

# Secretary of State James A. Baker Address to the Albanian Assembly, Tirana, Albania

June 22, 1991

For generations, your country-men and your relatives have been coming to America and making remarkable contributions to our national life. But the road between us must be a two-way road. So when, in this chamber earlier this month, Dr. Sali Berisha invited me to come to Albania, I came here as soon as I could. And now I am honored to address this body.

With the recent reestablishment of diplomatic relations between our two countries and with my own trip here today, I say to the people of Albania: America is returning to you.

The United States has watched closely, and we have applauded your progress along freedom's road. You have made the first great breakthroughs to begin rejoining the community of nations after long decades of cruel, self-imposed isolation. All Americans welcome your first steps along this road, the democratic road that so many nations across the globe now travel with you.

I have a very simple message for the members of this chamber today and for the citizens of this country which now faces the difficult challenge of national reconstruction: On freedom's road, we must always move forward.

In this parliament, in this capital, and across this land, there can only be forward movement toward establishing full democracy, a market economy, and the rule of law. After so many years, Albania cannot afford delay.

A vital part of the hard work necessary to build democracy will have to take place in this chamber, in drafting the laws necessary for a free market, for a constitutional system of government, and for the safeguards of democracy and economic freedom. Here is where you will do what President Bush calls "the hard work of freedom."

Your new coalition government has drawn up an ambitious economic program that will be essential to your national rebuilding effort. The privatization of agriculture and industry, the decisive opening of your country to foreign investment, and long-overdue policies to allow a convertible currency, liberalized prices, and a balanced national budget are essential in laying the groundwork for Albania's eventual economic recovery.

But I must tell you what the other reforming countries of Eastern Europe have already learned — the passage to prosperity is painful and difficult. Your work will not be easy. It will require of you and your people the patience and determination that Albanians have already demonstrated in their long struggle for freedom. But there is no other way to the future that Albanians want and deserve for themselves and for their children.

In this parliament and in this capital, your constitution will also be drafted to lay another crucial part of the foundation for a new Albania. If this is to be an Albania where individuals can determine their own futures, where the rights of every citizen — no matter what ethnic or religious group — are fully protected, then this constitutional drafting process must be open and democratic.

I am pleased that you have invited constitutional experts from my country and from Europe to consult with you in this process. And speaking as a lawyer, I can tell you that not only is the letter of the law important, the spirit of the law, and the practice of that law make the vital difference in the life and success of true democracy governed by just laws and by just governors. So, I am also glad that my government and many American private organizations will be helping Albanians construct democracy, markets, and a constitutional order.

I want to be very clear about something else: just as there is no turning back on the road to a new Albania, there is no place along that road for violence, no place for intimidation, no place for the use of force. The watchwords of the new Europe — the Europe Albania has just begun to rejoin with its membership in CSCE [Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe] — are respect for human rights and the peaceful settlement of disputes.

I know that I speak for every American when I say to every member of this chamber and every citizen of Albania: Let us see an end to all fear in Albania. This is a new Albania, and you are members of a new Europe.

You have joined the nations that have pledged to uphold the high standards of CSCE — standards that govern a state's behavior toward other nations and toward its own people. You have made a solemn compact with Europe and with yourselves. Do not forsake it.

You are now an integral part of CSCE. I hope you will use the privilege of your membership wisely and well. By your actions, Albania can help shape the Helsinki process -its new institutions, its decisions, its direction — for the greater good of Europe.

But without doubt, the Helsinki process will also shape you, just as it has shaped the destinies of other signatory states, for you have joined a process that has sought from its inception to build a Europe whole and free.

As Albania's first step as a full CSCE member, I urge this body, the Albanian government, and all democratic forces in this country to cooperate fully with the upcoming mission of CSCE rapporteurs.

CSCE can help guide nations once lost to repression, hostility, and isolation toward respect for human rights, democratic processes, free markets, and international cooperation. So, may it guide this nation toward a brighter future, for the sake of the Albanian people and for the sake of a new Europe.

And if I may, let me state clearly what the emerging democracies of Europe have learned about putting an end to old fears in order to build new futures. They know that it means freeing all

political prisoners, once and for all. They know that it means full respect for religious and minority rights and for opening the media to genuine pluralism. They know that it means eliminating repressive security organs and bringing legitimate police functions under democratic controls. They know that it means depoliticizing and developing civilian control over the military. They know that it means freeing the factories, farms, and mines from political controls and mismanagement. They know that it means instituting a fair and open judicial process, based on the best traditions of law and justice.

They know that it means pursuing democratization at every level of government and society. It means holding fully free and fair elections at both the national and local level — elections that include a fair campaign as well as equal allocation of state resources, and fair media access to all parties. For these are the challenges of your new freedom and the elements of lasting legitimacy.

You and your neighbors have a unique chance to make your history anew, transcending the history that led to dead ends and conflict. While working peacefully for respect for the rights of ethnic Albanians in the region, you must not be detoured by old conflicts and ancient quarrels.

Here, as in America, democracy must be not only an ideal — it must be a reality. In this endeavor, as long as you are true to these principles, we will stand with you as we stood with you early in this century, when President Woodrow Wilson championed your cause. I am proud that my President and my country stand with you now in the last decade of the 20th century, in support of a free and independent Albania. For every part of this continent, just as every citizen of this country, must be part of what President Bush calls “a Europe whole and free.”

In closing, let me say to you that is our hope from this day forward the American and Albanian people will share these ideals: open government, open media, an open economy, an open society.

These are the safeguards of freedoms. And freedom works.