troops or bases on their territory.

In the absence of diplomatic relations, one of the things which the Albanian Society has done is to draw attention to...the absence of diplomatic relations and to explain the causes and disadvantages

of the situation. It was largely on the initiative of the Albanian Society that in the early 1980s the Campaign for Diplomatic Relations with Albania (CDRA) was established. CDRA attracted the support of, amongst others, several members of both Houses of Parliament and was very successful in obtaining publicity in the media and in making the British Government answer questions.

Forty-five years after the end of World War II - a war in which the Albanian people were our allies - there are still no diplomatic relations between our two countries - an extraordinary and highly undesirable state of affairs. However, at a meeting in Rome early in November representatives of the two Governments agreed in principle to re-establish diplomatic ties, and presumably it will only be a matter of months before the agreement is implemented.

Once diplomatic relations have been established, we can expect to see a considerable increase in trade and tourism and also the establishment of cultural, scientific, and educational exchanges. This will be most welcome, and I suggest that in this situation there will be not only a continuing role for the Albanian Society, but also opportunities for expanding its membership and activities as more British people go to Albania as tourists or for professional or educational reasons, and, one hopes, as Albanian artistic and cultural performances, exhibitions and suchlike are presented in this country and arouse the interest of British people.

I foresee that the Society will have a continuing role not only in catering for the varied interests of its membership, but also in informing the British public about Albanian affairs, and I fear that it will be all too necessary for us to go on, for some time to come, drawing attention to the oppressive treatment of the Albanians in Yugoslavia and to the dangers to security in the Balkans posed not only by the explosive situation in Kosova, but also by the revival of Greek territorial claims relating to parts of southern Albania.

The Albanian Society was established in 1957. Three years later, in 1960, Bill Bland became its secretary - a post which he occupied almost without interruption for thirty years. In July this year he submitted his resignation both as Secretary and as a member of the Committee. Since he made it clear that he was not going to be persuaded to change his mind, his resignation had to be accepted, though with the greatest regret, and since July we have had two Acting Secretaries - first Norberto Steinmayr, then Steve Day, who both deserve our gratitude.

I conclude this address with a tribute to Bill Bland. The service which he has given to the Society as Secretary has been quite extraordinary. Few people in the English-speaking world know as much about Albania as he does, and he has unstintingly and unselfishly put this knowledge at the disposal not only of members of the Society, but also of hundreds of other individual and institutional inquirers at home and abroad. He has worked tirelessly for the Society and for the cause of British-Albanian understanding. He has of course written thousands of letters and made thousands of telephone calls on behalf of the Society; he has also translated countless Albanian articles, reviews, poems, and even books; written numerous pieces of his own; edited our journal Albanian Life, and not only edited it, but also typed it, collated it, distributed it; given lectures at and participated in meetings up and down the country from the south of England to Orkney; given interviews on radio and television and to the press; represented the Society on delegations to Albania; and travelled often to our local Albanian embassy in Paris to collect visas and other items. I have reason to believe that he has often been generous with his purse as well as with his time and effort.

It is an indication of Bill's prominent work for the Society and for the cause of good relations between Britain and Albania that a few years ago the local newspaper in Ilford, where he lives, published a photograph of his house, which it presented, not in complete seriousness, one imagines, as the Albanian Embassy in

Britain. A day or two later Bill had a visit from an irate Inspector from the local Council, who in complete seriousness warned him that ,by allowing his house to be used for diplomatic purposes ,he was in breach of planning regulations and liable to prosecution.

During my eight years as President of the Society I have had frequent occasion to be grateful to Bill for his generous help and advice, and I imagine that many others present today have benefited similarly. Naturally we hope that his expertise will continue to be at the disposal of the Society, of which he remains a member, but he will be very much missed as an officer and Committee member. Bill, on behalf of the Society, I offer you our warmest thanks for all you have done, and our very best wishes for the future.

¹ On 12th December 1990, less than a fortnight after I spoke these words, the Albanian Government authorised the existence of opposition political parties.



POLITICAL CHRONOLOGY OF 1990

JANUARY

- 10 Editorial of Zeri i Popullit [Voice of the People] carries article by Javer Malo entitled 'No one may play with socialist Albania' which defends Albania from Greek accusations of the torture and killing of the Prasos brothers from the village of Pepel following their alleged attempted illegal defection from Albania. Behind such claims the author sees the sinister hand of other foreign powers including that of the son of the ex-monarch, Leka whom he describes as a "hooligan and trafficker".
- 11 Editorial of Zeri i Popullit rejects perestroika and the restoration of capitalism as inappropriate for the Albanian people.
- 12 The Charge d'affairs in Rome responds to allegations of unrest and demonstrations in the Northern Albanian city of Shkodra by maintaining that the situation is tranquil and normal, stressing that the stories are without foundation and are instead part of a malicious campaign orchestrated by hostile Yugoslav agencies intent upon blackening the name of Albania.
- 22-3 9th Plenum of the Central Committee meets with Ramiz Alia delivering address "The Deepening of the Revolutionization of the Life of the Party and the Country" which outlines a significant reform program. Measures to decentralize the economy include limited changes that allow workers to earn according to production whilst reforms in the electoral and legislative systems introduce new measures to ensure that various enterprises will have management elected directly by its workforce, that in an effort to stem abuses of power no official will be allowed to hold office for more than two five year periods, that grass-roots Party meetings will be

open to all and finally that multi-candidate elections for the People's Assembly would be permitted at a future date

FEBRUARY

- 21 Simon Stefani, Minister of the Interior, gives statistics concerning the number of prisoners in Albania. Contrary to some western sources that claim Albania has up to 50,000 political prisoners, Stefani states there are in total 3850 prisoners, of which 83 are detained for political crimes. He added that 4 people have been executed for political crimes between the years 1980-1990.

MARCH

- 20 Inauguration of the direct-dial international telephone system in Tirana allowing Albanians to contact foreign countries directly for the first time.
- 21 Zeri i Rinise [Voice of the Youth] publishes a remarkable, outspoken interview with the author Ismail Kadare in which he distances himself from the PLA by criticizing himself for being 'too soft' on past errors of the Party, calls for a re-assessment of works by authors hitherto dismissed as 'reactionary' or 'collaborators' and in which he calls the Sigurimi 'trash'.

APRIL

- 11 5th anniversary of the death of Enver Hoxha commemorated by the laying of wreaths on his grave in the martyrs cemetery, Tirana and an editorial in Zeri i Popullit entitled 'Enver Hoxha's name and deeds are immortal'.
- 17 10th Plenum of the Central Committee meets with Ramiz Alia delivering address 'Democratization of the Socio-Economic

Life Strengthens the Thinking and Action of the People'. Major thrust of the speech is that on the domestic front reforms must proceed whilst concerning foreign policy Albania looks forward to good relations with all countries including the two superpowers USA and the Soviet Union. With regard to Britain however, Alia accuses consecutive British governments of being stuck with 'a cold-war mentality' that must change if relations are to be improved.

- 23 ATA announce that the six members of the Popa family seeking asylum in the Italian Embassy are free to leave the country.

