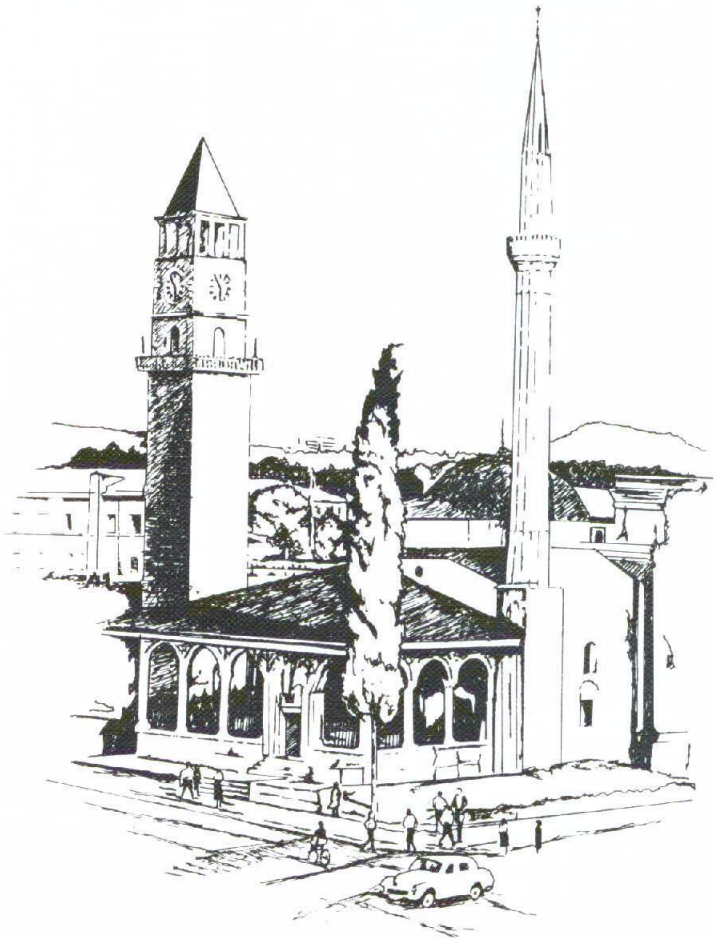


area handbook series

Albania

a country study



Albania

a country study

Federal Research Division
Library of Congress
Edited by
Raymond Zickel and
Walter R. Iwaskiw
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April 1992



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Tiranë

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Foreword

This volume is one in a continuing series of books prepared by the Federal Research Division of the Library of Congress under the Country Studies/Area Handbook Program sponsored by the Department of the Army. The last page of this book lists the other published studies.

Most books in the series deal with a particular foreign country, describing and analyzing its political, economic, social, and national security systems and institutions, and examining the interrelationships of those systems and the ways they are shaped by cultural factors. Each study is written by a multidisciplinary team of social scientists. The authors seek to provide a basic understanding of the observed society, striving for a dynamic rather than a static portrayal. Particular attention is devoted to the people who make up the society, their origins, dominant beliefs and values, their common interests and the issues on which they are divided, the nature and extent of their involvement with national institutions, and their attitudes toward each other and toward their social system and political order.

The books represent the analysis of the authors and should not be construed as an expression of an official United States government position, policy, or decision. The authors have sought to adhere to accepted standards of scholarly objectivity. Corrections, additions, and suggestions for changes from readers will be welcomed for use in future editions.

Louis R. Mortimer
Chief
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Library of Congress
Washington, D.C. 20540

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Preface

Preparation of this edition of *Albania: A Country Study* began as popular revolutions were drastically altering the political and economic systems of the communist countries of Eastern Europe. In Albania extreme isolation and Stalinist policies slowed, but could not stop, the revolution that striking workers and irate citizens directed against the regime. In early 1992, the Albanian people forced the communist government's fall, ushering in a long-term transition from totalitarianism toward democracy and from a centralized command economy to one based on a private market.

The uncertainty of both the process and the outcome of the transition make descriptions of the changing structures of government, economy, and society somewhat tentative in nature. The authors have attempted to describe the existing, but possibly transitional structures, using scholarly materials, which even from Western sources are very limited. Such descriptions can form a sound basis for readers to understand the ongoing events and assess change in Albania. The most useful sources are cited by the authors at the end of each chapter. Full references to these and other sources are listed in the Bibliography. A Country Profile and a Chronology are also included in the book as reference aids.

Transliteration of Albanian personal names and terms generally follows the Library of Congress transliteration system. Transliteration of place-names, however, follows the system developed by the United States Board on Geographic Names. In the ecclesiastical context, preference is given to the generic term *Orthodox*, rather than *Eastern Orthodox*. The term *Greek Orthodox* (like *Serbian Orthodox* or *Albanian Orthodox*) is used to designate ethnic affiliation, not historical background. Measurements are given in the metric system; a conversion table is provided to assist readers unfamiliar with that system (see table 1, Appendix).

The body of the text reflects information available as of April 1992. Certain other portions of the text, however, have been updated: the Introduction discusses significant events that have occurred since the information cutoff date; the Chronology and the Country Profile include updated information as available; and the Bibliography lists recently published sources thought to be particularly helpful to the reader.

Table A. Chronology of Important Events

Period	Description
ca.1000 B.C.	Illyrians, descendants of ancient Indo-European peoples, settle in western part of the Balkan Peninsula.
358 B.C.	Illyrians defeated by Philip II of Macedonia.
312 B.C.	King Glaucius of Illyria expels Greeks from Durrës.
229 B.C. and 219 B.C.	Roman soldiers overrun Illyrian settlements in Neretva River valley.
165 B.C.	Roman forces capture Illyria's King Gentius at Shkodër.
FIRST CENTURY A.D.	Christianity comes to Illyrian populated areas.
A.D. 9	Romans, under Emperor Tiberius, subjugate Illyrians and divide present-day Albania between Dalmatia, Epirus, and Macedonia.
A.D. 395	Roman Empire's division into eastern and western parts leaves the lands that now comprise Albania administratively under the Eastern Empire but ecclesiastically under Rome.
FOURTH CENTURY- SEVENTH CENTURY	Goths, Huns, Avars, Serbs, Croats, and Bulgars successively invade Illyrian lands in present-day Albania.
732	Illyrian people subordinated to the patriarchate of Constantinople by the Byzantine emperor, Leo the Isaurian.
1054	Christianity divides into Catholic and Orthodox churches, leaving Christians in southern Albania under ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople and those in northern Albania under pope in Rome.
1081	Albania and Albanians mentioned, for the first time in a historical record, by Byzantine emperor.
TWELFTH CENTURY	Serbs occupy parts of northern and eastern Albania.
1204	Venice wins control over most of Albania, but Byzantines regain control of southern portion and establish Despotate of Epirus.
1272	Forces of the King of Naples occupy Durrës and establish an Albanian kingdom.
1385	Albanian ruler of Durrës invites Ottoman forces to intervene against a rival; subsequently, Albanian clans pay tribute and swear fealty to Ottomans.

Table A.—Continued

Period	Description
1389	At Kosovo Polje, Albanians join Serbian-led Balkan army that is crushed by Ottoman forces; coordinated resistance to Ottoman westward progress evaporates.
1403	Gjergj Kastrioti born, later becomes Albanian national hero known as Skanderbeg.
1443	After losing a battle near Nis, Skanderbeg defects from Ottoman Empire, reembraces Roman Catholicism, and begins holy war against the Ottomans.
1444	Skanderbeg proclaimed chief of Albanian resistance.
1449	Albanians, under Skanderbeg, rout Ottoman forces under Sultan Murad II.
1468	Skanderbeg dies.
1478	Krujë falls to Ottoman Turks; Shkodër falls a year later. Subsequently, many Albanians flee to southern Italy, Greece, Egypt, and elsewhere; many remaining are forced to convert to Islam.
EARLY SEVENTEENTH CENTURY	Some Albanians who convert to Islam find careers in Ottoman Empire's government and military service.
SEVENTEENTH CENTURY-EIGHTEENTH CENTURY	About two-thirds of Albanians convert to Islam.
1785	Kara Mahmud Bushati, chief of Albanian tribe based in Shkodër, attacks Montenegrin territory; subsequently named governor of Shkodër by Ottoman authorities.
NINETEENTH AND TWENTIETH CENTURIES	
1822	Albanian leader Ali Pasha of Tepelenë assassinated by Ottoman agents for promoting an autonomous state.
1830	1,000 Albanian leaders invited to meet with Ottoman general who kills about half of them.
1835	Ottoman Sublime Porte divides Albanian-populated lands into <i>vilayets</i> of Janina and Rumelia with Ottoman administrators.
1861	First school known to use Albanian language in modern times opens in Shkodër.

