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TO AMEMBASSY BELGRADE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 278002

FOR AMBASSADOR ANDERSON FROM MONTGOMERY

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR

TAGS: PINR, AL

SUBJECT: BRIEFING FOREIGN AMBASSADORS TRAVELLING TO ALBANIA

REFERENCE: BELGRADE 7906

1. OUR LACK OF INFORMATION ON AND ACCESS TO ALBANIA MAKES THE TRAVEL OF FRIENDLY AMBASSADORS TO ALBANIA A POTENTIAL SOURCE OF VALUABLE INSIGHTS. WE WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO PASS ON OUR CURRENT THOUGHTS AND WILL APPRECIATE ANY FEEDBACK THE VISITORS MAY PROVIDE.

2. THE PRIMARY TOPICS OF CURRENT CONCERN CENTER AROUND THE EVENTUAL PASSING OF ALBANIAN STRONGMAN ENVER HOXHA. WHICH WAY WILL ALBANIA LEAN AFTER HOXHA? WHO ARE THE POSSIBLE SUCCESSORS AND WHAT ARE THEIR VIEWS, STRENGTHS AND FOLLOWINGS? WHAT ARE THE CHANCES OF IMPROVED ALBANIAN RELATIONS WITH THE US, USSR, CHINA, OR NATO/EC? THERE
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FOLLOWS OUR CURRENT ASSESSMENT OF ALBANIA AND SOME AREAS OF INTEREST YOU MAY WISH YOUR COLLEAGUES TO ADDRESS.

3. PERHAPS THE MOST IMPORTANT RESULT OF THE LATE NOVEMBER 1982 GOVERNMENT RESHUFFLE IN ALBANIA WAS THE CONFIRMATION OF ENVER HOXHA'S AUTHORITY. THERE IS NO ONE WITH MORE

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
REVIEW AUTHORITY: WILLIAM J GEHRON
DATE/CASE ID: 28 JUL 2003 200103229

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LONGEVITY OR PRESTIGE AMONG THE "OLD GUARD" THAT DOMINATES THE ALBANIAN STATE AND PARTY LEADERSHIP. HOXHA'S POSITION NOW SEEMS TO BE ABOVE CHALLENGE. NOW 74, HE DID HAVE A HEART ATTACK IN 1968 AND CONTINUES TO SUFFER FROM DIABETES AND CIRCULATORY PROBLEMS. OBSERVERS HAD DESCRIBED HIM AS FEEBLE AND TIRED, ESPECIALLY AFTER THE "SUICIDE" OF FORMER PRIME MINISTER MEHMET SHEHU IN DECEMBER 1981. BUT SINCE THEN HE HAS SEEMED MORE ALERT AND EFFECTIVE. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] HIS HEALTH HAS ACTUALLY IMPROVED IN THE LAST YEAR.

4. IT IS DIFFICULT TO SEPARATE HOXHA'S PERSONALITY FROM ALBANIAN POLICY, FOR HE HAS BEEN ITS ONLY POST-WORLD WAR II LEADER. HOXHA'S 35-YEAR DOMINANCE HAS MELDED THE TWO-- PERSONALITY AND POLICY. BOTH ARE HIGHLIGHTED BY THE FEAR OF ABSORPTION BY YUGOSLAVIA--WHICH HAS LED ALBANIA TO DEFEND ITSELF WITH EITHER A PROTECTOR OR BRAVADO--AND THE FEAR OF BETRAYAL, WHICH LED ALBANIA INTERNATIONALLY TO TURN AWAY FROM MOSCOW AND BEIJING (FOR BETRAYING MARXISM-LENINISM-STALINISM) AND DOMESTICALLY TO ENGAGE IN PERIODIC PURGES OF THOSE WHO OPPOSE HOXHA'S PERSONALITY OR POLICIES.

5. THIS HAS LED TO AN IMPRESSION OF ALBANIA AS ISOLATED WHICH STEMS MORE FROM THE CHANGING PATTERN OF THE COUNTRY'S ALLIANCES THAN FROM THE ACTUAL DIPLOMATIC SITUATION. HAVING DISCARDED A SERIES OF MENTORS--YUGOSLAVIA, THE SOVIET
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UNION AND FINALLY CHINA--ALBANIA TODAY APPEARS TO STAND ALONE. BUT ALTHOUGH ITS CONTACTS MAY NOT BE INTIMATE AND ITS TRADE LIMITED, ALBANIA MAINTAINS A FAIRLY BROAD RANGE OF INTERNATIONAL TIES--IT IS FROM THE US AND THE USSR THAT IT HAS ISOLATED ITSELF.