MAY

- 1 In place of the normal parades May Day is celebrated with picnics in the countryside and parks. ATA congratulate the Soviet Union Foreign Minister Shevardnadze on his statement which tacitly admits Soviet responsibility for the breaking of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 1961.
- 6 Official request made by PLA to join the Conference on Security and Co-operation (CSCE) with an agreement that Albania will adopt all the principles of the 1975 Helsinki Accords.
- 8-9 People's Assembly votes for further measures of liberalization. The penal code is changed, which includes amongst other things considerably reducing the number of crimes for which the death penalty is carried and the setting-up of a Ministry of Justice (previously abolished in 1965). Further measures announced state that passports are to be made available to everyone. Economic reforms include allowing enterprises to sell a percentage of surplus goods on the free market. Practising a religion no longer is an offence although organized religious groups are not tolerated.
- 12 Ramiz Alia declares the process of 'democratization'

- Irreversible.
- 12-3 Visit to Albania of U.N.'s Secretary General Perez de Cueller.
- 16 8th Volume of Enver Hoxha's diaries published covering year 1966.
- 16 Six members of the Popa family who had been seeking asylum who had been held up in the Italian Embassy since 1985 leave Tirana for Rome.
- 28 U.S. Congressman Tom Lantos (Member of Foreign Affairs Commission of the House of Representatives) and former Congressman Joseph DiGuardi arrive in Albania for a three-day stay which includes a meeting with Ramiz Alia.

JUNE

- 7 Eduard Shevarnadze meets with Ambassador Petrit Bushati in Denmark.
- 17 Ismail Kadare article in Drita (The Light - organ of the Union of writers and Artists) attacks the dogmatism of certain sectors of Albanian society and calls on everyone to support the right to 'freedom of speech'.

JULY

- 2-3 Demonstration in Tirana culminates in a number of people rushing into various foreign embassies and requesting asylum.
- 3-7 Numbers of people seeking asylum within the compounds of foreign embassies (esp.the French and West German) swells from an initial 200-300 to an estimated 4,500. Numerous reports of unrest in other towns throughout Albania, most notable being a demonstration in Kavaja following the death of a citizen after the deployment of the Sampist paramilitary forces.

- 6-7 Crisis meeting of the Central Committee (11th Plenum) with two speeches delivered by Ramiz Alia entitled 'Socialist Democracy must Penetrate Broadly Into the Life of the School' and 'The Continuation of the Process of Democratization is Vital for the Progress of the Country'. Attention paid to the report on the state of Education by the Minister of Education, Skender Gjinushi ('For the Perfection of the Education System and the Further Qualitative Consolidation of the School') and to the present political situation. Re-shuffling of various ministerial and other positions -which is continued over the next two weeks and includes-. Simon Stefanl retires as Minister of the Interior and is replaced by Hekuran Isal. Prokop Murra retires as Defence Minister / First Sec. of Tirana District / member of the Politburo. Munush Myftiu and Rita Marko retire from the Politburo, with Muho Asllani (politburo member) losing his position as district Party Sec. for Durres in light of his handling of the disturbances in Kavaja. Two new members of the Politburo are Vangjel Cerava and Xhehil Gjoni, Gjoni also becomes Tirana First Sec. and Central Comm. Sec. Xhemal Dymylia is promoted to candidate Politburo member and Abdyl Backa obtains the position of Central Comm.Sec. Significantly, these were the first changes to the politburo since Alia became First Sec. of the PLA in 1985.
- 10 Preparatory Comm. of the summit of the CSCE in Vienna grants Albania observer status.
- 11 The Council of Ministers ratify decision 'On the Reorganisation of Services and Artisan Production', which aims to stimulate growth of small private family craftsmen, tradesmen etc. to supplement state sector.
- 12 Decree issued excluding persons who entered the compounds of foreign embassies from prosecution.
- 13 Ferries carrying Albanian emigres arrive at Brindisi, Italy.
- 13 Pro-government demonstration in central Tirana numbering over

- 100,000 listens to an address by Xhelli Gjoni.
- 15 Ferry arrives in Marseille carrying over 500 Albanian emigres.
- 23 Chamber of Commerce in collaboration with Austrian companies holds a symposium on 'problems of contemporary marketing' in the Enver Hoxha Museum.
- 26 Politburo announces further measures for privatization with special regard paid to the agricultural sector.
- 27 Large demonstration in Tirana's central square broken-up by police.
- 30 The restoration of diplomatic links with the Soviet Union announced.
- 31 Legalisation of foreign investment announced by decrees of the Presidium of the People's Assembly: 'On the protection of Foreign Investment in the PSRA' and 'On the economic activities of the enterprises with the participation of foreign capital in PSRA. An additional decree 'On Assemblies, Gatherings and Manifestations of Citizens in Public Places' sets out restrictions for all gatherings.

AUGUST

- 8 Ramiz Alia and Xhelli Gjoni meet for talks with representatives of the Albanian intelligentsia. Unconfirmed reports of major disagreements between Alia and Kadare.
- 16 'Day of Enver' proclaimed, encouraging workers to increase production.
- 19 Delegation of the Commission of the U.S. Congress on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) visit Albania. Chairman of Commission Dennis de Concini accompanied by Senator Paul Sarbanes and Congressman Jim Moody meet with Alia.
- 22 Vice Foreign minister of China, Tieng Zeng Pei visits Albania.
- 23 Talks between Albania and USA concerning restoration of

- diplomatic relations take place in Washington.
- 30 ATA refute claims that large walls have been constructed around the area surrounding the Embassy district in Tirana.

SEPTEMBER

- 4 The Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs officially protests to the Greek Embassy in Tirana over a meeting of 'Pan-Greek Congress' in Konica that discussed the question of Northern Epirus and openly called for the revision of international borders between the two countries.
- 12 Council of Ministers ratifies proposal 'On the Increase of low wages of the working people' which includes the raising of wages previously set at 450 leks per month by 20%. Taken together with other wage reforms the legislation will effect approximately 650,000 people and raise the average wage of the citizen to 570leks from 523leks per month.
- 28 Ramiz Alia delivers address to the General Assembly at the United Nations, New York.

OCTOBER

- 9 Outline sketched for the introduction of secret ballots and multi-candidate elections discussed by Gen. Coun. of Democratic Front.
- 10 ATA announce a 'Week of Enver' to include numerous activities to commemorate the anniversary of Enver Hoxha's birth.
- 12 ATA refute Greek claims that two Albanians from the Greek minority were killed whilst attempting to cross the border illegally.
- 16 Alia and other Party and State officials lay wreaths at the grave of Enver Hoxha.
- 19 Albanian airspace opened for the use of foreign civilian aircrafts.

- 23 Publication of draft law of the 9 October proposal.
24 Ismail Kadare announces defection to France.
24-5 Balkan Conference of six foreign ministers meets in Tirana.

NOVEMBER

- 1 The law 'On the Advocacy in the PSRA' enters into force.
5-6 Albania and Britain meet in Rome for talks concerning the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries. The Albanian delegation is led by the deputy Foreign Minister, Muhamet Kaplani and the British delegation by Michael Tait, the under-secretary for state.
6-7 Meeting of the 12th Plenum of the Central Committee with Ramiz Alia delivering address 'The consolidation of the people's power and the consolidation of the entire political system stimulates the democratic development' which surveys achievements of past year; examines the position of the leading role of the Party in Albanian life; argues for changes in the 1976 constitution; argues for both atheist propaganda and pro-religious propaganda; admits that the economy is on "the verge of an emergency situation" which he attributes to the drought of the last year (which especially effects the Albanian economy reliant as it is on hydro-electric power) and the incorrect application of the numerous reforms set out by the Party.
9 ATA announce numerous activities to mark the 49th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of Albania .
9 Prime Minister, Adil Carcani, gives interview on national television in which he admits non-fulfilment of quotas for "bread grain, potatoes, industrial plants etc." and announces that the importation of electricity, bread grains, beans etc. has been necessary.
11 First legal Mass for 23 years is held in Shkodra. Figures in attendance vary from 15,000 to 40,000.