Table A.—Continued

Period	Description	
1877-78	Russia's defeat of Ottoman Empire seriously weakens Ottoman power over Albanian-populated areas.	
1878	Treaty of San Stefano, signed after the Russo-Turkish War, assigned Albanian-populated lands to Bulgaria, Montenegro, and Serbia; but Austria-Hungary and Britain block the treaty's implementation. Albanian leaders meet in Prizren, Kosovo, to form the Prizren League, initially advocating a unified Albania under Ottoman suzerainty. Congress of Berlin overturns the Treaty of San Stefano but places some Albanian lands under Montenegrin and Serbian rule. The Prizren League begins to organize resistance to the Treaty of Berlin's provisions that affect Albanians.	
1879	Society for Printing of Albanian Writings, composed of Roman Catholic, Muslim, and Orthodox Albanians, founded in Constantinople.	
1881	Ottoman forces crush Albanian resistance fighters at Prizren. Prizren League's leaders and families arrested and deported.	
1897	Ottoman authorities disband a reactivated Prizren League, execute its leader later, then ban Albanian language books.	
1906	Albanians begin joining the Committee of Union and Progress (Young Turks), which formed in Constantinople, hoping to gain autonomy for their nation within the Ottoman Empire.	
1908	Albanian intellectuals meet in Bitola and choose the Latin alphabet as standard script rather than Arabic or Cyrillic.	
1912	May	Albanians rise against the Ottoman authorities and seize Skopje.
October	First Balkan War begins, and Albanian leaders affirm Albania as an independent state.	
November	Muslim and Christian delegates at Vlorë declare Albania independent and establish a provisional government.	
December	Ambassadorial conference opens in London and discusses Albania's fate.	
1913	May	Treaty of London ends First Balkan War. Second Balkan War begins.

Table A.—Continued

Period	Description
August	Treaty of Bucharest ends Second Balkan War. Great Powers recognize an independent Albanian state ruled by a constitutional monarchy.
1914 March	Prince Wilhelm, German army captain, installed as head of the new Albanian state by the International Control Commission, arrives in Albania.
September	New Albanian state collapses following outbreak of World War I; Prince Wilhelm is stripped of authority and departs from Albania.
1918 November	World War I ends, with Italian army occupying most of Albania and Serbian, Greek, and French force occupying remainder. Italian and Yugoslav powers begin struggle for dominance over Albanians.
December	Albanian leaders meet at Durrës to discuss presentation of Albania's interests at the Paris Peace Conference.
1919 January	Serbs attack Albania's inhabited cities. Albanians adopt guerrilla warfare.
June	Albania denied official representation at the Paris Peace Conference; British, French, and Greek negotiators later decide to divide Albania among Greece, Italy, and Yugoslavia.
1920 January	Albanian leaders meeting at Lushnjë reject the partitioning of Albania by the Treaty of Paris, warn that Albanians will take up arms in defense of their territory, and create a bicameral parliament.
February	Albanian government moves to Tiranë, which becomes the capital.
September	Albania forces Italy to withdraw its troops and abandon territorial claims to almost all Albanian territory.
December	Albania admitted to League of Nations as sovereign and independent state.
1921 November	Yugoslav troops invade Albanian territories they had not previously occupied; League of Nations commission forces Yugoslav withdrawal and reaffirms Albania's 1913 borders.
December	Popular Party, headed by Xhafer Ypi, forms government with Ahmed Zogu, the future King Zog, as internal affairs minister.
1922 August	Ecumenical patriarch in Constantinople recognizes the Autocephalous Albanian Orthodox Church.

Table A.—Continued

Period	Description
September	Zogu assumes position of prime minister of government; opposition to him becomes formidable.
1923	Albania's Sunni Muslims break last ties with Constantinople and pledge primary allegiance to native country.
1924 March	Zogu's party wins elections for National Assembly, but Zogu steps down after financial scandal and an assassination attempt.
July	A peasant-backed insurgency wins control of Tiranë; Fan S. Noli becomes prime minister; Zogu flees to Yugoslavia.
December	Zogu, backed by Yugoslav army, returns to power and begins to smother parliamentary democracy; Noli flees to Italy.
1925 May	Italy, under Mussolini, begins penetration of Albanian public and economic life.
1926 November	Italy and Albania sign First Treaty of Tiranë, which guarantees Zogu's political position and Albania's boundaries.
1928 August	Zogu pressures the parliament to dissolve itself; a new constituent assembly declares Albania a kingdom and Zogu becomes Zog I, "King of the Albanians."
1931	Zog, standing up to Italians, refuses to renew the First Treaty of Tiranë; Italians continue political and economic pressure.
1934	After Albania signs trade agreements with Greece and Yugoslavia, Italy suspends economic support, then attempts to threaten Albania.
1935	Mussolini presents a gift of 3,000,000 gold francs to Albania; other economic aid follows.
1939 April	Mussolini's troops invade and occupy Albania; Albanian parliament votes to unite country with Italy; Zog flees to Greece; Italy's King Victor Emmanuel III assumes Albanian crown.
1940 October	Italian army attacks Greece through Albania.
1941 April	Germany, with support of Italy and other allies defeat Greece and Yugoslavia.

Table A.—Continued

Period	Description	
October	Josip Broz Tito, Yugoslav communist leader, directs organizing of Albanian communists.	
November	Albanian Communist Party founded; Enver Hoxha becomes first secretary.	
1942	September	Communist party organizes the National Liberation Movement, a popular front resistance organization.
October	Noncommunist nationalist groups form to resist the Italian occupation.	
1943	August	Italy's surrender to Allied forces weakens Italian hold on Albania; Albanian resistance fighters overwhelm five Italian divisions.
September	German forces invade and occupy Albania.	
1944	January	Communist partisans, supplied with British weapons, gain control of southern Albania.
May	Communists meet to organize an Albanian government; Hoxha becomes chairman of executive committee and supreme commander of the Army of National Liberation.	
July	Communist forces enter central and northern Albania.	
October	Communists establish provisional government with Hoxha as prime minister.	
November	Germans withdraw from Tiranë, communists move into the capital.	
December	Communist provisional government adopts laws allowing state regulation of commercial enterprises, foreign and domestic trade.	
1945	January	Communist provisional government agrees to restore Kosovo to Yugoslavia as an autonomous region; tribunals begin to condemn thousands of "war criminals" and "enemies of the people" to death or to prison. Communist regime begins to nationalize industry, transportation, forests, pastures.
April	Yugoslavia recognizes communist government in Albania.	
August	Sweeping agricultural reforms begin; about half of arable land eventually redistributed to peasants from large landowners; most church properties nationalized. United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration begins sending supplies to Albania.	

Table A.—Continued

Period	Description	
November	Soviet Union recognizes provisional government; Britain and United States make full diplomatic recognition conditional.	
December	In elections for the People's Assembly only candidates from the Democratic Front are on ballot.	
1946	January	People's Assembly proclaims Albania a "people's republic"; purges of noncommunists from positions of power in government begins.
Spring	People's Assembly adopts new constitution, Hoxha becomes prime minister, foreign minister, defense minister, and commander in chief; Soviet-style central planning begins.	
July	Treaty of friendship and cooperation signed with Yugoslavia; Yugoslav advisers and grain begin pouring into Albania.	
October	British destroyers hit mines off Albania's coast; United Nations (UN) and the International Court of Justice subsequently condemn Albania.	
November	Albania breaks diplomatic relations with the United States after latter withdraws its informal mission.	
1947	April	Economic Planning Commission draws up first economic plan that establishes production targets for mining, manufacturing and agricultural enterprises.
May	UN commission concludes that Albania, together with Bulgaria and Yugoslavia, supports communist guerrillas in Greece; Yugoslav leaders launch verbal offensive against anti-Yugoslav Albanian communists, including Hoxha; pro-Yugoslav faction begins to wield power.	
July	Albania refuses participation in the Marshall Plan of the United States.	
1948	February-March	Albanian Communist Party leaders vote to merge Albanian and Yugoslav economies and militaries.
June	Cominform expels Yugoslavia; Albanian leaders launch anti-Yugoslav propaganda campaign, cut economic ties, and force Yugoslav advisers to leave; Stalin becomes national hero in Albania.	
September	Hoxha begins purging high-ranking party members accused of "Titoism"; treaty of friendship with Yugoslavia abrogated by Albania; Soviet Union begins giving economic aid to Albania and Soviet advisers replace ousted Yugoslavs.	