6. THE US AND USSR ARE THE MAIN VILLAINS IN ALBANIAN PROPAGANDA, EQUALLY GUILTY OF AGGRESSION, WARMONGERING, COLONIALISM, AND OPPRESSION AND THE "SWORN ENEMIES" OF FREEDOM AND PEACE. ALBANIAN LEADERS HAVE VOWED NEVER TO RECONCILE THEMSELVES TO THE POLICIES OF THE TWO SUPERPOWERS OR TO HAVE DIPLOMATIC OR ANY OTHER KIND OF RELATIONS WITH THEM. TIRANA DEPICTS SOVIET "REVISIONISM" AS ITS MAIN IDEOLOGICAL ENEMY IN THE COMMUNIST WORLD, BUT THE REAL THREAT TO ALBANIA'S SOVEREIGNTY AND INDEPENDENCE HAS BEEN TRADITIONALLY PERCEIVED TO BE FROM NEIGHBORING YUGOSLAVIA. THIS PERCEPTION MOTIVATED ALBANIA'S POST-WAR SEARCH FOR A "PROTECTOR" AGAINST YUGOSLAV/"GREAT SERB" HEGEMONISM.

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7. DESPITE ITS PERCEIVED NEED TO PROTECT ITSELF FROM OUTSIDERS, ALBANIA FOR THE LAST TEN YEARS HAS ACTUALLY BEEN INCREASING SOME OF ITS INTERNATIONAL CONTACTS, PRIMARILY

, BECAUSE OF THE NEED FOR TRADE AND TECHNOLOGY. SINCE THE ALBANIAN CONSTITUTION FLATLY BARS CREDITS FROM "CAPITALIST" AND "REVISIONIST" STATES, TRADE AND EXPORTS ARE ESSENTIAL TO GENERATE FUNDS FOR BADLY NEEDED INTERNAL INVESTMENT. TIRANA IS ALSO NO DOUBT INTERESTED IN ESTABLISHING ITS CREDENTIALS AS A VIABLE INTERNATIONAL ACTOR WHOSE OPINIONS SHOULD BE CONSIDERED. THE PURSUIT OF THIS IMAGE AND PRESTIGE, HOWEVER, TAKES A BACK SEAT TO MATTERS IDEOLOGICAL AND ECONOMIC.

8. THE GROWTH IN ALBANIA'S DIPLOMATIC CONTACTS CAME IN THE WAKE OF THE DETERIORATION OF ITS RELATIONS WITH CHINA, ALONG WITH INTENSIVE STRESS ON SELF-RELIANCE, SACRIFICE, AND
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DISCIPLINE TO MAKE THE ECONOMY VIABLE AND SAFE-GUARD THE COUNTRY AGAINST "SAVAGE ENCIRCLEMENT AND ECONOMIC BLOCKADE IMPOSED BY THE CAPITALIST AND REVISIONIST COUNTRIES." BY SEPTEMBER 1978, HOXHA WAS PUBLICLY CALLING FOR CLOSER ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL TIES WITH "WELL-DISPOSED" BOURGEOIS STATES OF THE WEST "WHICH RESPECT ALBANIA". TODAY TIRANA HAS DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS WITH ALMOST 100 COUNTRIES (MORE THAN HALF OF THEM ESTABLISHED DURING THE 1970S), INCLUDING ALL OF EUROPE EXCEPT WEST GERMANY AND THE UK. RELATIONS WERE ESTABLISHED WITH JAPAN IN 1981 AND DISCUSSIONS ARE UNDERWAY ON ESTABLISHING RELATIONS WITH CANADA.

9. NO MAJOR CHANGES IN ALBANIAN FOREIGN POLICY ARE LIKELY WHILE HOXHA REMAINS IN POWER OR DURING THE IMMEDIATE POST HOXHA PERIOD, PARTICULARLY IF MEMBERS OF THE PARTISAN "OLD GUARD" PREVAIL. THE NOVEMBER APPOINTMENT OF HOXHA STALWART RAMIZ ALIA TO BE HEAD OF STATE, IN ADDITION TO HIS ACTIVE PARTY DUTIES, SUPPORTS THIS LIKELIHOOD. ALIA IS CONSIDERED A LEADING IDEOLOGIST AND SUPPORTER OF HOXHA'S LINE WHO EARLY IN HIS CAREER HEADED THE COMMUNIST YOUTH ORGANIZATION. WHILE ALIA ESTABLISHED HIS POLITICAL BASE IN THE PARTY, THE OTHER LEADING POSSIBLE SUCCESSOR, ADIL CARCANI, DRAWS HIS STRENGTH FROM THE GOVERNMENT BUREAUCRACY, BEING THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. BOTH THESE CONTENDERS ARE THEMSELVES NEAR 60 YEARS OF AGE AND HAVE SPENT THEIR CAREERS IDENTIFIED WITH HOXHA'S POLICIES.