- 12-4 People's Assembly reviews draft law ('On the elections to the People's Assembly') for multi-candidate elections and passes its recommendations.
- 13 Alia delivers speech on constitutional changes entitled 'Amendments to the Constitution-Juridicial Support for the New Democratic Changes' which sets out the necessity for constitutional change in the light of international and domestic developments.
- 17 Special Commission convenes to examine amendments to the Constitution (1976) under Ramiz Alia and Supreme Court Chairman, Kleanthi Koci and others.
- 17 In an interview with Zeri i Popullit, Deputy Interior Minister, Veip Proda issues statistics that between January and June 1990, 5,449 passports were issued to citizens, whereas since the decree 'On the issuing of passports' of June 1990, 41,507 have been issued.
- 20 ATA announce that international credit cards can now be used at a number of outlets in Albania.
- 21 ATA report the statement of the Albanian delegation at the Paris summit of the CSCE which expresses the hope that discussion concerning the future security of Europe will not focus solely on political and military issues but will also address economic and social problems with the goal of "narrowing the gap of economic inequality" between member states which it sees as a prerequisite for lasting peace and security in Europe. In addition, the delegation strongly voiced its unhappiness with the decision of the council not to grant Albania full membership status, stating that they found the decision "surprising...indeed, incomprehensible".
- 28-9 Numerous activities on the anniversaries of the proclamation of Independence in 1912 and the Liberation of the country from the Nazis in 1944. War vetrans, workers, Party and state officals laid wreaths on the graves in the martyrs cemetery, at the base of the monument 'Mother Albania' and at

the grave of "the beloved and unforgettable leader, the legendary commander and architect of the new socialist Albania, comrade Enver Hoxha". -ATA.

- 30 Adil Carcani and Xhelil Gjoni along with other leading party workers from the Tirana district hold a special meeting on how to speed up the process of economic reform. Figures given state that 1251 independent "production units" (small private companies) exist.

DECEMBER

- 1-5 Mother Theresa pays her second visit to Albania where she meets with Nexhmije Hoxha and Ramiz Alia, visits a kindergarten bearing her name and receives the award of 'The First Class Order "Naim Frasherj"'.
2 Presidium of the People's Assembly announce the date, February 10 1991 for the elections of the deputies for the People's Assembly.
8 Disturbances at the University campus in Tirana over living conditions begins late in the evening. The police intervene to disperse demonstrators.
9 As demonstrations continue a formal application from a student delegation is made for a meeting with Ramiz Alia to explain the grievances of the students. After clashes with security forces, Sali Berisha, a cardiologist and well known advocate of reform, is requested to act as a go-between between the Party and the demonstrators so as to obtain the release of students arrested by the police. A committee comprising of students and intellectuals from different sections of the University is formed numbering about 30 in total with Azem Shpendi as President. Skender Gjinushi, the Minister of Education, and a number of officials meets with student representatives for talks.
10 5-6000 students boycott classes and gather in front of the

- University in Tirana. Some clashes between students and police reported.
- 11 In response to the demonstrations in Tirana and following a meeting with a group of student activists, the evening news of Albanian state television announces that following an emergency session of the Central Committee (13th Plenum) five members of the Politburo, : Muho Asslani, Lena Cuko, Foto Cami, Hajredin Celiku and Simon Stefani have been relieved of their duties. Two candidate members of the Politburo, Piro Kondi and Qirako Mihalj were also dismissed. The Prime Minister Adil Carcani, is instructed to form a new team of Ministers. The broadcast also announces that the Party has issued the recommendation that independent political parties should henceforth be legalized. First riots reported in the industrial town of Kavaje.
- 12 The formation of the first legal opposition political Party since the war, the Democratic Party is announced by the 35 year old economist, Prof. Gramoz Pashko. Peaceful crowds numbering several thousand gather in central Tirana. Ramiz Alia makes a national address appealing for calm.
- 13 Radio Tirana announces that security forces were sent to Shkodra to break up violent outbreaks in the city. Non-communist leaders of the newly established 'Democratic Party' appear on television appealing for restraint and patience from the public so as not to hinder the progress of reform. In France, Ismail Kadare gives an interview to 'Le Figaro' welcoming Ramiz Alia's reforms and calling on the people of Albania not to riot, deploring the violence of the youths in Shkodra.
- 14 A second day of unrest in several towns and cities, including Shkodra, Elbasan and Kavaja. Further troops are called in to keep the peace. The Democratic Party issues the statement that the acts of violence in the provincial towns "have nothing in common with democracy we all...want to establish

the grave of "the beloved and unforgettable leader, the legendary commander and architect of the new socialist Albania, comrade Enver Hoxha". -ATA.

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- 14 A second day of unrest in several towns and cities, including Shkodra, Elbasan and Kavaja. Further troops are called in to keep the peace. The Democratic Party issues the statement that the acts of violence in the provincial towns "have nothing in common with democracy we all...want to establish

- but they compromise and undermine it."
- 15 ATA and foreign news agencies report that a state of normality has returned to all cities.
- 17 Ramiz Alia meets with representatives of the opposition parties to discuss measures concerning electoral procedure. Decree legalising new political parties published. The Democratic Party apply for official registration. Student demonstration in Tirana demanding the release of all political prisoners, the legalisation of the Democratic Party and the postponement of the elections. Foreign news agencies report that the trials of 175 people arrested during recent disturbances are to begin. Arson attack in Tirana on the Enver Hoxha Engineering plant causes severe damage estimated at £150,000. Prof. Gramoz Pashko in an interview with foreign press warns of repeated and escalating violence "out of control of both sides" if reform process is not speeded up.
- 18- Representatives of the British and Albanian government meet in Geneva for further discussions concerning the restoration of diplomatic relations between the two countries.
- 18 Announcement that the new Democratic Party has been legalised. Communist Youth League of Albania hold conference to decide upon their manifesto for the forthcoming elections in which they intend to field 250 candidates. High on their agenda is the introduction of a free market economy to the country and the absolute right for citizens to travel abroad. Radio Tirana quote a statement from the Ministry of Justice that prison sentences of between 11 and 20 years have been given to eight people involved in the previous week's riots in Shkodra, Durres and Elbasan.
- 20 General Council of the Democratic Front meets and issues statement that Nexhmije Hoxha has resigned from her position of President of the Democratic Front and is replaced by Adil Carcani, who in turn steps down from the office of Prime

Minister. Committee to monitor human rights formed with leading members including Prof. Arben Puto and the writers Besnik Mustafi and Neshat Tozaj.