Table A.—Continued

Period	Description
November	First Party Congress changes name of Albanian Communist Party to Albanian Party of Labor.
1949 January	Regime issues <i>Decree on Religious Communities</i> .
February	Albania joins Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon); all foreign trade conducted with member countries.
December	Pro-Tito Albanian communists purged.
1950	Britain and United States begin inserting anticommunist Albanian guerrilla units into Albania; all are unsuccessful.
July	A new constitution is approved by People's Assembly. Hoxha becomes minister of defense and foreign minister.
1951 February	Albania and Soviet Union sign agreement on mutual economic assistance.
1954 July	Hoxha relinquishes post of prime minister to Mehmet Shehu but retains primary power as party leader.
1955 May	Albania becomes a founding member of the Warsaw Pact.
1956 February	After Nikita Khrushchev's "secret speech" exposes Stalin's crimes, Hoxha defends Stalin; close relations with Soviet Union become strained.
1959	Large amounts of economic aid from Soviet Union, East European countries, and China begin pouring into Albania.
May	Khrushchev visits Albania.
1960 June	Albania sides with China in Sino-Soviet ideological dispute; consequently, Soviet economic support to Albania is curtailed and Chinese aid is increased.
November	Hoxha rails against Khrushchev and supports China during an international communist conference in Moscow.
1961 February	Hoxha harangues against the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia at Albania's Fourth Party Congress.
December	Soviet Union breaks diplomatic relations; other East European countries severely reduce contacts but do not break relations; Albania looks toward China for support.

Table A.—Continued

Period	Description
1962	Albanian regime introduces austerity program in attempt to compensate for withdrawal of Soviet economic support; China incapable of delivering sufficient aid; Albania becomes China's spokesman at UN.
1964	Hoxha hails Khrushchev's removal as leader of the Soviet Union; diplomatic relations fail to improve.
1966	February Hoxha initiates Cultural and Ideological Revolution.
March	Albanian Party of Labor "open letter" to the people establishes egalitarian wage and job structure for all workers.
1967	Hoxha regime conducts violent campaign to extinguish religious life in Albania; by year's end over two thousand religious buildings were closed or converted to other uses.
1968	August Albania condemns Soviet-led invasion of Czechoslovakia; subsequently, Albania withdraws from Warsaw Pact.
1976	September Hoxha begins criticizing new Chinese regime after Mao's death.
December	A new constitution promulgated superceding the 1950 version; Albania becomes a people's socialist republic.
1977	Top military officials purged after "Chinese conspiracy" is uncovered.
1978	July China terminates all economic and military aid to Albania.
1980	Hoxha selects Ramiz Alia as the next party head, bypassing Shehu.
1981	December Shehu, after rebuke by Politburo, dies, possibly murdered on Hoxha's orders.
1982	November Alia becomes chairman of Presidium of the People's Assembly.
1983	Hoxha begins semiretirement; Alia starts administering Albania.
1985	April Hoxha dies.
1986	November Alia featured as party's and country's undisputed leader at Ninth Party Congress.
1987	August Greece ends state of war that existed since World War II.

Table A.—Continued

Period	Description
November	Albania and Greece sign a series of long-term agreements.
1989 September	Alia, addressing the Eighth Plenum of the Central Committee, signals that radical changes to the economic system are necessary.
1990 January	Ninth Plenum of the Central Committee; demonstrations at Shkodër force authorities to declare state of emergency.
April	Alia declares willingness to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union and the United States.
May	The Secretary General of the UN visits Albania.
May	Regime announces desire to join the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe. People's Assembly passes laws liberalizing criminal code, reforming court system, lifting some restrictions on freedom of worship, and guaranteeing the right to travel abroad.
Summer	Unemployment throughout the economy increases as a result of government's reform measures; drought reduces electric-power production, forcing plant shutdowns.
July	Young people demonstrate against regime in Tiranë, and 5,000 citizens seek refuge in foreign embassies; Central Committee plenum makes significant changes in leadership of party and state. Soviet Union and Albania sign protocol normalizing relations.
August	Government abandons its monopoly on foreign commerce and begins to open Albania to foreign trade.
September	Alia addresses the UN General Assembly in New York.
October	Tiranë hosts the Balkan Foreign Ministers' Conference, the first international political meeting in Albania since the end of World War II. Ismail Kadare, Albania's most prominent writer, defects to France.
December	University students demonstrate in streets and call for dictatorship to end; Alia meets with students; Thirteenth Plenum of the Central Committee of the APL authorizes a multiparty system; Albanian Democratic Party, first opposition party established; regime authorizes political pluralism; draft constitution is published; by year's end, 5,000 Albanian refugees had crossed the mountains into Greece.

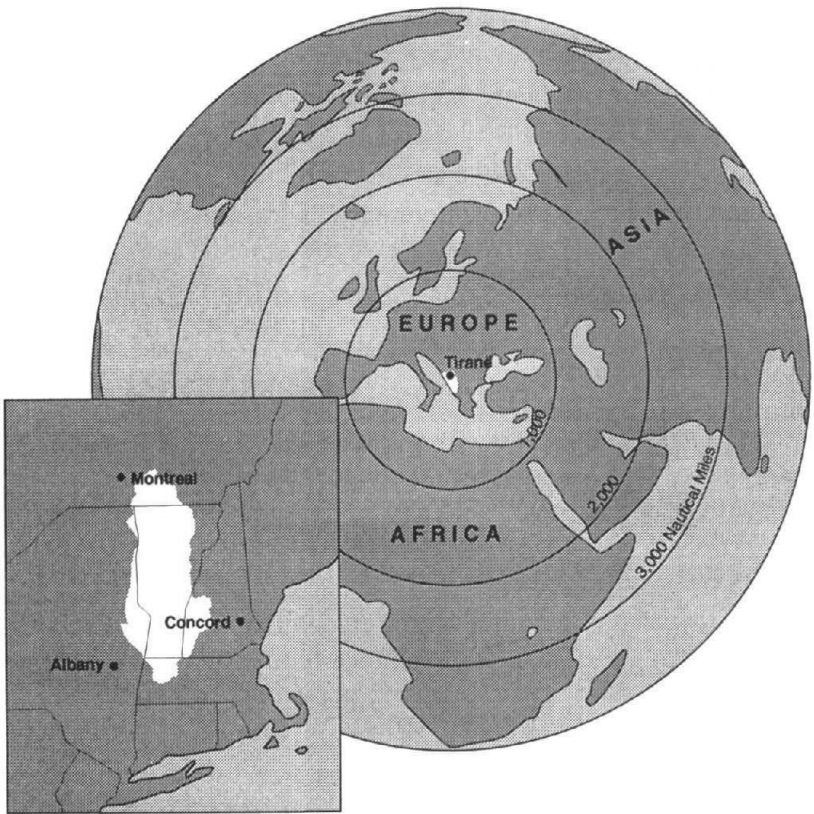
Table A.—Continued

Period		Description
1991	January	First opposition newspaper <i>Rilindja Demokratike</i> begins publishing. Thousands of Albanians seek refuge in Greece.
	March	Albania and the United States reestablish diplomatic relations after a thirty-five-year break. Thousands more Albanians attempt to gain asylum in Italy.
	March–April	First multiparty elections held since the 1920s; 98.9 percent of voters participate; Albanian Party of Labor wins over 67 percent of vote for People’s Assembly seats; Albanian Democratic Party wins about 30 percent.
	April	Communist-dominated People’s Assembly reelects Alia to new presidential term. Ministry of Internal Affairs replaced by Ministry of Public Order; Frontier Guards and Directorate of Prison Administration are placed under the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Justice, respectively. People’s Assembly passes Law on Major Constitutional Provisions providing for fundamental human rights and separation of powers and invalidates 1976 constitution. People’s Assembly appoints commission to draft new constitution.
	June	Prime Minister Nano and rest of cabinet resign after trade unions call for general strike to protest worsening economic conditions and killing of opposition demonstrators in Shkodër. Coalition government led by Prime Minister Ylli Bufi takes office; Tenth Party Congress of the Albanian Party of Labor meets and renames party the Socialist Party of Albania (SPA); Albania accepted as a full member of CSCE; United States secretary of state, James A. Baker, visits Albania.
	July	Sigurimi, notorious secret police, is abolished and replaced by National Information Service.
	August	Up to 18,000 Albanians cross the Adriatic Sea to seek asylum in Italy; most are returned. People’s Assembly passes law on economic activity that authorizes private ownership of property, privatizing of state property, investment by foreigners, and private employment of workers.
	October	United States Embassy opens in Tiranë. Albania joins International Monetary Fund.
	December	Coalition government dissolves when opposition parties accuse communists of blocking reform and Albanian Democratic Party withdraws its ministers from the cabinet. Prime Minister Bufi resigns and Alia names Vilson Ahmeti as prime minister. Alia sets March 1992 for new elections.

