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RELEASED IN FULL

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ACTION EUR-01

INFO	LOG-00	AID-00	CIAE-00	SMEC-00	INL-01	OASY-00	DODE-00
	SRPP-00	FBIE-00	INLB-01	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	JUSE-00
	LAB-01	L-01	ADS-00	MOFM-04	MOF-03	M-00	NSAE-00
	NSCE-00	OMB-01	PA-01	PM-00	PRS-01	P-00	SCT-00
	SP-00	SS-00	TRSE-00	T-00	USIE-00	SA-01	SNIS-00
	NISC-01	PMB-00	PRME-01	DRL-09	G-00	/028W	

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R 130852Z OCT 95
FM AMEMBASSY TIRANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8273
INFO AMEMBASSY ROME
USMISSION USVIENNA
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
USLO SKOPJE
USEU BRUSSELS
AMEMBASSY ATHENS

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ SECTION 01 OF 02 TIRANA 003137

STATE FOR EUR/SCE

E.O. 12356: DECL: 10/11/2005
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, AL
SUBJECT: CONFIDENT SOCIALISTS BEGIN ELECTION
CAMPAIGN

1. ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ - ENTIRE TEXT.

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SUMMARY

2. THE SOCIALIST PARTY HAS OPENED ITS CAMPAIGN SEASON IN ANTICIPATION OF MAY 1996 ELECTIONS. THE PS HOPES TO EXPLOIT STRONG LOCAL ORGANIZATION AND PERCEIVED GROWING POPULAR DISILLUSIONMENT WITH THE BERISHA GOVERNMENT. SOME PS LEADERS BELIEVE THE RESTRICTIONS OF THE NEW LUSTRATION LAW WILL ONLY HELP THEIR CAUSE. WHILE THEY DISAVOW ANY INTENT TO PROVOKE CAMPAIGN VIOLENCE, THEY CLAIM TO BE PREPARED TO ENDURE POTENTIAL GOVERNMENT IMPEDIMENTS TO RALLIES AND OTHER CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES AND TURN

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: FRANK H. PEREZ
DATE/CASE ID: 13 DEC 2002 200103201

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THEM TO THEIR ADVANTAGE. RECENT GOVERNMENT ACTIONS AND PS AGGRESSIVENESS ARE SETTING THE STAGE FOR A NASTY CAMPAIGN. END SUMMARY

PS OPENS CAMPAIGN SEASON

3. WITH PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS EXPECTED NEXT MAY, THE SOCIALIST PARTY ANNOUNCED, OCTOBER 9, AN IMMEDIATE DECISION TO BEGIN THE CAMPAIGN. PS LEADERS HAVE FANNED OUT ALL OVER THE COUNTRY TO ADDRESS RALLIES AND TO DELIVER THE MESSAGE THAT, DESPITE THE RULING PD'S ASSERTIONS TO THE CONTRARY, THERE IS A "SOCIALIST ALTERNATIVE." PS SLOGANEERING FOCUSES ON THREE MAJOR THEMES: PRESIDENT BERISHA'S SUPPOSED AUTHORITARIAN TENDENCIES, ALLEGED MASSIVE CORRUPTION IN THE BUREAUCRACY AND JUDICIARY, AND THE PERCEIVED SLOW PACE OF IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY OF LIFE.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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PS STRENGTH - LOCAL ORGANIZATION

4. AS THE HEIRS OF THE OLD ALBANIAN LABOR (COMMUNIST) PARTY, THE SOCIALISTS BENEFIT FROM AN EXTENSIVE AND DISCIPLINED LOCAL ORGANIZATION. SOCIALISTS WON OVER HALF OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT POSITIONS IN JULY 1992 ELECTIONS. THE PARTY ALSO INCLUDES STRONG EUROSOCIALIST YOUTH AND WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS. THE SOCIALISTS' RECOGNIZED ORGANIZATIONAL ADVANTAGES HAVE FORCED THE PD TO UNDERTAKE ITS OWN MASSIVE RESTRUCTURING OF LOCAL ORGANIZATIONS. WHILE REPORTEDLY NOT AS WEALTHY AS THE PD, THE PS ENJOYS INCOME FROM PARTY-OWNED ENTERPRISES.

GENOCIDE LAW? NO PROBLEM!