- 21 The statue of Joseph Stalin is removed from its prominent position on the Bulevardi "Deshmoret e Kombit" in central Tirana following the decision of the Council of Ministers that after "taking into consideration the fact that the historic circumstances have changed since the time when decisions were adopted in our country to honour J.V.Stalin" have decided to follow Politburo recommendation to; "1.Deprive the state enterprises, objects and institutions bearing the name J.V.Stalin of his name and remove his symbols, and 2. Concerning the agricultural co-operatives and the dwelling centres named after J.V.Stalin, their inhabitants should decide upon according to the laws in force." -ATA.
- 22 Major rally of some 15,000 supporters of the Democratic Party gathers in central Tirana.
- 23 ATA report statement by the Albanian Trade Union Federation that they wish to become "a political, social and pluralist association, and an independent electoral force". Major ministerial shake-up announced that includes the dismissal of Simon Stefani from the State Control Commission being replaced by Ali Kaza. The economist Fatos Nano takes over the position of General Secretary of the Council of Ministers from Niko Gjyzerin who becomes the general director of the state bank. Andrea Nako loses the office of Finance Minister to Qemal Disha, whilst Salvador Franja is appointed head of Transport.
- 25 The Catholic priest of Shkodra, Simon Jubani, announces that he will form a Christian Democratic Party.
- 26 Ramiz Alia announces that the PLA must "deviate from many principles of Socialism" and that reform process must continue. Core of speech examined the PLA's expressed goal

- of "full integration within Europe" with further promises for the lifting of existing restrictions on travel abroad. With a cautious remark regarding the status of Stalin and people who styled themselves as 'loyal Stalinists', Allia said, "Let us leave Enver Hoxha to the historians, and let them deal with history without passion." Allia further rejected calls for the elections to the People's Assembly to be delayed. Numerous new members to the PLA Central Committee appointed.
- 27 The Democratic Party calls for a national referendum to determine the date of the elections for the National Assembly, scheduled for 10 February 1991 but which they wish to be delayed until May 1991 so they have more time to organise their campaign.
- 30 Peaceful demonstration of up to 10,000 supporters of the Democratic Party in Korca.
- 30 Figures issued by Greek police show that on 29 December, approximately 650 Albanians left Albania and requested asylum in Greece. The total number of Albanian emigrees seeking refugee status in Greece for the month of December was in excess of 1000.
- 31 ATA announce that the Council of Ministers are to re-examine their decision of July 11 'On the reorganisation of services and Artisan production' so as to remove the clause which allows only members of a family to work in a small company unit.
- 31 Ramiz Allia delivers a New Year's address to the nation in which he surveys the achievements and difficulties of 1990. He calls for unity and order from the people so as to ease the progress of the "profound democratisation process that the PLA undertook on its own initiative". Allia asks all Albanians to act as "genuine ardent patriots" to avoid previous difficulties and to help relieve the "hard economic difficulties facing the country". Furthermore, Allia pledges the PLA to an active foreign policy and the implementation of policies to ensure that human rights in Albania will be kept in line with international standards.

EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY ART

An exhibition of contemporary Albanian art was held at the Glasgow School of Art from 4th August until 7th September 1990. More than forty paintings and twenty cartoons were on display.

A delegation came from Albania for the occasion. Ksenofon Dilo, Director of the National Gallery, was accompanied by Xhevat Lloshi, Director of the National Encyclopaedia, Ferid Hudhri, art critic and historian, and linguist Hamlet Bezhani. They were received by the Lord Provost of Glasgow in the City Chambers.

Ksenofon Dilo, opening the exhibition, expressed his hope for many more such contacts between our two countries. Steven Norris M.P. welcoming the delegation, looked forward to a swift resolution of the problem of diplomatic relations.

The delegation visited Oxford, Stratford-upon-Avon and London as well as spending six days in Glasgow.



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* **ALBANIAN SOCIETY MEMBERS TOUR**, to be led by Dave Smith. This will have special interest for members keen on music, although there will be other items of general interest.

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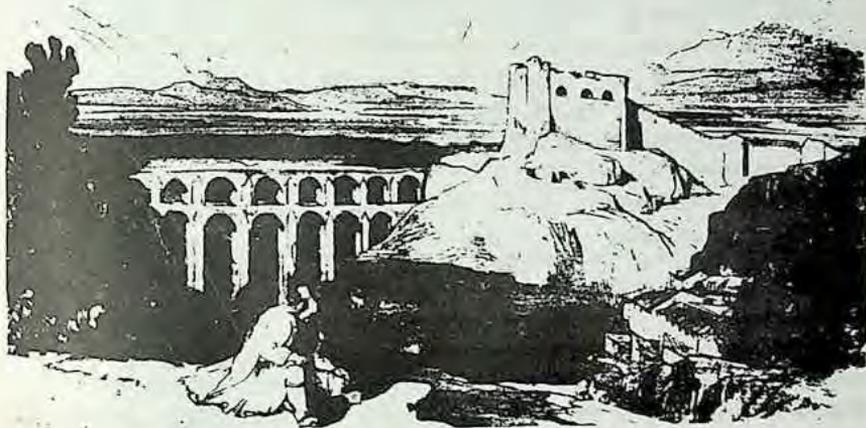
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IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF EDITH DURHAM AND ROSE WILDER LANE

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NEWS FROM KOSOVA

On July 2nd, 1990, the Assembly of the Socialist Autonomous Province of Kosova (Yugoslavia), the legislative body of that Province, tried to meet at the Assembly's main hall, but was denied entrance by the Serbian police. The Government of Serbia has recently taken over the full control of the police forces and the judiciary in the Province of Kosova against strong Albanian protests. Offended by this unusual action of Serbian police, one hundred and fourteen indignant representatives decided to convene in the hallways of the Assembly Building and to proceed with the agenda: the discussion on the future constitutional status of Kosova. The attending representatives elected their colleague, Mr. Muharrem Shabani as chairman. After lively debate they unanimously approved a statement read by the representative Bujar Gjurxhala.

INSPIRED by the will unmistakably expressed all over Kosova by the majority of the people of Kosova and duly elevated by the statement of the Academy of Science and Arts of Kosova regarding the new constitutional position of Kosova, and CONSCIOUS of the role and status the Assembly of Kosova has as the highest representative body of the Kosova Administration and its self-government system invested with the constitution - making powers, the Assembly proclaims:

THE CONSTITUTIONAL DECLARATION

ON KOSOVA AS AN INDEPENDENT AND EQUAL CONSTITUENT UNIT WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE FEDERATION (CONFEDERATION) OF YUGOSLAVIA ENTITLED TO THE SAME CONSTITUTIONAL DENOMINATION AS THE OTHER CONSTITUENT UNITS,

1. This declaration expresses and distinctly states the fundamental attitude held by the people of Kosova and by this Assembly toward the constitution and considers it an act of political self-determination within the framework of Yugoslavia.
2. This Assembly, on its own and with its standing, in declaring Kosova an equal constituent unit within Yugoslavia, according to the principles of genuine democracy and respect for the expressed will of the individuals, social groups and national collectives, expects to obtain the confirmation of their constitutional act in the (forthcoming) constitution of Yugoslavia and the full support of the voices in Yugoslavia and of the international opinion as well.
3. This Assembly confirms that Kosova, in its constitutional position, is a political - constitutional community of people, its political - constitutional position being shared in common by all its citizens and by the national groups of Kosova on an equal basis. Also, Albanians being the overwhelming majority in Kosova and one of the numerically largest peoples in Yugoslavia consider themselves to be a people nation as Serbs and others do - and no longer a nationality (national minority).
4. In the meantime, while waiting for the juridical and definite fulfilment of this constitutional declaration the Assembly and the organs of the Government of Kosova in their relations within the constitutional order of Yugoslavia will respect the existing constitution of Yugoslavia and not the amendments to the constitution of the SR of Serbia of the year 1989. This statement also voids the decision of the Assembly of Kosova of march 23rd, 1989 which approved those amendments at that time.

5. From now on until the promulgation of the new constitution of Kosova, the Assembly of Kosova will communicate publicly with this name. As a representative body, it will simultaneously refer to the socio-political community simply as Kosova.

Note: Reprinted from 'Liria'.

Since the Constitutional Declaration, Serbia has stepped up repression in Kosova, taking control of all the key industries and institutions and sacking workers of all levels who refused to denounce the Declaration. More than 10,000 people have been thrown out of work in this way.

