

MEMORANDUM ON ALBANIA

June 9, 1996 Tirana, Albania

To: U.S. Department of State
European Union
OSCE
Council of Europe
National and international nongovernmental organizations
International public opinion

From: A group of Albanian writers, scientists, artists, journalists and editors

Translated from the Albanian

Because the institutions of democracy in Albania have broken down;
Because the free vote of the people was stolen and violated in the May 26 parliamentary elections in Albania, and a legitimate democratic parliament is nonexistent;
Because a puppet, single-party parliament has replaced the multi-party system as a result of the plunder and violation of free votes;
Because the dialogue between this party, i.e. the President of the Republic on the one hand and the brutally discriminated and demonized parties on the other hand, has reached a dead end;
Because the rule of law has become fictional and citizens are defenseless in the face of the police state;
Because people with parliamentary immunity have been cruelly beaten by the police even in front of television cameras from around the world,

We, the signatories of this memorandum, turn to the governments of the democratic countries of the free world, international organizations, democratic-minded Albanians and world opinion to draw attention to the catastrophic consequences of this situation. We appeal to them to commit their energies and influence to help change the situation in our country.

It is already clear for the Albanian and world public opinion that the electoral farce of May 26, 1996, is taking Albania along the first steps toward the restoration of a dictatorship. The few freedoms we still enjoy -- won through the struggle of the Albanian people after half a century of totalitarianism -- will not be here tomorrow. Tomorrow will be too late. Tomorrow, the security of the individual will be at stake in the face of an arbitrary state power which has already ignored the political will of its citizens as expressed through their votes; a state power which is not accountable to any organ or law in the face of the rapacious and immoral lackeys of the state.

The old fear of the state is back, and spreading. The most elementary human right, the right to free speech, is already threatened. And tomorrow it may be as remote as it was during the period of obscurity we have all struggled to overcome. The free world should not remain indifferent to the restoration of a dictatorship in the heart of Europe, as it did with the events in former Yugoslavia, which led to a tragedy for millions of people.

The consequences of these events in Albania will be even harsher if the situation does not change. A dictatorial Albania could turn into a hot-bed of tension for the entire region. In the

conditions of poor capitalism, a dictatorship without sufficient financial means easily gives rise to arms and drug trafficking, as well as to other forms of illegal trade, all of which has already started in this country. Albania threatens to become a major link in the network of international crime, as has been the case with other dictatorships in Latin America. The geographic position and topographic configuration of the country would particularly favor this.

Albania could become an open wound with destructive effects on the entire region. With unlimited power devoid of any democratic control, President Berisha could easily break the hypocritical promises he has made regarding international and regional policy, just as he is violating his promise to abide by OSCE standards. He is sacrificing the rights and freedoms of Albanian citizens for his personal power. In the future he could play with the destiny of all Albanians inside and outside of the country for exactly the same motives. The free world should not close its eyes or pretend naivete in the face of such overwhelming dangers.

Likewise, political forces in the free world should not justify the authoritarianism of Berisha because it presents an alternative to the return of communism in Albania. The last bastion of communism in Albania is the personal power of President Berisha himself. A free Albania oriented toward Europe can only be achieved through the democratic integration of all existing political forces in the country, and not through a ghettoization in the spirit of the Cold War, which runs counter to the European integration process, and keeps alive the ghosts of the past. What a post-communist society badly needs is peace, understanding and dialogue between all political forces, and not political apartheid. It needs mutual tolerance and respect, and not revenge and discrimination. We will either build democracy together, with each person enjoying the space for diversity, or we will never be. This pan-Albanian aspiration should not fall prey to the violence and lies of an authoritarian state power. If this were to happen, it would be our common misfortune, and a shameful burden on the conscience of everyone who can do something to help the young Albanian democracy free itself from the claws of the past.

Signed:

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