5. OPTIMISTIC SOCIALIST LEADERS RECENTLY TOLD POLOFF THAT THEY DO NOT EXPECT THE RECENTLY PASSED LUSTRATION OR "GENOCIDE" LAW TO INTERRUPT THEIR MARCH TO VICTORY. THEY CLAIM THAT, ONCE ELECTED, THEY WILL REPEAL THE LAW AND THEN APPOINT THOSE SOCIALISTS WHO WOULD HAVE BEEN FORBIDDEN FROM RUNNING FOR PARLIAMENT TO KEY GOVERNMENT JOBS. POLOFF HAS HEARD NO INDICATIONS THAT THE PS WILL CHALLENGE THE LAW IN THE COURTS (AS OTHER PARTIES HAVE THREATENED) OR INSIST ON RUNNING CANDIDATES DISQUALIFIED UNDER THE LAW. SOME SOCIALIST LEADERS

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ARE CONFIDENT THAT THE "GENOCIDE" LAW, IN ALL ITS BREADTH, WILL EARN THE PARTY SYMPATHY AND VOTES.

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CAMPAIGN VIOLENCE? NOT US!

6. PS LEADERS CATEGORICALLY DENY THAT THEY WILL ENCOURAGE VIOLENCE DURING THE CAMPAIGN, DESPITE RUMORS THAT CERTAIN PARTY LEADERS HAVE CONTEMPLATED ORGANIZING ILLEGAL RALLIES AND OTHER ACTS OF "CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE" IN ORDER TO PROVOKE SUPPRESSION AND EMBARRASS THE GOVERNMENT. PS DEPUTY CHAIRMAN LUAN HAJDARAGA TOLD POLOFF THAT THE PS EXPECTS THE GOVERNMENT TO PUT OBSTACLES IN THE WAY OF ITS LAWFUL CAMPAIGN ACTIVITIES. RATHER THAN COUNTER SUCH OBSTACLES WITH FORCE, HAJDARAGA CONTINUED, THE PS WILL ENDURE THEM IN THE BELIEF THAT EVERY CLEAR VIOLATION OF THE PS RIGHT TO CAMPAIGN WILL EARN THE PARTY THAT MANY MORE VOTES FROM A JADED AND DISGRUNTLED ELECTORATE.

7. OTHER OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT THE POLEMICAL LEVEL, ALREADY HIGH, WILL INCREASE DRAMATICALLY AS ELECTIONS NEAR AND COULD RESULT IN VIOLENT INCIDENTS. THEY ARE AS CONCERNED ABOUT DEMOCRATIC PARTY PROVOCATIONS AS THEY ARE

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COMMENT

8. THE SOCIALISTS ARE OPTIMISTIC AND CONFIDENT IN THEIR ORGANIZATION. THEY BELIEVE THAT POPULAR DISILLUSIONMENT WITH BERISHA HAS ONLY INCREASED SINCE ITS FIRST SURPRISING MANIFESTATION IN THE NOVEMBER 1994 CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM. HOWEVER, THEIR CAMPAIGN THUS FAR IS LONG ON CRITICISM AND SHORT ON SPECIFICS CONCERNING THEIR SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC ALTERNATIVES. THIS IS THE RESULT OF THEIR LONG FIXATION WITH JAILED CHAIRMAN FATOS NANO, AND THEIR ATTEMPTS TO BUILD SUPPORT PURELY ON CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT.

9. THE PD HAS SET THE STAGE FOR A NASTY CAMPAIGN, BEGINNING LATE LAST YEAR WITH PERSONAL AND LEGAL ATTACKS ON OPPOSITION FIGURES AND THE JUDICIARY, AND CONTINUING WITH THE RECENT PASSAGE OF THE "GENOCIDE" LAW. IN AN APPARENT ATTEMPT TO FOCUS THE ELECTION ON THE PD VERSUS THE PS AND REDUCE THE POSSIBILITY OF A POST-ELECTION COALITION, THE PD IS REPORTEDLY PREPARING A NEW ELECTORAL LAW THAT COULD SET THE MINIMUM PERCENTAGE OF VOTES FOR PARTIES TO PARTICIPATE IN PARLIAMENT AT AS HIGH AS 8 PERCENT. THE PS SHOWS NO INTENTION OF SHRINKING FROM THE FIGHT AND BY ITS TOUGH RHETORIC MAY HOPE TO PROVOKE HARSH AND, IT HOPES, SELF-DEFEATING PD REACTIONS. BASED ON OUR EXPERIENCE WITH THE 1992 ELECTIONS, 1994 BY-ELECTIONS, AND THE CONSTITUTIONAL REFERENDUM, WE BELIEVE THAT LOCALIZED VIOLENT

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INCIDENTS ARE LIKELY, GIVEN THE POLITICALLY
POLARIZED ATMOSPHERE.

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