On 7th August Rilindja, the only daily paper in Albanian in Yugoslavia was suspended.

Albanian leaders are calling for calm, so as not to give the Serbian authorities any pretext for further violence ; however the situation remains tense, with constant provocation by the Serb militia - beatings, torture etc. Some 2,000 political prisoners are still held.

A General Strike on September 3rd also attracted repressive action from the Serb authorities, including the dismissal of seventeen Albanian judges for refusing to take part in the trials of those arrested for opposing the Serbians.

WHAT THE KOSOVARS SAY AND DEMAND- a collection of studies, articles, interviews and commentaries in two volumes. Published 1990 by B Nentori, Tirana. Hardback price £5 each volume inc p&p.

ALBANIA: THE SEARCH FOR THE EAGLE'S SONG

by JUNE EMERSON

Reviewed by Steve Day

June Emerson, above all else in this book, shows a love of life and people. This itself makes it worth reading. Her joie de vivre, persistence and some good luck enabled her to meet and make friends with many Albanians, especially in her field of music.

While the form of the book is like many others: "on Tuesday we went to Saranda", and can be criticised for a lack of depth, the observation and humorous tone compensate.

She makes it clear that she does not understand or like politics and takes several swipes at the Socialist system, yet her admiration for the results of that system especially in the cultural sphere is sincerely and freely expressed. It has been her bad luck that she has written this book at a time of such rapid change that a lot of it looks dated already.

Her assertion that all Albanian composed music sounds 100 years old has to be challenged, especially in the case of Feim Ibrahim, who she got to know quite well.

June Emerson's genuine interest and appreciation of Albanian music, culture and way of life shine through on each page. I look forward to the sequel - "Albania- Finding the Eagle's Song ?!"

Published by Brewin Books. Available at £6.95 from bookshops or :-
June Emerson, Windmill Farm, Ampleforth, York, YO6 4HF.



THERE WHERE THE AVALANCHE STOPS

Compact Disc: Music from the Gjirokastra Folk Festival

Albania, 1988

Cat. No.: Touch T33.11

Released, 16th August, 1990, £9.95

Every five years in the town of Gjirokastra in southern Albania the National Folk Festival is held. Two thousand singers, dancers and musicians take part, one group from each of the 26 districts of Albania. Each group presents a sequence of songs, dances and instrumental pieces lasting forty minutes, and various prizes are awarded at the end, the best team winning a banner.

This newly released CD comprises live recordings of songs and dances and instrumental pieces from six of the regions: Shkodra, Tropoja and Dibra in the north and Korca, Vlora and Gjirokastra in the south.

The music of northern Albania is all homophonic, and yet each region has its own distinctive flavour. The music of the south, those regions south of the Shkumbin river, is polyphonic, the songs often incorporating an intriguing vocal drone.

Albanians are natural artists, and seemingly without any trace of nervousness, give exciting performances full of verve and energy. The men hurl their voices as if from mountain to mountain, singing of brave heroes of the past, wars and hardships, and their deep love of their homeland. The women sing of more domestic themes, of family traditions and festivals, harvests and weddings,

spinning and weaving, and in particular of the haunting sorrows of exile.

The children take part too: the little boys as tough as their fathers, the girls as graceful as their mothers, and both have an assurance of style born of a long tradition.

This sequence of recordings, including as it does some of the response of the audience, brings alive the exuberant atmosphere of the hill-top fortress of Gjirokastra during this major national event. It is to be hoped that this joyful pride and expertise in their folk culture will not be diminished as the country begins to move towards a more western style of life.

The extremely apt title of this CD, printed small on a mosaic design is barely legible, and the inner pages of the leaflet are similarly difficult to read. It would seem to be the case where the cost of redesigning the inlay would be justified in order to bring this exciting disc to the attention of a wider public.

June Emerson

October 1990

From The Albanian Shop, 3, Betterton St. London WC2.



REPORT OF THE DELEGATION

by Steve Day

First of all I too would like to express my appreciation of the work of Bill Bland in the furthering of understanding of Albania in this country over many years. This sentiment was also expressed to us in Albania. Norberto Steinmayr has also made a large contribution, not just as acting-Secretary but as an active member of the committee and Secretary of the London Branch.

Dave Smith, the foremost expert on Albanian music and myself as acting-Secretary went to Albania from 29th October to 8th November on the invitation of the Albanian Committee for Cultural and Friendly Relations with Abroad. Dave was on his tenth trip and I was on my fifth, so while neither of us were novices we were both keen to find out what changes had taken place.

We were met at Rinas Airport by our guide and translator, Fatos Cocoli, who works on New Albania magazine. The first evening we had dinner with Ali Llapa from the Committee, who welcomed us and asked us what we wished to see and who we wished to meet. We also had talks on the current situation and the work of our Society.

Over the next ten days we met many experts, old friends and ordinary Albanians and had a chance to find out a lot about recent events and future plans. Although we spent most of the time in Tirana, we had three days in the South, visiting Gjirokastra, Saranda and Vlora including a visit to the Greek minority village of Vrisera in Dropull.

Among the people we met were Fatos Nano, economist, Paskal Haxhi, Judge, who gave us talks on their specialities; Jashuar Melzelxhiu, member of the Central Committee, who we had dinner with in Saranda by chance as all the tables in the restaurant were full; Edi Kurtezi, Genc Lamani and Shpresa Rira all of whom we knew from previous visits; Shaban Murati, foreign editor of Zeri i Popullit; musicians Limos Disdari, Felm Ibrahim, Spiro Shituni and others. We also met Jorgo Melica, chairman of the Committee, who expressed his appreciation of the work of the Society and sent his regards to the

members.

Our impressions were of a much greater openness and willingness to discuss (though we have always had political debate in the past too), an explosion of fashion amongst the young, and a friendly reception wherever we went.

At the 12th Plenum of the PLA, during our stay, Ramiz Alia spoke of the economic situation being on the verge of emergency and this was explained to us also by Fatos Nano. The achievements to date should not be underestimated— the economic level has been transformed since 1944. However there are and have been problems of the technological level, of consciousness at work and of serious drought in the last few years. Above all and compounding the problems has been the new situation in Eastern Europe, with whom Albania had trade relations based on exchange of goods; suddenly all trade has to be carried out in hard currency and Albania has to compete for markets with the technologically superior capitalist countries.

Certain specific measures have been introduced to deal with the problems, while other measures are seen as a normal development. An example of this is the move away from excessive centralisation of the economy, which was necessary in 1944 when there were less than one hundred specialists in the economy and to spread them out would have made no sense. Now there are plenty of well trained specialists and over-centralisation is holding back the economic possibilities. To deal with the low level of productivity and also to improve quality of goods, material incentives are to be brought in. According to results workers may earn bonuses of up to 30% above their salary or be penalised up to 10% for bad results. Enterprises will also be allowed to fail, be relieved of the present obligation to create jobs for new entrants (this will be done by the State by setting up new enterprises) and workers will elect their directors for a maximum term of four years and remove them if they are not satisfied with results.

Bearing in mind that machinery is considered out of date after five or ten years in Britain and that many Albanian factories are equipped with Chinese machines from the seventies or even Soviet ones from the sixties, the need for major investment in new technology is clear. Given the present stage of development, it has been decided to attempt this modernisation partly by means of joint ventures with foreign firms, who will supply the technology which will then belong to the local enterprise, who in turn will supply the labour and raw materials. The foreign firms will have the right to export their portion of any profits.

In order to stimulate small scale production and also to regulate that which existed before, artisan concerns may now run as private businesses, although they cannot employ other than family members.

