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ACTION EUR-01

INFO	LOG-00	INLB-01	AID-00	SMEC-00	INL-01	OASY-00	SRPP-00
	DS-00	FBIE-00	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	L-01
	MCO-01	ADS-00	MOF-04	MOF-03	M-00	NSAE-00	NSCE-00
	OMB-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00
	SSO-00	TRSE-00	USIE-00	SA-01	ASDS-01	SNIS-00	NISC-00
	PMB-00	DSCC-00	PRME-01	DRL-09	G-00	/027W	

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O 271428Z MAY 96
FM AMEMBASSY TIRANA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9538
INFO EUROPEAN POLITICAL COLLECTIVE
SECDEF WASHDC
CIA WASHDC

RELEASED IN FULL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TIRANA 001052

OPS CENTER PLEASE ALERT EUR/SCE TOM UNDERWOOD ON RECEIPT

E.O. 12958: DECL:05/27/01
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, AL, AMGT
SUBJECT: ALBANIAN ELECTIONS

REF: TIRANA 1051 AND PREVIOUS

1. (U) CLASSIFIED BY DRSMITH, CHARGE, PER 1.5 B AND D

SUMMARY

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2. (C) NUMEROUS IRREGULARITIES MARRED THE MAY 26 ALBANIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS. WITH THE EXCEPTION OF SOME MORE SERIOUS AND LOCALIZED IRREGULARITIES OF A MORE POLITICAL THAN ADMINISTRATIVE NATURE, MOST OBSERVERS AGREE THAT THE PROCESS WENT REASONABLY WELL UP TO THE COUNTING STAGE. IT IS DIFFICULT TO TELL WHETHER OPPOSITION PRESENCE DURING THE COUNTING STAGE WOULD HAVE MADE ANY DIFFERENCE. IRONICALLY, PRIVATE PARALLEL AND EXIT POLLS ARE EXPECTED TO SHOW THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY

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WOULD HAVE WON HANDILY IN ANY CASE. END SUMMARY.

MANY OBSERVERS REPORTED; PROBLEMS ABOUND

3. (C) WITH ALL EMBASSY AND MOST OSCE OBSERVERS NOW DEBRIEFED, THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT THE MAY 26 ALBANIAN PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS WERE FRAUGHT WITH NUMEROUS IRREGULARITIES. MOST OF THESE WERE PRACTICAL, ADMINISTRATIVE AND PROCEDURAL IN NATURE. AS SUCH, THEY WERE GENERALLY INSIGNIFICANT, ALTHOUGH THEIR SHEER VOLUME SPEAKS POORLY OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE PROCESS AND WILL SERVE ONLY TO INCREASE GENERAL VOTER DISTRUST.

MOST SERIOUS PROBLEMS LOCALIZED

4. (C) FROM EMBASSY OBSERVATION, IT APPEARS THAT MANY OF THE MORE SERIOUS PROBLEMS OF A MORE POLITICAL NATURE WERE LOCALIZED IN BERAT, VLORA AND LUSHNJE, ALTHOUGH THERE WERE OTHER INSTANCES. THESE MORE SERIOUS PROBLEMS GENERALLY TOOK THE FORM OF POLICE/SECURITY FORCE INTIMIDATION, OPEN AND BLATANT RECORD ALTERATION AND MORE
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SERIOUS PROCEDURAL VIOLATIONS. THIS IS NOT TO SUGGEST THAT SERIOUS VIOLATIONS DID NOT OCCUR OUTSIDE THESE AREAS, ONLY THAT WE DID NOT OBSERVE THEM. OSCE AND OTHERS REPORT SERIOUS IRREGULARITIES ELSEWHERE, ALSO.