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10. SO LITTLE IS KNOWN ABOUT ALBANIA'S YOUNGER LEADERS OR ABOUT, ANY FACTIONS WITHIN THE ALBANIAN LEADERSHIP THAT NO PREDICTIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE DIRECTION OF ALBANIA'S FOREIGN POLICY CAN BE MADE WITH ANY SENSE OF CONFIDENCE. HOWEVER IMPROBABLE, AN ACCOMMODATION WITH THE USSR SEEMS RULED OUT DURING HOXHA'S LIFETIME BUT SOVIET WOOING WILL UNDOUBTEDLY
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INTENSIFY ONCE HOXHA'S SUCCESSORS ASSUME POWER. A POST-HOXHA REGIME FACED WITH PRESSING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS, WIDE-SPREAD UNREST OVER POLITICAL AND OR ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, OR A PERCEIVED THREAT FROM YUGOSLAVIA OR THE WEST MIGHT TURN TIRANA TO MOSCOW FOR MILITARY AND ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE. THE LIKELIHOOD OF SUCH A SHIFT WOULD INCREASE IF A PRO-SOVIET FACTION WERE TO EMERGE IN THE ALBANIAN LEADERSHIP AFTER HOXHA.

11. OVER THE YEARS SINCE THE 1961 BREAK, THE SOVIET UNION HAS REPEATEDLY OFFERED TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS WITH ITS SOCIALIST COMPATRIOT, ALBANIA. THE OVERTURES IN LATE 1982 REFLECTED A MARKED UPGRADING IN WARMTH, POSSIBLY OWING TO A COINCIDENCE OF LEADERSHIP CHANGES IN MOSCOW (THE ANDROPOV ACCESSION) AND TIRANA (A 50 PERCENT TURNOVER IN THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS AND PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY). THE SOVIETS HAVE VARIED MOTIVES IN WANTING ALBANIA TO RETURN TO THE FOLD OF FRATERNAL SOCIALIST COUNTRIES. THEY WOULD LIKE TO REGAIN ACCESS TO THE ADRIATIC AND HAVE NEVER ABANDONED THE HOPE OF WELCOMING ALBANIA BACK INTO THE "SOCIALIST COMMONWEALTH". AN ALBANIA REUNITED WITH THE SOVIET UNION WOULD ALSO BE A MAJOR IRRITANT TO NEIGHBORING YUGOSLAVIA, TO SAY NOTHING OF THE IMPACT SUCH A RAPPROCHEMENT WOULD HAVE FOR NATO'S SOUTHERN FLANK AND EUROPE IN GENERAL.

12. IN RESPONSE TO ANDROPOV'S SPEECH TO THE NOVEMBER 1982 SOVIET PARTY PLENUM URGING CLOSER TIES WITH ALL SOCIALIST STATES, THE OFFICIAL ALBANIAN NEWS SERVICE (ATA) ON NOVEMBER 25 ONCE AGAIN CONDEMNED THE SOVIET UNION AS A "SOCIAL-FASCIST AND SOCIAL-IMPERIALIST STATE." ATA NOTED THAT SOVIET POLICY "IS NOT DEFINED BY THE PERSONS WHO COME TO POWER, BUT BY THE SYSTEM WHICH IS IN POWER." THAT ALBANIA STANCE IS UNLIKELY TO CHANGE AT LEAST AS LONG AS HOXHA REMAINS IN POWER.
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13. ALBANIA'S GEOGRAPHIC POSITION MAKES IT STRATEGICALLY IMPORTANT TO YUGOSLAVIA'S SECURITY. AS A RESULT, YUGOSLAV LEADERS HAVE VARIOUSLY SOUGHT TO DOMINATE ALBANIA (AS IN THE IMMEDIATE POST-WORLD WAR II PERIOD) OR, FAILING THIS, TO ALLAY TRADITIONAL ALBANIAN MISTRUST AND HOSTILITY-- WITHOUT MUCH SUCCESS. SINCE THE ALBANIAN-CHINESE BREAK, THE YUGOSLAVS HAVE SOUGHT IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH ALBANIA IN ORDER TO HAVE A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF DEVELOPMENTS THERE AND TO POSITION THEMSELVES FOR THE POST-HOXHA PERIOD. YUGOSLAV OFFICIALS HAVE PUBLICLY AND PRIVATELY SHOWN AN AWARENESS THAT ANY SERIOUS DETERIORATION IN RELATIONS WITH TIRANA COULD HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON BELGRADE'S INTERNAL STABILITY AND ON BALKAN SECURITY.