The peasant plots, severely curtailed until recently, have been expanded and the right to the family cow etc restored. These are considered necessary measures to improve the supply of food. The peasant market is also recognised and regulated with maximum prices set somewhat above the State shops.

In all these measures, many with a distinctly capitalist flavour, the overall aim is to maintain the overall socialist perspective, and while differentials will increase, ceilings have been imposed by which the Government hopes to limit the creation of a new class of entrepreneurs or other negative phenomena.

The political scene was calm while we were there but there was evidence of some dissatisfaction especially amongst young people in Tirana. The gap between the high educational level and the lower economic level has meant pockets of unemployment among some qualified young people, who are often unwilling to travel to jobs or take less qualified posts. There is also a perception amongst some young people that the West is a paradise, based on their watching Yugoslav and Italian TV and as one teacher told us, a lack of understanding due to overuse of slogans and not enough serious

investigation. Of course many young Albanians have had the chance to see for themselves since the events at the embassies in July and we were told that many of the refugees had approached Albanian embassies asking to return. Many have expressed disillusionment with conditions in the host countries, others have found themselves in trouble with the law. As the new law on passports takes effect some estimates were that 100,000 people may seek to emigrate, though finding a country that will accept economic refugees will not be easy. Many other Albanians, of course, will be travelling and returning home as we do.

We discussed the defection of Ismail Kadare with many people who knew him personally. Nobody criticised his work, which is still on sale, but there was disappointment at his act. It is ironical that he called the embassy refugees 'excrement' while others were more restrained; Ramiz Alia called them bad-mannered and misguided. His work was not repressed in Albania and he was free to travel abroad. Acquaintances characterised him as aloof and self-centred.

The serious situation in Kosova was of concern to all Albanians we spoke to. It was clear that the national question transcends any political differences.

We had talks about promoting cultural and educational exchanges and these activities will be boosted when diplomatic relations are finally established, hopefully in the near future.

Finally, in all our meetings, whether formal or informal, at the Hotel, the Enver Hoxha Museum, the football stadium, the Palace of Culture or on the street we found a genuine friendly feeling towards British people, which is the basis of our work and which we hope to build on in the future.

INTERVIEW WITH HARDIAL BAINS

Hardial Bains, First Secretary of the CC of the Communist Party of Canada (Marxist-Leninist) was in Albania during the events of December and was interviewed by "The New Hamilton Weekly" regarding the situation there on his return to Canada. Extracts from this interview follow.

New Hamilton Weekly; Welcome, and thank you for agreeing to this interview. We understand that you have just returned from Albania. We would like first of all to ask you when and why you were there, and about the events that happened there most recently.

Hardial Bains; Well, I just came back from Albania today. I was there all week. The interest our Party has in Albania is of course manifold. Besides the political interest, we are developing relations between Albanians and Canadians, in which different fronts of cooperation are being established. As a result, people go there for various reasons. I of course didn't go there to see what events were going to unfold; it came as quite a coincidence.

When I arrived in Albania the University of Tirana was on strike and a large number of students stayed away from their classes. The day I arrived, the students demanded to see the President of Albania, Ramiz Alla. He agreed to see the students the next day. He met with their representatives, because to meet with all the students would have been impossible. He spoke to them about various questions and the students put forward the demand to have an independent student union. The Plenum of the Central Committee of the Party of Labour of Albania met and agreed that the students could have an independent student union. The next day the students declared the foundation of the Democratic Party and the Independent Union of Students and New Intellectuals. They were directed to

present their papers to the Ministry of Justice so that they could be duly registered.

NHW: The other thing we have heard about is the events in Shkodra, where it is said a riot took place and thirty people were arrested. We also heard that this riot was opposed by the Democratic Party and by the State. When you get such reports, the first question that comes to mind is "did these events really occur?" Were you there during these events, and did they actually take place?

HB. Before answering that, I would first like to elaborate some more on your first question. The first issue is why did the students start this strike? The problem began with economic demands of the students, which were actually raised by the youth organisation of the Party. This year several buildings had been added to what they call the Student City, a complex of residences behind the University of Tirana. These buildings were not supplied with proper heating or electric power. This was one of the grievances the students had. The grievances were put forward by the official student organisation. As the situation developed these issues were taken over by others, who in the course of the development of the situation transformed the economic demands into political demands. The political demands were that Albania should speed up what is called the European process; that it should comply with the Helsinki Charter, and that it should publish the documents from the Paris Summit of the CSCE. On the basis of this spirit, the Democratic Party was formed last week.

What is very important, in my opinion is that the Party of Labour and the present state are very serious about pushing forward the process of deepening democracy. When the students struck and raised their economic demands, and then put forward political demands, the question naturally was, what should be done? If the state had responded in an anti-democratic spirit, it would have

sent the police and the army. It would have been very easy to crush the students through state violence. Many times in other countries, say in Eastern Europe, this is what happened. The Party and the state in Albania consider these to be political problems, so they have to be dealt with politically. The same is the case with economic problems which have to be dealt with on an economic basis. Are these just demands? Can the demands be met? So the organs of state power there, the police and the army, did not try to discourage such events. They strictly adhered to the law. They did not in any way intimidate or interfere with the political process. In my mind this shows that the Party and the state are very serious about deepening the democratic process in Albania.

Let me now reply to your second question. You have seen the reports of the press about some events in the town of Kavaje, which is in the Durrës District. There is one main street there, about two kilometres long. Every single window on that street was broken. The office of the Post, Telephone and Telegraph was smashed. In that town the police did not interfere, even though all this vandalism was taking place. After the Kavaje events, but before the ones in Shkodra, Ramiz Alia issued an appeal to the citizens pointing out that in Albania they like to deal with problems on a mature, cultured basis. Within this framework there is no place for anarchy or violence. There is no place for breaking the law. He said that this law applies to everyone, including himself.

Immediately after the incident in Kavaje, the Shkodra incident occurred, which was of a similar nature. The question arose as to what should be the response of the organs of state power? Are anarchy and violence to take over and destabilize the situation? Or should the organs of state power intervene? After giving serious thought to these matters, when the events in Shkodra unfolded the police and the army intervened. These events had various aspects. In a premeditated way, a gang of individuals attacked the Party committee office and other places. They put forward no political demands. All of a sudden violence erupted. So the ordinary people

on the streets tried to stop those committing violent acts and vandalism. While they did so, they were attacked with knives. While all this was taking place, the Chief of Police of Shkodra City was informed. It was decided that this was a matter of defence of law. It was not a political matter. The organs of the people's state power, the police and the army were called in to take action.

When the Democratic Party and the Independent Student's Union were founded and they put forward their political demands and economic demands, no force was used to settle these matters. Because these are economic and political demands they are dealt with accordingly. But in Shkodra and Kavaje the hooliganism in the streets was a question of law. Force was used and will be used in future as necessary, whenever and wherever the law is violated. What these events in Shkodra and Kavaje indicate is that there is some internal and external force that does not want the process of deepening of Albanian democracy to go on. As far as the Democratic Party is concerned, it is not really an issue whether or not they are in favour of this process. Forming a political organisation is a political act. Everyone in Albania has that right. So the blame cannot be placed on this or that political force. But when an attempt is made to destabilize the situation, that is a separate matter, it is a question of anarchy and violence.

