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 P:AWOLFF S/S:WRPEARSON
 S/S-O: SMULL

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E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR
 TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PHUM, PREF, AL. US
 SUBJECT: ACTING SECRETARY KIMMITT MEETS WITH ALBANIAN
 DEMOCRATIC LEADERS BERISHA AND PASHKO

1. ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~ - ENTIRE TEXT.
2. SUMMARY. DURING THEIR MEETING WITH ACTING SECRETARY KIMMITT, ALBANIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY LEADERS VOICED THEIR PLEASURE OVER THE U.S. DECISION TO RESUME RELATIONS WITH

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 ALBANIA, ASSURED KIMMITT OF THEIR PARTY'S COMMITMENT TO PURSUING A MORE OPEN AND PROSPEROUS ALBANIA VIA PEACEFUL, DEMOCRATIC DIALOGUE, ASKED THAT THE U.S. CAUTION THE GOA AGAINST ANY CRACKDOWN PRIOR TO THE MARCH 31 ELECTIONS, AND PLEADED FOR FOOD AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE. KIMMITT PLEDGED TO EXPLORE THE POSSIBILITY OF SENDING IMMEDIATE HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO ALBANIA AND EMPHASIZED THE USG INTEREST IN DEVELOPING CLOSER TIES WITH THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF ALBANIA. END SUMMARY.

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3. PRIOR TO THE MARCH 15 CEREMONY FOR THE RESUMPTION OF DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS BETWEEN THE U.S. AND ALBANIA, ACTING SECRETARY KIMMITT MET WITH ALBANIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY LEADERS DR. SALIH BERISHA AND GRAMOZ PASHKO. USG

PARTICIPANTS ALSO INCLUDED EUR DAS KAMMAN, EUR/EEY DIRECTOR SWIHART, P SPECIAL ASSISTANT WOLFF, S/P FOX, AND EUR/EEY ENSTROM (NOTETAKER).

4. MR. KIMMITT OPENED THE MEETING BY APPLAUDING THE ROLE THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAS PLAYED IN ENCOURAGING DEMOCRATIC REFORM IN ALBANIA, UNDERSCORING OUR SHARED VALUES AND GOALS FOR ALBANIA IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE INTERNATIONALLY ACCEPTED CSCE PRINCIPLES AND STRESSING THE USG WISH TO SEE ALBANIA CREATE A CONSTRUCTIVE ROLE FOR ITSELF WITHIN EUROPE.

U.S. - ALBANIAN RELATIONS

5. BERISHA EXPRESSED HIS PARTY'S STRONG SUPPORT FOR THE

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USG DECISION TO RESTORE RELATIONS, ALTHOUGH PASHKO REGRETTED THAT THIS DECISION HAD NOT COME EARLIER. BERISHA FURTHER NOTED THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY HAS SUPPORTED SUCH A DECISION FROM THE VERY BEGINNING AS VITAL TO THE ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMOCRACY IN ALBANIA AND THE WELFARE OF THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE. HE STRESSED THAT IT WAS IN THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE'S INTEREST TO HAVE AN OFFICIAL U.S. PRESENCE IN THE COUNTRY SOON AND NOT LATER. HE CREDITED CURRENT DEVELOPMENTS IN ALBANIA TO THE HELSINKI SPIRIT SWEEPING ACROSS EASTERN EUROPE AND EXPRESSED HIS HOPE THAT ALBANIA WOULD BE ABLE TO GAIN BACK SOME OF THE TIME IT HAS LOST VIS A VIS OTHER EAST EUROPEAN NATIONS.