Table A.—Continued

Period	Description
1992 February	Albanian People's Assembly prevents OMONIA, the party representing Greek Albanians, from fielding candidates in the elections planned for March.
March	Albanian Democratic Party scores decisive election victory over the Socialist Party of Albania in the midst of economic freefall and social chaos.
April	Sali Berisha, a leader of the Albanian Democratic Party, elected president.
June	Albania signs Black Sea economic cooperation pact with ten other countries, including six former Soviet republics.
July	Socialist Party of Albania gains significantly in nationwide local elections.
September	Former President Alia and eighteen other former communist officials, including Nexhmije Hoxha, arrested and charged with corruption and other offenses.
December	Albania joins the Organization of the Islamic Conference.
1993 March	Secretary General of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) visits Tiranë.
April	Albania recognizes the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
May	President Berisha urges NATO to intervene militarily in Kosovo.
July	Fatos Nano, chairman of the Socialist Party of Albania and former prime minister, arrested and charged with corruption.
September	President Berisha and President Momir Bulatovic of Montenegro meet in Tiranë to discuss ways of improving Albanian-Montenegrin relations.
October	Socialist Party of Albania loses many votes to Albanian Democratic Party in local elections in Dibrë district.
October	Greece recalls its ambassador for consultations after series of border incidents and alleged human rights abuses in Albania.
November	Israel's foreign minister makes first official visit to Tiranë.

Country Profile



Country

Formal Name: Republic of Albania.

Short Form: Albania.

Term for Citizens: Albanian(s).

Capital: Tiranë.

Date of Independence: November 28, 1912, national holiday celebrated as Liberation Day.

NOTE—The Country Profile contains updated information as available.

Geography

Size: 28,750 square kilometers (land area 27,400 square kilometers); slightly larger than Maryland.

Location: Southeastern coast of Adriatic Sea and eastern part of Strait of Otranto, opposite heel of Italian boot; between approximately 40° and 43° north latitude.

Topography: A little over 20 percent coastal plain, some of it poorly drained. Mostly hills and mountains, often covered with scrub forest. Only navigable river is the Bunë.

Climate: Mild temperate; cool, cloudy, wet winters with January low of 5°C; hot, clear, dry summers with July high of 28°C; interior cooler and wetter.

Boundaries: Land boundaries total 720 kilometers; borders with Greece 282 kilometers; border with former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 151 kilometers; border with Serbia 114 kilometers; border with Montenegro 173 kilometers; coastline 362 kilometers.

Society

Population: 3,335,000 (July 1991), growth rate 1.8 percent (1991). Birth rate 24 per 1,000 population, death rate 5 per 1,000 population. Total fertility rate 2.9 children per woman. Infant mortality rate 50 deaths per 1,000 live births. Life expectancy at birth 72 years for males, 79 years for females.

Ethnic Groups: Albanian 90 percent, divided into two groups: the Gëgs to the north of the Shkumbin River and the Tosks to the south. Greeks probably 8 percent, others (mostly Vlachs, Gypsies, Serbs and Bulgarians) about 2 percent.

Languages: Albanian (Tosk official dialect, Geg also much-used variant), Greek.

Religion: In 1992, estimated 70 percent of people Muslim, 20 percent Orthodox, and 10 percent Roman Catholic. In 1967 all mosques and churches closed and religious observances prohibited; in December 1990, ban on religious observance lifted.

Education: Free at all levels. Eight-grade primary and intermediate levels compulsory beginning at age six. Literacy rate raised from about 20 percent in 1945 to estimated 75 percent in recent years. In 1990, primary school attended by 96 percent of all school-age children, and secondary school by 70 percent. School operations seriously disrupted by breakdown of public order in 1991.

Health and Welfare: All medical services free. Six months of maternity leave at approximately 85 percent salary; noncontributory state social insurance system for all workers, with 70–100 percent of salary during sick leave. Pension about 70 percent of average salary. Retirement age 50–60 for men, 45–55 for women. In early 1990s, health and welfare system adversely affected by economic and social disintegration.

Economy

Salient Features: Until 1991, centrally planned Stalinist economy. Economic reforms crippled by economic and social disintegration in early 1990s. In 1992, new Democratic government announced “shock therapy” program to establish a market economy.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP): L16,234 million in 1990, US\$450 per capita, drop of 13.1 percent from previous year; preliminary figures indicated 30 percent drop for 1991.

Gross National Product (GNP): Estimated at US\$4.1 billion in 1990; per capita income estimated in range US\$600–US\$1,250; real growth rate not available.

Government Budget: Revenues US\$2.3 billion; expenditures US\$2.3 billion (1989). Note: Albania perennially ran substantial trade deficit; government tied imports to exports, so deficit seems to have been greatly reduced if not eliminated.

Labor Force: 1,567,000 (1990); agriculture about 52 percent, industry 22.9 percent (1987). Females made up 48.1 percent of labor force in 1990.

Agriculture: Arable land per capita lowest in Europe. Self-sufficiency in grain production achieved in 1976, according to government figures. A wide variety of temperate-zone crops and livestock raised. Up to 1990, Albania largely self-sufficient in food; thereafter drought and political breakdown necessitated foreign food aid.

Land Use: Arable land 21 percent; permanent crops 4 percent; meadows and pastures 15 percent; forest and woodland 38 percent; other 22 percent.

Industry: Main industries in early 1990s: food products, energy and petroleum, mining and basic metals, textiles and clothing, lumber, cement, engineering, and chemicals.

Natural Resources: Chromium, coal, copper, natural gas, nickel, oil, timber.

Imports: US\$255 million (1987 estimate). Major commodities: machinery, machine tools, iron and steel products, textiles, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals.

Exports: US\$378 million (1987 estimate). Major commodities: asphalt, bitumen, petroleum products, metals and metallic ores, electricity, oil, vegetables, fruits, tobacco.

Trading Partners: Italy, Yugoslavia, Germany, Greece, East European countries, and China.

Economic aid: In fiscal year 1991, United States government provided US\$2.4 million; the European Community (EC) pledged US\$9.1 million; and Italy provided US\$196 million for emergency food aid, industrial inputs, and education system. In July 1991, EC enrolled Albania in its program for technical assistance to former communist countries.

Currency: Lek (pl., leke); exchange rate in March 1993 L109.62 per US\$1.

Fiscal year: calendar year.

Transportation and Communications

Roads: Between 16,000 and 21,000 kilometers of road network suitable for motor traffic; 6,700 kilometers of main roads. In the mountainous north, communications still mostly by pack ponies or donkeys. Private cars not permitted until second half of 1990; bicycles and mules widely used.

Railroads: Total of 543 kilometers, all single track, 509 kilometers in 1.435-meter standard gauge; thirty-four kilometers in narrow gauge. Work on Yugoslav section of fifty-kilometer line between Shkodër and Titograd completed in late 1985; line opened to freight traffic in September 1986.

Aviation: Scheduled flights from Rinas Airport, twenty-eight kilometers from Tiranë to many major European cities. No regular internal air service.

Shipping: In 1986 Albania had twenty merchant ships, with total displacement of about 56,000 gross tons. Main ports: Durrës, Vlorë, Sarandë and Shëngjin. Completion of the new port near Vlorë by early 1990s will allow cargo-handling capacity of 4 million tons per year.

Politics and Government

Political Parties: Albanian Party of Labor (APL), the communist party, became Socialist Party of Albania in 1991. Other parties allowed to form December 1990, including Albanian Democratic Party, Republican Party, Ecology Party, OMONIA (Unity—Greek minority party).

Government: Until April 1991, single-chamber People's Assembly with 250 deputies met only few days each year; decisions made by Presidium of the People's Assembly, whose president head of state, and Council of Ministers; from April 1991, interim constitution provided for president who could not hold other offices concurrently; People's Assembly with at least 140 members legislative organ; Council of Ministers top executive organ.

Ministries: As of August 1993: agriculture; construction, housing, and land; culture, youth, and sports; defense; economy and finance; education; foreign affairs; health, and environment; industry, mining, and energy; justice; labor, emigration, social assistance, and political prisoners; public order; tourism; trade and foreign economic relations; and transport and communications.

Administrative Divisions: Country divided into twenty-six districts, each under People's Council elected every three years.

Judicial System: Supreme Court, elected by People's Assembly, also district and regional courts.