When the storming of the embassies took place in July, the new law on the issuing of passports had just come into effect. Everyone had the right to be issued a passport. They had the right to travel wherever they wished. So that incident took place after the law came into being, not before. In other words, there is some internal or external force, or both, that does not want this deepening of democracy. Now, many more changes have taken place. Then this violence, this anarchy comes along. It seems to me that as far as the Albanians are concerned, the Party and the people, they are very much interested in moving along the road of the deepening of democracy. But there are some neighbours who may not want this to go on. It could be Yugoslavia, it could be Greece, it could be the

French and Germans. Sooner or later it will become clear, because Albanian people are very serious not to have the situation in their country destabilized.

NHW. It seems that the only time we hear anything about Albania is when there is some disturbance which could be used to discredit it. The viewpoint presented is always that now Albania, which they are calling the last Stalinist regime in Europe, will go the same way as the other countries of Eastern Europe. It looks as if there is a lot of external pressure on Albania at this time. Could you comment on this?

HB. We consider what has happened in Eastern Europe to be a positive process. One has to look closely at what has taken place there. Do the media which carry these reports support the positive processes in the world? Would they like to see real democracy come to the Soviet Union, to Hungary, to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Romania? Can you say that? If they were for such a democracy then we would be with them. But it seems to me that various forces want their own democracy imposed on these countries, the democracy which favours them just as in Eastern Europe, the Soviet model of socialism was being imposed on all the countries. So, you see what happens when you try foreign models? Far from introducing this Western democracy in Eastern Europe, they should actually think about what are its shortcomings. The people here in Canada are very concerned about this democracy. They are concerned that political parties function, elections take place, the most powerful win and then they don't implement their promises. There are serious problems with the constitution, and Canada urgently needs a new one. Would it not be better if people concentrated on overcoming the shortcomings and weaknesses of this democracy, and have a real democracy that can empower them to deal with their problems, rather than looking to impose their imperfect brand of democracy on others?

In my estimation, this question of democracy is a global need. It is not just a problem of Eastern Europe. Canadians need it too. And Albania has a need for the deepening of Albanian democracy

When developments take place, such as those in Albania, there are both subjective and objective causes. The objective causes are all of the developments since the time of liberation in 1944. A whole new people has been brought into being, people who are educated, people who are facing a new situation. A new Albania has been created. They have new needs that are not the same calibre as before. Now these current needs have to be satisfied as was done in the past. It is an objective thing.

There is an intelligensia; there are young workers and students who are not satisfied with what they have. Some of them have illusions about capitalism. They think of capitalism as a system which provides big salaries to the workers. The naivete is such that one of the economic demands of the Democratic Party is to have a six-hour working day, five days a week. Most Canadian workers don't even enjoy an eight hour day, and the forty hour week is still being fought over. The illusions are created in their minds through radio and television. What is the response of the Party to them? Is it to deal with them as brothers and sisters, as Albanian people, through dialogue, through persuasion, through discussion, not by force, not by inhibiting their opinions. This is why Ramiz Alia agreed to meet them. We have to understand this is the new situation for Albania.

In the twentieth century, the first need of the Albanians was to be masters in their own country. The men of the nineteenth century Albanian Renaissance dreamed of that and the state was created in 1912. The Albanian people achieved political independence. Their next demand was for social progress, for democracy. But because of the interference of the big powers, Ahmet Zog came to power. Zog first declared himself president of the Republic and then converted Albania into a monarchy with himself as king. He sold Albania out to foreign powers, especially the Italians. The war came and the

Italians occupied Albania. Zog fled. The need of the Albanian people was then for liberation. Liberation gave the Albanians people's power and the possibilities to deal with various problems. What is taking place today is a continuation of this process. They need to deepen their democracy, not the old kind of democracy but the one they have established. Different people in the world will have different forms of democracy, so to try and incite people to impose a particular kind of form onto different conditions will give rise to disaster.

This is one reason why these developments have not taken place. It is not just a question of the failure of this or that policy. The subjective causes are also there. There is the question of policy on different fronts, especially on the question of common herding of livestock and so on, where there were some weaknesses in the policy, but it was the Albanians who corrected them. There have been weaknesses in other aspects as well.

But the greatest problem that has arisen there is the problem of bureaucracy. It is the Party that has hoisted the banner of struggle against bureaucracy. The press does not want to tell the world that it is the Party that is the vanguard of the democratic process in Albania. In Albania there is broad discontent on the question of bureaucracy. The people are not satisfied with the status quo. So this is another cause.

Then there is the question of economic problems which are caused by various factors. One of them is the drought which has persisted for five years. But there is also the question of encirclement, the pressure from outside. And all these problems put together have now brought forth the situation whereby the issue has to be settled; whether to deepen Albanian democracy to strengthen socialism, or whether to destroy Albanian democracy in order to introduce capitalism. This is the way things look. But the Albanians want to deal with very definite problems, the problems which they face, and they have opted for socialism, they have opted for democracy. They are experimenting with this democracy and within that there may be

some weaknesses.

For example, Albania is creating a progressive state, with its juridical foundation and structure, with its own law. And the Party within the state will be a party like any other. Its main function is to organise and mobilize people for very definite aims that can assist them. Various distortions appeared in the past, whereby it was impossible to distinguish between the Party and the State, and are being corrected. It is the Party which is carrying out work to eliminate these distortions, not those who espouse the Western conception of democracy.

So, all this process which the Albanian Party and State have started, in my estimation, is not liked by some. They want to sabotage this process. We are told by the media that riots are taking place. What is a riot? A riot is not that people just go out into the street and start throwing rocks. To have a riot there has to be a very definite reason. What happened in Shkodra was not a riot. It's hooligan behaviour, criminal behaviour. So it is quite possible that those people want this democratic process to be stopped so that the position of Albania's independence is compromised and socialism is ended. If that is what they have in mind, then all claims that they are for democracy and so on are a farce.

Today the question of democracy is really one of the most fundamental questions. Without it, people cannot begin to deal with their problems. Albania has taken a particular road but some don't like it. They want to sabotage it, they want to overrun that process and introduce the same kind of thing that is going on in Poland, Czechoslovakia and other countries. What is being introduced in these countries is not democracy. They are mimicking Western democracy, and some people here in Canada are very satisfied that now they can manipulate all the governments of the Eastern European countries.

Democracy is also needed by the people in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Which country is it where people don't need democracy so

that they can deal with their problems? The people of India also need democracy. Everybody does. So here we have the Albanian people who, led by their Party and their state, are further democratizing their whole way of life and some people don't like it. That is really the issue.

As for the headlines that the Albanian state is Stalinist and it is going to go, or that the last domino is going to fall and so on, the Albanians never practiced what they call Stalinism. The Albanians have again set an example. If it is a political issue they will not use force against the opposition. These are questions which are settled through discussion, through persuasion, through dialogue, through cultured behaviour. Ramiz Alia raised the issue: Does democracy mean anarchy and violence? Does it mean that you can do anything you like, including destroying property, attacking people and so on? Some may have this conception.

NHW: In October, the Albanian writer Ismail Kadare announced his defection to France. How does his role fit in with those developments?

HB: When these events broke out, Ismail Kadare issued a statement that there is no place for anarchy and violence in Albania. The Democratic Party also condemned the use of violence and anarchy. As far as Ismail Kadare's role, it does not fit, because he should be within Albania pushing this democratic process instead of sitting outside and playing into the hands of those who want to sabotage this process.

NHW: It seems that here this whole question of democracy has been turned around. In Albania you have democratisation being led by the Party and by the State. You have Ismail Kadare who has imposed his own exile when Albania says he should go back and fight for his views if that is what he believes in. While in the rest of the world, it's the other way round - people have to fight against

the state, against those who are imposing democratisation. This differentiation is not being made by the media.