14. YUGOSLAV LEADERS HAVE ALSO LONG BEEN CONCERNED THAT THE SOVIETS MIGHT BE ABLE TO REGAIN INFLUENCE IN ALBANIA AND USE ALBANIAN TERRITORY TO SUBVERT YUGOSLAVIA'S INDEPENDENCE AND TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. WHILE BELGRADE RECOGNIZES THAT HOXHA HAS NOT MODIFIED HIS IMPLACABLE HOSTILITY TO SOVIET "REVISIONISM", SUSPICION OF COLLUSION BETWEEN MOSCOW AND TIRANA AGAINST YUGOSLAVIA IS ENDEMIC-- E.G., CONCERN OVER THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE SOVIET AND BULGARIAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICES ARE ALREADY EXPLOITING THE NATIONALITY ISSUE IN YUGOSLAVIA (AND KOSOVO SPECIFICALLY) AND MAY HAVE ESTABLISHED INDIRECT CONTACT WITH THE ALBANIAN INTELLIGENCE SERVICE THROUGH ANTI-YUGOSLAV ALBANIAN EMIGRE ORGANIZATIONS. MOREOVER, SOME YUGOSLAVS FEAR THAT THE SOVIETS HAVE BEEN USING THE VIETNAMESE, BULGARIANS, HUNGARIANS, AND CZECHOSLOVAKS AS PROXIES TO PREPARE FOR THE POST-HOXHA ERA. OTHERS ARE CONVINCED THAT PRO-SOVIET ELEMENTS IN ALBANIA ARE MERELY WAITING FOR HOXHA'S DEPARTURE BEFORE MOVING TO ALLY TIRANA WITH THE

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USSR.

15. ALL THIS LEAVES US WITH MORE QUESTIONS THAN ANSWERS, MORE SPECULATION THAN FACT. HOPEFULLY, THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WILL ELICIT SOME FACTS.

--PROGNOSIS ON HOXHA: HIS HEALTH AND POLITICAL STANDING?

--LEADING CANDIDATES AND THEIR VIEWS: DOES ALIA HAVE THE NEEDED ADMINISTRATIVE EXPERIENCE? WILL HOXHA COME TO SEE HIM AS A RIVAL OR CHALLENGE AND ELIMINATE HIM AS WAS DONE WITH SHEHU? DOES ALIA REPRESENT ANY PARTICULAR VIEW OR

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JUST SUPPORT HOXHA? ARE THERE LINGERING PRO-SOVIET OR PRO-CHINESE FACTIONS? ANY WHICH ARE PRO-YUGOSLAV OR PRO-NATO OR US? ANY LIKELY TO SUPPORT IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH THE UK OR FRG?

--ANY OBSERVATIONS ON CHANGING STANDARDS WITHIN THE COUNTRY? PRESENCE OF POLICE AND MILITARY? LIVING STANDARDS, FASHIONS FOOD AND CONTACT WITH FOREIGNERS?

--WHAT ARE LOCAL EXPLANATIONS FOR ALIA'S ORATING TRIP TO BORDER AREAS WITH YUGOSLAVIA? ANY HOPES FOR REVIVAL OF CULTURAL EXCHANGES WITH KOSOVO? A;Y CROSS BORDER ACTIVITY?

--ANY ALBANIAN REACTION TO BUSH'S COMMENTS ON EASTERN EUROPE?

16. WE APPRECIATE YOUR INTERCEEDING WITH FRIENDLY AMBASSADORS AND WILL GLADLY PROVIDE ANY FURTHER INFORMATION

IF THIS CABLE LEAVES GAPS YOU WANT FILLED. WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE FEEDBACK. DAM

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