Flag: Black, two-headed eagle centered on red field.

National Security

Armed Forces: In 1991 People's Army included ground forces, air and air defense forces, and naval forces and comprised about 48,000 active-duty and 155,000 reserve personnel.

Ground Forces: Numbered about 35,000, including 20,000 conscripts. Organized along Soviet lines into four infantry brigades, one tank brigade, three artillery regiments, and six coastal artillery battalions. Tanks numbered about 190 and were old, Soviet-type T-34 and T-54s. Artillery mixture of outdated Soviet and Chinese origin equipment and consisted of towed artillery, mortars, multiple rocket launchers, and antitank guns. Infantry brigades operated 130 armored personnel carriers.

Air and Air Defense Forces: About 11,000 members, majority of whose officers assigned to air defense units, which also had about

1,400 conscripts assigned. Combat aircraft, supplied by China in the 1960s and early 1990s, numbered less than 100. Air Forces organized into three squadrons of fighter-bombers, three squadrons of fighters, two squadrons of transports, and two squadrons of unarmed helicopters. Air Defense Forces manned about twenty-two Soviet-made SA-2s at four sites.

Naval Forces: About 2,000 members, of which 1,000 conscripts, organized into two coastal defense brigades. Thirty-seven patrol and coastal combatants, most of which torpedo craft of Chinese origin. Two Soviet-made Whiskey-class submarines. One mine-warfare craft of Soviet origin.

Defense Budget: In 1991 about L1 billion or about 5 percent of gross national product and 10 percent of total government spending.

Internal Security Forces: In 1989 about 5,000 uniformed internal security troops, organized into five regiments of mechanized infantry, and another 5,000 plain-clothed officers. In July 1991 reorganized by People's Assembly.

Frontier Guards: About 7,000 members organized into several battalion-sized units.



Figure 1. Administrative Divisions of Albania, 1992

Introduction

ALBANIA, PROCLAIMED A “PEOPLE’S REPUBLIC” in 1946, was for more than forty years one of the most obscure and reclusive countries in the world. A totalitarian communist regime, led by party founder and first secretary Enver Hoxha from 1944 until his death in 1985, maintained strict control over every facet of the country’s internal affairs, while implementing a staunchly idiosyncratic foreign policy. After World War II, Hoxha and his protégés imposed a Stalinist economic system, and turned alternately to Yugoslavia, the Soviet Union, and China for assistance, before denouncing each of these communist countries as “bourgeois” or “revisionist” and embarking on a course of economic self-reliance. Notwithstanding some notable accomplishments in education, health care, and other areas, Hoxha’s policies of centralization, isolation, and repression stifled and demoralized the population, hindered economic development, and relegated Albania to a position of technological backwardness unparalleled in Europe.

Ramiz Alia, Hoxha’s handpicked successor, introduced a modicum of pragmatism to policy making, but his ambiguous stance toward reform did little to ameliorate a growing social and economic crisis. Like President Mikhail S. Gorbachev’s policy of *perestroika* in the Soviet Union, Alia’s efforts at reform were prompted, and tempered, by a commitment to preserving the system that had facilitated his accession to power. In both countries, however, the departure from traditional hard-line policies sufficed merely to unshackle the forces that would accelerate the collapse of the old system.

In December 1990, swayed by large-scale student demonstrations, strikes, and the exodus of thousands of Albanians to Italy and Greece, and fearing the prospect of a violent overthrow, Alia yielded to the popular demand for political pluralism and a multi-party system. The newly created Albanian Democratic Party (ADP), the country’s first opposition party since World War II, quickly became a major political force, capturing nearly one-third of the seats in the People’s Assembly in the spring 1991 multiparty election. And several months later, as the economy continued to deteriorate, the ADP participated in a “government of national salvation” with the communist Albanian Party of Labor (APL), subsequently renamed the Socialist Party of Albania (SPA). The fragile coalition government led by Prime Minister Ylli Bufi fell apart when the ADP decided to pull out in December. An interim

government of nonparty members and specialists headed by Vilson Ahmeti struggled on until the ADP scored a decisive election victory on March 22, 1992, amidst economic free-fall and social chaos, receiving about 62 percent of the vote to the SPA's 26 percent. Alia resigned as president shortly afterward, paving the way for the ADP to take over the government. On April 9, Sali Berisha, a cardiologist by training and a dynamic ADP leader who had figured prominently in the struggle for political pluralism, was elected by the People's Assembly to the post of president. The first post-communist government, headed by ADP founding member Aleksander Meksi, was appointed four days later. This "cabinet of hope," as it was popularly dubbed, consisted mainly of young ADP activists, intellectuals without prior government experience. Unlike their communist predecessors, most of whom were of southern Albanian origin, the ministers hailed from various parts of the country.

The new government made remarkable progress in restoring law and order, reforming the economy, and raising the population's standard of living. It privatized small businesses, closed down unprofitable industrial facilities, distributed about 90 percent of the land previously held by collective farms to private farmers, began to privatize housing, improved the supply of food and basic consumer goods, reduced the rate of inflation, stabilized the lek (Albania's currency unit), cut the budget deficit, and increased the volume of exports. However, more than one year after the Democrats came to power, Albania's economic plight was far from over. Its 400,000 newly registered private farmers had yet to assume full ownership rights over their land, there was insufficient investment in private agriculture, and shortages of tractors and other farming equipment continued to impede agricultural production. Approximately forty percent of the nonagricultural labor force was unemployed, corruption pervaded the state bureaucracy, and the country remained dependent on foreign food aid. In addition, partly because of the general political instability in the Balkans, particularly in the former Yugoslavia (see Glossary), direct investment from abroad was not forthcoming. Although President Berisha's "shock therapy" received the imprimatur of the International Monetary Fund (IMF—see Glossary), it drew sharp criticism from the SPA, which had been resuscitated by significant gains in the July 1992 local elections. The SPA argued that the reforms should have been implemented gradually, that many more jobs had been eliminated than created, and that at least some of the old state-run factories should have been kept open.

In March 1993, SPA chairman Fatos Nano called on the entire cabinet to resign, accusing it of incompetence. On April 6, President Berisha, citing a need to “correct weaknesses and shortcomings” in the government’s reform efforts, replaced the ministers of agriculture, internal affairs, education, and tourism (although ADP chairman Eduard Selami denied that these changes had been made in response to the opposition’s demands). The new appointees included individuals with greater professional expertise and two political independents. The outgoing ministers of agriculture and internal affairs assumed other government posts. Despite the Socialist challenge, opposition from right-wing extremists, and some manifestations of discord within the ADP, the Democratic government remained in a strong position in late 1993.

In foreign policy, the unresolved question of the status of Kosovo, a formerly autonomous province of Serbia, predominated. Although in September 1991 Kosovo’s underground parliament proclaimed this enclave with its large majority of ethnic Albanians a “sovereign and independent state,” Albania was the only country that had officially recognized Kosovo’s independence from Serbia. The Serbian government carried out a policy of systematic segregation and repression in Kosovo that some Western observers have compared with South Africa’s apartheid system. Concerned that Serbia’s ethnic cleansing campaigns would spread from Bosnia and Hercegovina to Kosovo and that Albania could be dragged into the ensuing confrontation (potentially a general Balkan war), President Berisha forged closer relations with other Islamic countries, particularly Turkey. In December 1992, Albania joined the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), a move denounced by the SPA as a detriment to the country’s reintegration with Europe. But Berisha also sought ties to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and urged repeatedly that NATO forces be deployed in Kosovo. In March 1993, NATO secretary general Manfred Wörner visited Tiranë, and later that month Albanian defense minister Safet Zhulali participated in a meeting of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council in Brussels. Wörner offered various forms of technical assistance to the Albanian armed forces, although membership in NATO itself was withheld.

In April 1993, Albania granted recognition to the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Important factors in relations between the two countries were the human rights of the Albanian minority in Macedonia, estimated to amount to between a fifth and a third of the population, and possible Albanian irredentism.

Relations benefited from the inclusion of ethnic Albanians in the Macedonian government. Good relations were maintained with Slovenia, Croatia, Italy, Bulgaria, and Romania as well, and steps were taken to improve relations with the neighboring Republic of Montenegro, also home to a large minority Albanian community. In September, Montenegro's president, Momir Bulatovic, met with President Berisha in Tiranë for the highest level talks between the two countries in a half-century. Attempts to expand cooperation and exchanges with Montenegro, however, were hampered by a United Nations embargo against the rump Yugoslavia.