HB: Yes, they are causing very big confusion on this. You see there is a conservative attitude, whereby if one looks at the recent developments through preconceived notions, notions from the past, then all developments look negative. For example, the youth of Albania are astir. You see, some youth may not like socialism but generally speaking all are opposed to bureaucracy, and they don't like those conditions which exist there. So what attitude should be taken towards them ? Should a conservative attitude be taken based on old notions, or should some moralisms be thrown their way ? Or should one start from where they are at, see what their problems are, and lead them to solve those problems, deal with them ?

Instead, another notion is being imposed. For instance, you have the CSCE process. Those who support the CSCE process proclaim that they are for democracy but they do not help the democratisation process in Albania. How does it help to keep Albania out of the CSCE ? How does it help just to throw mud from the outside, instead of saying that : yes, these are positive developments which are taking place. Various leftists have also completely gone over to conservatism by saying that this democratisation process in Albania will wipe out socialism and should therefore be opposed. How is it that socialism will be wiped out through the democratisation process ? The only way socialism can be strengthened is by strengthening the process of democratisation.

And then you have those who indulge in anarchy and violence who are also hurting the democratisation process. You know how ? Because now anyone who is fanatical, dogmatist, hidebound, extremist, will be able to say : see what you have achieved by giving these rights to the people ? The solution, they say, is to withdraw all these measures.

So neither the CSCE nor these leftist critics are helping the

process, nor are those who engage in anarchy and violence, nor are all these journalists who make comments about the end of the last Stalinist outpost, instead of actually analysing what is happening there.

NHW: What is actually being put forward by this new party ?

HB: The Democratic Party wants the Helsinki Charter to be the basis of organising Albanian society . They want the documents of the Paris summit of the CSCE to be published in Albania, and that Albania should agree with the four principles of the Paris Charter: a free market economy, self-determination, free elections, and the right to private property - what is called joining in the European process.

NHW: Do you think that foreign capital is going to put a lot of money into the Democratic Party or other parties which may arise later on ?

HB: Naturally that's what they will do. And they will be doing it lawfully, because there is now a law which allows joint ventures. Now people can get together, strike some deals and the money will start pouring in. There is no obstruction whatsoever. They are already manoeuvring.

NHW: So theoretically and legally, of course the situation is that when elections are held, the Democratic Party could become the ruling party...

HB: I don't think so.

NHW: Are there laws to prevent that ?

HB: No. They can get elected. There is no law to stop it. They can, through elections, become the leading party. But in my estimation they will not win and one of the main reasons is that the peasantry is with the PLA. The Democratic Party, basically, exists only in Tirana, amongst the students, some intellectuals and some young workers. The peasantry is very much with the PLA. Many rallies have been held there in support of the PLA and the democratisation process. When I was in Albania, there were rallies with hundreds of thousands of people in support of the PLA. These don't seem to have been reported by the foreign media.

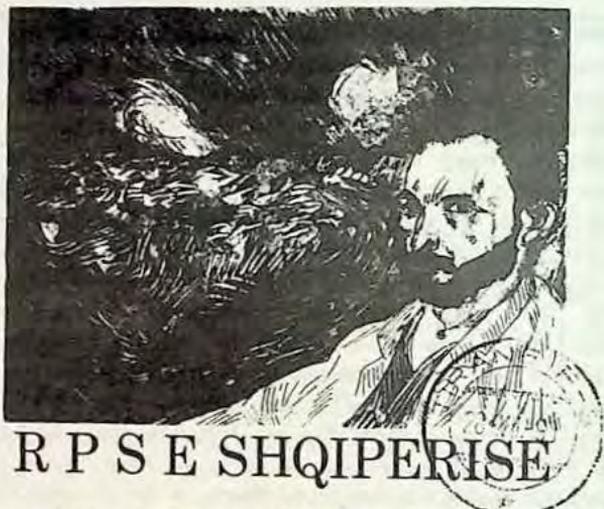
NHW: Do you have anything to add before we conclude ?

HB: This has been the most serious situation for the people of Albania. It seems to me that the way things are going any violation of law is going to be dealt with very severely. Any political opposition will be dealt with on the basis of dialogue and discussion. There are people who are trying to stir up discontent in the south, that is amongst the Greek minority. Some problems may arise there. There are different forces trying to stir up things. But the major problem is economic and then from there the issue becomes political and so on. There are serious economic problems. There are food shortages, shortages of raw materials for enterprises and so on.....there is discontent; you see some people simply want very fast changes. They are impressed by the glitter of capitalism, they want all these things. They literally think that if they could just leave the country, the whole world is waiting to hand them a Dynasty-type lifestyle. Plus there is a lot of discontent against bureaucracy there, a lot of complaints.

Once again the issue which has to be emphasised is that democracy is needed by everyone. There are those who say it is needed only in Eastern Europe, in Albania. This is to suggest that the democracy which we have here is the last word in democracy, and the people here have no more needs in terms of democracy. This is

really the crux of the matter. In Albania they have their process of deepening democracy and there are those who are trying to sabotage it. This is because according to them, the process of deepening democracy means strengthening socialism. World capital does not like it. The leftists accuse Albania of opening the country to all the capitalist states. That's what the process of deepening democracy means to the leftists. If it does not mean this, then it means nothing to them. So Albania is developing the process of deepening democracy in its own way.

* Decree no. 7442 of 17th December 1990 prohibits any foreign aid for political parties or associations. (Editor)



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The stamps filling the gaps in this issue are available at £2 per set of 4 mounted on a postcard. Please specify Folklore or Van Gogh Centenary.

NEWS FROM THE BRANCHES

MIDLANDS.

On October 6th 1990 Mike Clark, Secretary of the Midlands Branch spoke at a meeting in Birmingham entitled "The Threat to Albania's Independence", which was followed by discussion and a video on the life of Enver Hoxha.

On March 2nd 1991 Liam McDowall will speak on "Recent Events in Albania" at Friends Meeting House, Birmingham City Centre at 2pm. There will also be a speaker from Kosova on the serious situation of the Albanians in Yugoslavia.

BATH & WEST.

This newly formed Branch has been meeting at the Royal York Hotel, Bath in the last three months of 1990. They are planning a musical evening in January and hope to arrange a study tour to Albania this year or next. Local members wanting more information should contact the Branch Secretary: Richard Pierce, 8, Wedmore Avenue, Chippenham, Wilts. SN15 1QP.

NORTH-EAST ENGLAND.

On June 21st 1990 June Emerson gave a talk, illustrated with slides and tape recordings, on Albanian music, at Gateshead Central Library. This was followed by a concert of Albanian composed music: Sonatina for Piano by Tonin Harapi, Nokturn for Clarinet and Piano by Thoma Simaku and String Quartet No. 1 by Tish Dalja performed by the Genista String Quartet, David Murray on piano and Jenny Murray on clarinet.



RADIO TIRANA

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06.30-07.00 7205 and 9500
18.30-19.00 7120, 9480 and 1395
22.30-23.00 7215, 9480 and 1395

First broadcast;

Mon. Sports Spot*/ Folk Music
Tue. P.O. Box Radio Tirana
Wed. Music for pleasure
Thu.
Fri. Youth In Focus
Sat. Let's Learn Albanian
Sun. The host - Albania

Second Broadcast;

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Tue. Our View / Let's learn Albanian
Wed. Our Heritage
Thu. Profile / Bookpage (bi-weekly)
Fri. Question Mark
Sat. Music on Request / Cultural magazine
Sun. Music and more