DEMOCRATIZATION

6. TERMING ALBANIA THE MOST STALINIST COMMUNIST COUNTRY--"WORSE THAN MR. ORWELL'S NOVEL"-- BERISHA CONCEDED THAT THE ROAD TO DEMOCRACY WOULD BE DIFFICULT. HE ADDED THAT ALBANIA, UNLIKE OTHER EAST EUROPEAN NATIONS, HAS NEVER HAD A DEMOCRATIC TRADITION BUT STRESSED HIS PARTY'S COMMITMENT TO PROCEED TOWARD DEMOCRACY DESPITE THESE BARRIERS. "WE ARE INTELLECTUALS AND HAVE MISSED THE

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EXPERIENCE OF BEING POLITICIANS," PASHKO CONFESSED. THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY REQUIRES THE AID OF DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTES TO HELP THEM BUILD POLITICAL SKILLS AND LOOKS TO THE U.S. TO SUPPORT THEM IN ACHIEVING DEMOCRACY IN ALBANIA.

7. KIMMITT PRAISED THE ALBANIANS' PERSISTENCE IN PURSUING THEIR GOALS AND ASSURED THEM OF THE USG INTENTION TO SUPPORT THE PROCESS OF DEMOCRATIZATION IN ALBANIA.

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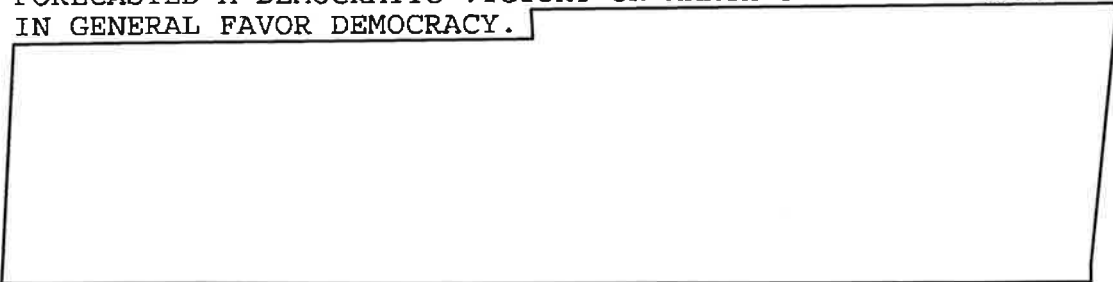
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HOWEVER, KIMMITT CAUTIONED THAT THE ROAD TO DEMOCRACY IN

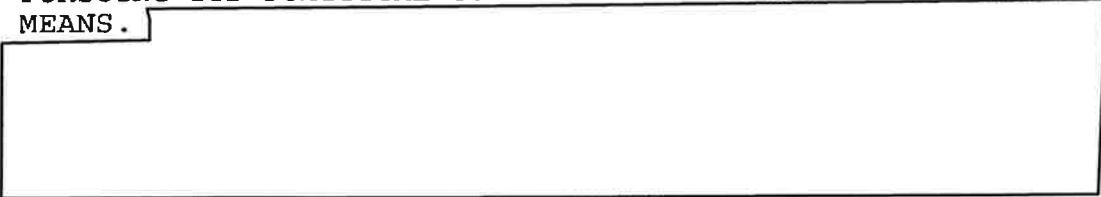
ALBANIA MAY REQUIRE A SERIES OF SMALL RATHER THAN LARGE STEPS TO ACHIEVE THE FINAL GOAL.

8. ASKED HOW THE USG COULD BEST GUARANTEE FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS IN ALBANIA, BERISHA REPLIED THAT PRESSURE FROM THE USG AND OTHERS WAS KEY. BERISHA ESTIMATED THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY MEMBERSHIP TO BE APPROXIMATELY 95,000 AND FORECASTED A DEMOCRATIC VICTORY ON MARCH 31. THE PEOPLE IN GENERAL FAVOR DEMOCRACY.



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9. KIMMITT COMMENTED THAT OPPOSITION FORCES OFTEN BECOME RADICALIZED WHEN THEY FIND ELECTORAL RESULTS HAVE BEEN MANIPULATED OR NOT TO BE IN THEIR FAVOR. BERISHA ASSURED HIM THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY WOULD REMAIN COMMITTED TO PURSUING ITS POLITICAL GOALS VIA NONVIOLENT AND DEMOCRATIC MEANS.