Relations with Greece, Albania's ancient southern neighbor (which, for religious and historical reasons, was expected to side with Serbia in the event of war in Kosovo), deteriorated rapidly in the early 1990s. The tension stemmed primarily from two issues: the influx of hundreds of thousands of illegal aliens, mostly economic immigrants, from Albania to Greece, and the treatment of ethnic Greeks in Albania. Greco-Albanian relations worsened markedly when the Albanian parliament voted in February 1992 to prevent OMONIA (Unity), the political party representing Greek Albanians, from fielding candidates in the March 1992 election. A compromise was reached, permitting OMONIA's members to register under the name of the Union for Human Rights and to have their representatives included among the candidates, but mutual recriminations persisted. Another major setback occurred in June 1993 when Albania expelled a Greek Orthodox priest for allegedly fomenting unrest among ethnic Greeks in southern Albania, and Greece retaliated by deporting 25,000 Albanian illegal immigrants. Several weeks later Greece's prime minister, Constantinos Mitsotakis, demanded "the same rights for the Greek community living in Albania as those that the Albanian government demands for the Albanian communities in the former Yugoslavia." A potential problem was posed also by the status of "Northern Epirus," the Greek-populated region in southern Albania on which Greece had made territorial claims in the past. The regional instability created by such ethnic tensions, combined with continued economic deprivation, threatened Albania's transition to democracy.

January 1, 1994

Walter R. Iwaskiw

Chapter 1. Historical Setting



Skanderbeg, Albanian national hero of the fifteenth century

“THE ALBANIAN PEOPLE have hacked their way through history, sword in hand,” proclaims the preamble to Albania’s 1976 Stalinist constitution. These words were penned by the most dominant figure in Albania’s modern history, the Orwellian post-war despot, Enver Hoxha. The fact that Hoxha enshrined them in Albania’s supreme law is indicative of how he—like his mentor, the Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin—exploited his people’s collective memory to enhance the might of the communist system, which he manipulated for over four decades. Supported by a group of sycophantic intellectuals, Hoxha repeatedly transformed friends into hated foes in his determination to shape events. Similarly, he rewrote Albania’s history so that national heroes were recast, sometimes overnight, as villains. Hoxha appealed to the Albanians’ xenophobia and their defensive nationalism to parry criticism and threats to communist central control and his regime and to justify its brutal, arbitrary rule and economic and social folly. Only Hoxha’s death, the timely downfall of communism in Eastern Europe at the end of the 1980s, and the collapse of the nation’s economy were enough to break his spell and propel Albania fitfully toward change.

The Albanians are probably an ethnic outcropping of the Illyrians, an ancient Balkan people who intermingled and made war with the Greeks, Thracians, and Macedonians before succumbing to Roman rule around the time of Christ. Eastern and Western powers, secular and religious, battled for centuries after the fall of Rome to control the lands that constitute modern-day Albania. All the Illyrian tribes except the Albanians disappeared during the Dark Ages under the waves of migrating barbarians. A forbidding mountain homeland and resilient tribal society enabled the Albanians to survive into modern times with their identity and their Indo-European language intact.

In the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, the Ottoman Turks swept into the western Balkans. After a quixotic defense mounted by the Albanians’ greatest hero, Skanderbeg, the Albanians succumbed to the Turkish sultan’s forces. During five centuries of Ottoman rule, about two-thirds of the Albanian population, including its most powerful feudal landowners, converted to Islam. Many Albanians won fame and fortune as soldiers, administrators, and merchants in far-flung parts of the empire. As the centuries passed, however, Ottoman rulers lost the capacity to command the loyalty of local pashas, who governed districts on the empire’s fringes. Soon

pressures created by emerging national movements among the empire's farrago of peoples threatened to shatter the empire itself. The Ottoman rulers of the nineteenth century struggled in vain to shore up central authority, introducing reforms aimed at harnessing unruly pashas and checking the spread of nationalist ideas.

Albanian nationalism stirred for the first time in the late nineteenth century when it appeared that Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece would snatch up the Ottoman Empire's Albanian-populated lands. In 1878 Albanian leaders organized the Prizren League, which pressed for autonomy within the empire. After decades of unrest and the Ottoman Empire's defeat in the First Balkan War in 1912-13, Albanian leaders declared Albania an independent state, and Europe's Great Powers carved out an independent Albania after the Second Balkan War of 1913.

With the complete collapse of the Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian empires after World War I, the Albanians looked to Italy for protection against predators. After 1925, however, Mussolini sought to dominate Albania. In 1928 Albania became a kingdom under Zog I, the conservative Muslim clan chief and former prime minister, but Zog failed to stave off Italian ascendancy in Albanian internal affairs. In 1939 Mussolini's troops occupied Albania, overthrew Zog, and annexed the country. Albanian communists and nationalists fought each other as well as the occupying Italian and German forces during World War II, and with Yugoslav and Allied assistance the communists triumphed.

After the war, communist strongmen Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu eliminated their rivals inside the communist party and liquidated anticommunist opposition. Concentrating primarily on maintaining their grip on power, they reorganized the country's economy along strict Stalinist lines, turning first to Yugoslavia, then to the Soviet Union, and later to China for support. In pursuit of their goals, the communists repressed the Albanian people, subjecting them to isolation, propaganda, and brutal police measures. When China opened up to the West in the 1970s, Albania's rulers turned away from Beijing and implemented a policy of strict autarky, or self-sufficiency, that brought their nation economic ruin.

The Ancient Illyrians

Mystery enshrouds the exact origins of today's Albanians. Most historians of the Balkans believe that the Albanian people are in large part descendants of the ancient Illyrians, who, like other Balkan peoples, were subdivided into tribes and clans. The name Albania is derived from the name of an Illyrian tribe called the Arber, or Arbereshë, and later Albanoi, that lived near Durrës.

The Illyrians were Indo-European tribesmen who appeared in the western part of the Balkan Peninsula about 1000 B.C., a period coinciding with the end of the Bronze Age and the beginning of the Iron Age. They inhabited much of the area for at least the next millennium. Archaeologists associate the Illyrians with the Hallstatt culture, an Iron Age people noted for production of iron and bronze swords with winged-shaped handles and for domestication of horses. The Illyrians occupied lands extending from the Danube, Sava, and Morava rivers to the Adriatic Sea and the Sar Mountains. At various times, groups of Illyrians migrated over land and sea into Italy.

The Illyrians carried on commerce and warfare with their neighbors. The ancient Macedonians probably had some Illyrian roots, but their ruling class adopted Greek cultural characteristics. The Illyrians also mingled with the Thracians, another ancient people with adjoining lands on the east. In the south and along the Adriatic Sea coast, the Illyrians were heavily influenced by the Greeks, who founded trading colonies there. The present-day city of Durrës (Dyrrachium) evolved from a Greek colony known as Epidamnus, which was founded at the end of the seventh century B.C. Another famous Greek colony, Apollonia, arose between Durrës and the port city of Vlorë.

The Illyrians produced and traded cattle, horses, agricultural goods, and wares fashioned from locally mined copper and iron. Feuds and warfare were constant facts of life for the Illyrian tribes, and Illyrian pirates plagued shipping on the Adriatic Sea. Councils of elders chose the chieftains who headed each of the numerous Illyrian tribes. From time to time, local chieftains extended their rule over other tribes and formed short-lived kingdoms. During the fifth century B.C., a well-developed Illyrian population center existed as far north as the upper Sava River valley in what is now Slovenia. Illyrian friezes discovered near the present-day Slovenian city of Ljubljana depict ritual sacrifices, feasts, battles, sporting events, and other activities.

The Illyrian kingdom of Bardhyllus became a formidable local power in the fourth century B.C. In 358 B.C., however, Macedonia's Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, defeated the Illyrians and assumed control of their territory as far as Lake Ohrid (see fig. 1). Alexander himself routed the forces of the Illyrian chieftain Clitus in 335 B.C., and Illyrian tribal leaders and soldiers accompanied Alexander on his conquest of Persia. After Alexander's death in 323 B.C., independent Illyrian kingdoms again arose. In 312 B.C., King Glaucius expelled the Greeks from Durrës. By the end of the third century, an Illyrian kingdom based near what is



Source: Based on information from R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, *The Encyclopedia of Military History*, New York, 1970, 95; Hermann Kinder and Werner Hilgemann, *The Anchor Atlas of World History*, 1, New York, 1974, 90, 94; and *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15, New York, 1975, 1092.

Figure 2. Illyria under Roman Rule, First Century B.C.

now the Albanian city of Shkodër controlled parts of northern Albania, Montenegro, and Hercegovina. Under Queen Teuta, Illyrians attacked Roman merchant vessels plying the Adriatic Sea and gave Rome an excuse to invade the Balkans.