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN VOTE DAY AND VOTE COUNT

5. (C) EVEN IN THOSE AREAS WHERE PROCEEDINGS WENT RELATIVELY SMOOTHLY PRIOR TO THE CLOSE OF POLLS, HOWEVER, OBSERVERS ALMOST UNIFORMLY CITE PROCEDURAL IRREGULARITIES DURING THE VOTE COUNT, SUCH AS MORE BALLOTS THAT VOTERS LISTED AS VOTED, UNUSUALLY HIGH NUMBERS OF INVALIDATED VOTES, QUESTIONABLY INVALIDATED BALLOTS, ARBITRARY COUNTING METHODS, NON-UNIFORM APPLICATION OF RULES REGARDING INVALIDATION OF BALLOTS, ETC. IT IS NOT POSSIBLE TO GAUGE HOW OPPOSITION PRESENCE DURING THE VOTE COUNT WOULD HAVE AFFECTED THIS ASPECT OF THE PROCEEDINGS.

LIKELY PD VICTORY REGARDLESS

6. (C) INFORMED SOURCES INDICATE THAT PARALLEL VOTE TABULATIONS BY NDI-RELATED GROUPS AND EXIT POLLING BY IRI-RELATED GROUPS WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY SUPPORT RESULTS

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SHOWING AND EASY VICTORY FOR THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY (PD) IN THE RANGE OF 2-3:1. IT IS NOT YET KNOWN HOW SOCIALIST VOTES WILL BE COUNTED FOR PURPOSES OF DETERMINING WHETHER A SECOND ROUND IS NECESSARY. HOWEVER, A FEW QUASI-OFFICIAL RESULTS DISCUSSED ON TELEVISION THUS FAR GIVE MOST OF THE VICTORIES TO PD CANDIDATES BY MARGINS LARGE ENOUGH TO AVOID RUNOFFS.

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STATEMENTS EXPECTED LATER

7. (C) OSCE OBSERVERS, THE SOCIETY FOR DEMOCRATIC CULTURE (SUPPORTED BY NDI) AND THE INTERNATIONAL REPUBLICAN INSTITUTE (IRI) EXPECT TO MAKE STATEMENTS LATER THIS EVENING. MOST ARE EXPECTED TO DRAW ATTENTION TO THE NUMEROUS AND SERIOUS IRREGULARITIES AND FOCUS ON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT, ESPECIALLY IN THE SECOND ROUND. NDI CAN BE EXPECTED NOT TO DISPUTE ANY OFFICIAL RESULTS WHICH CONFORM TO THE PARAMETERS OF THEIR PARALLEL VOTE TABULATION, AND IRI MAY DO THE SAME.

COMMENT

8. (C) THIS ELECTION WAS CHAOTIC AND DISORGANIZED. THE CHAOS WAS CONFOUNDED BY PARANOIA WHICH FOMENTED THE LAST MINUTE CHANGE OF VOTE COUNT PROTOCOLS. IT ALSO PROBABLY DROVE MANY OF THE OTHER EXCESSES, INCLUDING SOME EXCESSIVE AND UNFOUNDED AND EXAGGERATED OPPOSITION CLAIMS OF PROBLEMS, WITNESSED BY THE CORPS OF OBSERVERS AROUND THE COUNTRY. THE OPPOSITION PARTIES HAVE ONLY CONTRIBUTED TO THIS LANDSCAPE OF IRREGULARITY BY WHAT STILL APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN A PREMATURE AND LARGELY UNWARRANTED PULLOUT FROM THE CONTEST. NO ONE IS CERTAIN

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OF THE NEXT STEPS; HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT HAS GIVEN
EVERY INDICATION THAT IT INTENDS TO PROCEED AND TO SEAT
A PARLIAMENT COMPRISED OF VICTORS FROM THIS ELECTION.
IRONICALLY, IF THE PARALLEL COUNT AND EXIT POLL PERFORMED
ARE ACCURATE, IT SEEMS THERE WAS NEED FOR NEITHER THE

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PARANOIA OR THE EXCESSES. BY ITS INSISTENCE ON CONTROL
OVER THE PROCEEDINGS, THE PD HAS ROBBED ITSELF OF WHAT
COULD HAVE BEEN AN HONORABLE VICTORY.

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