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10. KIMMITT ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO INFORM VISITING ALBANIAN FOREIGN MINISTER KAPLLANI THAT THE FUTURE OF U.S.-ALBANIAN RELATIONS WILL BE DIRECTLY AFFECTED BY THE FAIRNESS OF THE MARCH 31 ELECTIONS AND GOVERNMENT EFFORTS TO FACILITATE THE PARTICIPATION OF FOREIGN ELECTION OBSERVERS.

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DIRE ECONOMIC SITUATION

11. PASHKO CHARACTERIZED THE CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION IN ALBANIA AS CATASTROPHIC. HE ADDED. HOWEVER, THAT ALBANIA WILL FACE MANY MORE PROBLEMS FOLLOWING THE ELECTIOS. PASHKO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE SITUATION UNDER A DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP IS LIKELY TO GET WORSE BEFORE IT GETS BETTER. IF THEY ARE VICTORIOUS, HE STRESSED THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY WOULD INHERIT A BALANCE OF TRADE DEFICIT AND A LARGE OUTSTANDING FOREIGN DEBT. (COMMENT: RECENT REPORTS INDICATE THAT THE ALBANIAN FOREIGN DEBT IS APPROXIMATELY 300 MILLION DOLLARS. HOWEVER, NUMERICAL ESTIMATES OF ALBANIAN ECOMONIC ACTIVITY ARE SUBJECT TO A

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WIDE MARGIN OF ERROR SINCE THE GOVERNMENT DOES NOT PUBLICLY RELEASE DATA. WHILE WAITING TO MEET WITH MR. KIMMITT, BERISHA COMMENTED TO SWIHART AND KAMMAN THAT THE TRANSITION TO A DEMOCRACY AND MARKET SYSTEM "WOULD BE MUCH EASIER FOR A PROSPEROUS COUNTRY SUCH AS BULGARIA THAN FOR ALBANIA." BERISHA'S COMMENT UNDERSCORES THE NEAR-CRISIS-LEVEL OF THE CURRENT ECONOMIC SITUATION IN ALBANIA.)

12. PASHKO ATTRIBUTED THE RECENT MASS EXODUS OF REFUGEES TO A LOSS OF FAITH BY MANY ALBANIANS IN THE COUNTRY'S ABILITY TO REVERSE YEARS OF DEMOCRATIC AND ECONOMIC STAGNATION. NOTING DEMONSTRATING STUDENTS IN TIRANA

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SHOUTING, "BUSH, BUSH," HE ALSO OPINED THAT THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE HAVE BEGUN TO DOUBT THE SINCERITY OF THEIR NEIGHBORS' GOODWILL AND ARE LOOKING MORE AND MORE TO HELP FROM THE USG. PASHKO, HOWEVER, EXPRESSED HIS FEAR THAT THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE'S EXPECTATIONS IN THE USG ABILITY TO RESCUE THEM FROM THE PRESENT SITUATION MAY BE TOO HIGH. ON THIS ISSUE, PASHKO NOTED THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY JOINS THE LABOR PARTY IN PLEADING FOR U.S. ASSISTANCE IN ALLEVIATING THE HARSH ECONOMIC CONDITIONS PREVALENT IN ALBANIA. THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE MUST HAVE HOPE BEFORE DEMOCRATIC AND ECONOMIC REFORM CAN MOVE FORWARD.

13. KIMMITT PLEDGED TO EXPLORE IMMEDIATELY THE POSSIBILITY OF SENDING HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE TO ALBANIA, ALTHOUGH EUR DAS KAMMAN NOTED THAT SUCH ASSISTANCE MAY NOT BE LOGISTICALLY POSSIBLE UNTIL AFTER THE ELECTION.

14. KIMMITT ENDED THE MEETING BY EMPHASIZING THE USG

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INTEREST IN BUILDING A LASTING AND CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE AND IN MAINTAINING AND FURTHER DEVELOPING ITS TIES WITH THE DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF ALBANIA. BAKER

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