In the Illyrian Wars of 229 and 219 B.C., Rome overran the Illyrian settlements in the Neretva River valley. The Romans made new gains in 168 B.C., and Roman forces captured Illyria's King Gentius at Shkodër, which they called Scodra, and brought him to Rome in 165 B.C. A century later, Julius Caesar and his rival Pompey fought their decisive battle near Durrës. In A.D. 9, during the reign of Emperor Tiberius, Rome finally subjugated recalcitrant Illyrian tribes in the western Balkans. The Romans divided the lands that make up present-day Albania among the provinces of Macedonia, Dalmatia, and Epirus (see fig. 2).

For about four centuries, Roman rule brought the Illyrian-populated lands economic and cultural advancement and ended most of the clashes among local tribes. The Illyrian mountain

clansmen retained local authority but pledged allegiance to the emperor and acknowledged the authority of his envoys. During a yearly holiday honoring the Caesars, the Illyrian mountaineers swore loyalty to the emperor and reaffirmed their political rights. A form of this tradition, known as the *kuvend*, has survived to the present day in northern Albania.

The Romans established numerous military camps and colonies and completely latinized the coastal cities. They also oversaw the construction of aqueducts and roads, including the Via Egnatia, a famous military highway and trade route that led from Durrës through the Shkumbin River valley to Macedonia and Byzantium (later Constantinople—see Glossary). Copper, asphalt, and silver were extracted from the mountains. The main exports were wine, cheese, and oil, as well as fish from Lake Scutari and Lake Ohrid. Imports included tools, metalware, luxury goods, and other manufactured articles. Apollonia became a cultural center, and Julius Caesar himself sent his nephew, later the Emperor Augustus, to study there.

Illyrians distinguished themselves as warriors in the Roman legions and made up a significant portion of the Praetorian Guard. Several of the Roman emperors were of Illyrian origin, including Diocletian (r. 284–305), who saved the empire from disintegration by introducing institutional reforms; and Constantine the Great (r. 324–37), who accepted Christianity and transferred the empire's capital from Rome to Byzantium, which he called Constantinople. Emperor Justinian (r. 527–65)—who codified Roman law, built the most famous Byzantine church, the Hagia Sofia, and reextended the empire's control over lost territories—was probably also an Illyrian.

Christianity came to the Illyrian-populated lands in the first century A.D. Saint Paul wrote that he preached in the Roman province of Illyricum, and legend holds that he visited Durrës. When the Roman Empire was divided into eastern and western halves in A.D. 395, the lands that now make up Albania were administered by the Eastern Empire but were ecclesiastically dependent on Rome. In A.D. 732, however, a Byzantine emperor, Leo the Isaurian, subordinated the area to the patriarchate of Constantinople. For centuries thereafter, the Albanian lands were an arena for the ecclesiastical struggle between Rome and Constantinople. Most Albanians living in the mountainous north became Roman Catholic, whereas in the southern and central regions the majority became Orthodox.

The Barbarian Invasions and the Middle Ages

The fall of the Roman Empire and the age of great migrations

brought radical changes to the Balkan Peninsula and the Illyrian people. Barbarian tribesmen overran many rich Roman cities, destroying the existing social and economic order and leaving the great Roman aqueducts, coliseums, temples, and roads in ruins. The Illyrians gradually disappeared as a distinct people from the Balkans, replaced by the Bulgars, Serbs, Croats, and Albanians. In the late Middle Ages, new waves of invaders swept over the Albanian-populated lands. Thanks to their protective mountains, close-knit tribal society, and sheer pertinacity, however, the Albanian people developed a distinctive identity and language.

In the fourth century, barbarian tribes began to prey upon the Roman Empire, and the fortunes of the Illyrian-populated lands sagged. The Germanic Goths and Asiatic Huns were the first to arrive, invading in mid-century; the Avars attacked in A.D. 570; and the Slavic Serbs and Croats overran Illyrian-populated areas in the early seventh century. About fifty years later, the Bulgars conquered much of the Balkan Peninsula and extended their domain to the lowlands of what is now central Albania. Many Illyrians fled from coastal areas to the mountains, exchanging a sedentary peasant existence for the itinerant life of the herdsman. Other Illyrians intermarried with the conquerors and eventually assimilated. In general, the invaders destroyed or weakened Roman and Byzantine cultural centers in the lands that would become Albania.

Again during the late medieval period, invaders ravaged the Illyrian-inhabited regions of the Balkans. Norman, Venetian, and Byzantine fleets attacked by sea. Bulgar, Serb, and Byzantine forces came overland and held the region in their grip for years. Clashes between rival clans and intrusions by the Serbs produced hardship that triggered an exodus from the region southward into Greece, including Thessaly, the Peloponnese, and the Aegean Islands. The invaders assimilated much of the Illyrian population, but the Illyrians living in lands that comprise modern-day Albania and parts of Yugoslavia (see Glossary) and Greece were never completely absorbed or even controlled.

The first historical mention of Albania and the Albanians as such appears in an account of the resistance by a Byzantine emperor, Alexius I Comnenus, to an offensive, in 1081, into Albanian-populated lands. The offense was waged by Vatican-backed Normans from southern Italy.

The Serbs occupied parts of northern and eastern Albania toward the end of the twelfth century. In 1204, after Western crusaders had sacked Constantinople, Venice won nominal control over Albania and the Epirus region of northern Greece and took possession of Durrës. A prince from the overthrown Byzantine ruling

family, Michael Comnenus, made alliances with Albanian chiefs and drove the Venetians from lands that now make up southern Albania and northern Greece. In 1204 he set up an independent principality, the Despotate of Epirus, with Janina (now Ioannina in northwest Greece) as its capital. In 1272 the king of Naples, Charles I of Anjou, occupied Durrës and formed an Albanian kingdom that would last for a century. Internal power struggles further weakened the Byzantine Empire in the fourteenth century, enabling the Serbs' most powerful medieval ruler, Stefan Dusan, to establish a short-lived empire that included all of Albania except Durrës.

The Albanian Lands under Ottoman Domination, 1385–1876

The expanding Ottoman Empire overpowered the Balkan Peninsula in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. At first, the feuding Albanian clans proved no match for the armies of the sultan (see Glossary). In the fifteenth century, however, Skanderbeg united the Albanian tribes in a defensive alliance that held up the Ottoman advance for more than two decades. His family's banner, bearing a black two-headed eagle on a red field, became the flag under which the Albanian national movement rallied centuries later.

Five centuries of Ottoman rule left the Albanian people fractured along religious, regional, and tribal lines. The first Albanians to convert to Islam were young boys forcibly conscripted into the sultan's military and administration. In the early seventeenth century, however, Albanians converted to Islam in great numbers. Within a century, the Albanian Islamic community was split between Sunni (see Glossary) Muslims and adherents to the Bektashi (see Glossary) sect. The Albanian people also became divided into two distinct tribal and dialectal groupings, the Gëgs and Tosks. In the rugged northern mountains, Geg shepherds lived in a tribal society often completely independent of Ottoman rule. In the south, peasant Muslim and Orthodox Tosks worked the land for Muslim beys, provincial rulers who frequently revolted against the sultan's authority. In the nineteenth century, the Ottoman sultans tried in vain to shore up their collapsing empire by introducing a series of reforms aimed at reining in recalcitrant local officials and dousing the fires of nationalism among its myriad peoples. The power of nationalism, however, proved too strong to counteract.

The Ottoman Conquest of Albania

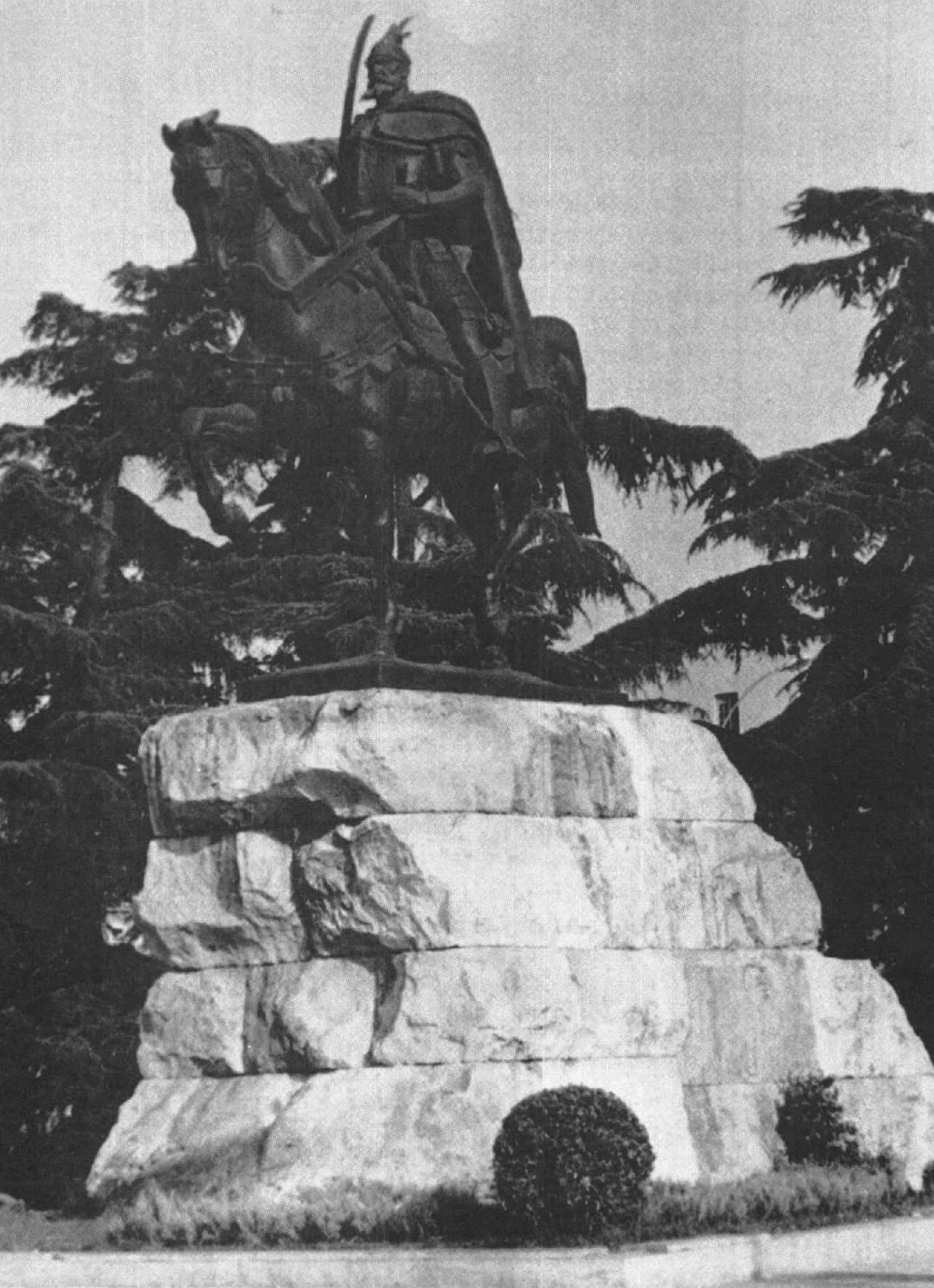
The Ottoman Turks expanded their empire from Anatolia to

the Balkans in the fourteenth century. They crossed the Bosphorus in 1352, and in 1389 they crushed a Serb-led army that included Albanian forces at Kosovo Polje, located in the southern part of present-day Yugoslavia. Europe gained a brief respite from Ottoman pressure in 1402 when the Mongol leader, Tamerlane, attacked Anatolia from the east, killed the Turks' absolute ruler, the sultan, and sparked a civil war. When order was restored, the Ottomans renewed their westward progress. In 1453 Sultan Mehmed II's forces overran Constantinople and killed the last Byzantine emperor.

The division of the Albanian-populated lands into small, quarreling fiefdoms ruled by independent feudal lords and tribal chiefs made them easy prey for the Ottoman armies. In 1385 the Albanian ruler of Durrës, Karl Thopia, appealed to the sultan for support against his rivals, the Balsha family. An Ottoman force quickly marched into Albania along the Via Egnatia and routed the Balshas. The principal Albanian clans soon swore fealty to the Turks. Sultan Murad II launched the major Ottoman onslaught in the Balkans in 1423, and the Turks took Janina in 1431 and Arta, on the Ionian coast, in 1449. The Turks allowed conquered Albanian clan chiefs to maintain their positions and property, but they had to pay tribute, send their sons to the Turkish court as hostages, and provide the Ottoman army with auxiliary troops.

The Albanians' resistance to the Turks in the mid-fifteenth century won them acclaim all over Europe. Gjon Kastrioti of Krujë was one of the Albanian clan leaders who submitted to Turkish suzerainty. He was compelled to send his four sons to the Ottoman capital to be trained for military service. The youngest, Gjergj Kastrioti (1403-68), who would become the Albanians' greatest national hero, captured the sultan's attention. Renamed Iskander when he converted to Islam, the young man participated in military expeditions to Asia Minor and Europe. When appointed to administer a Balkan district, Iskander became known as Skanderbeg. After Ottoman forces under Skanderbeg's command suffered defeat in a battle near Nis, in present-day Serbia, in 1443, the Albanian rushed to Krujë and tricked a Turkish pasha into surrendering to him the Kastrioti family fortress. Skanderbeg then reembraced Roman Catholicism and declared a holy war against the Turks.

On March 1, 1444, Albanian chieftains gathered in the cathedral of Lezhë with the prince of Montenegro and delegates from Venice and proclaimed Skanderbeg commander of the Albanian resistance. All of Albania, including most of Epirus, accepted his leadership against the Ottoman Turks, but local leaders kept control of their



*Equestrian statue of Skanderbeg on Skanderbeg Square in central Tirane
Courtesy Charles Sudetic*

own districts. Under a red flag bearing Skanderbeg's heraldic emblem, an Albanian force of about 30,000 men held off brutal Ottoman campaigns against their lands for twenty-four years. Twice the Albanians overcame sieges of Krujë. In 1449 the Albanians routed Sultan Murad II himself. Later, they repulsed attacks led by Sultan Mehmed II. In 1461 Skanderbeg went to the aid of his suzerain, King Alfonso I of Naples, against the kings of Sicily. The government under Skanderbeg was unstable, however, and at times local Albanian rulers cooperated with the Ottoman Turks against him. When Skanderbeg died at Lezhë, the sultan reportedly cried out, "Asia and Europe are mine at last. Woe to Christendom! She has lost her sword and shield."

With support from Naples and the Vatican, resistance to the Ottoman Empire continued mostly in Albania's highlands, where the chieftains even opposed the construction of roads out of fear that they would bring Ottoman soldiers and tax collectors. The Albanians' fractured leadership, however, failed to halt the Ottoman onslaught. Krujë fell to the Ottoman Turks in 1478; Shkodër succumbed in 1479 after a fifteen-month siege; and the Venetians evacuated Durrës in 1501. The defeats triggered a great Albanian exodus to southern Italy, especially to the kingdom of Naples, as well as to Sicily, Greece, Romania, and Egypt. Most of the Albanian refugees belonged to the Orthodox Church. Some of the émigrés to Italy converted to Roman Catholicism, and the rest established a Uniate Church (see Glossary). The Albanians of Italy significantly influenced the Albanian national movement in future centuries, and Albanian Franciscan priests, most of whom were descended from émigrés to Italy, played a significant role in the preservation of Catholicism in Albania's northern regions.

Albanians under Ottoman Rule

The Ottoman sultan considered himself God's agent on earth, the leader of a religious—not a national—state whose purpose was to defend and propagate Islam. Non-Muslims paid extra taxes and held an inferior status, but they could retain their old religion and a large measure of local autonomy. By converting to Islam, individuals among the conquered could elevate themselves to the privileged stratum of society. In the early years of the empire, all Ottoman high officials were the sultan's bondsmen, the children of Christian subjects chosen in childhood for their promise, converted to Islam, and educated to serve. Some were selected from prisoners of war, others sent as gifts, and still others obtained through *deushirme*, the tribute of children levied in the Ottoman Empire's Balkan lands. Many of the best fighters in the sultan's elite

guard, the janissaries (see Glossary), were conscripted as young boys from Christian Albanian families, and high-ranking Ottoman officials often had Albanian bodyguards.

In the early seventeenth century, many Albanian converts to Islam migrated elsewhere within the Ottoman Empire and found careers in the Ottoman military and government. Some attained powerful positions in the Ottoman administration. About thirty Albanians rose to the position of grand vizier, chief deputy to the sultan himself. In the second half of the seventeenth century, the Albanian Köprülü family provided four grand viziers, who fought against corruption, temporarily shored up eroding central government control over rapacious local beys, and won several military victories.

The Ottoman Turks divided the Albanian-inhabited lands among a number of districts, or *vilayets*. The Ottoman authorities did not initially stress conversion to Islam. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, however, economic pressures and coercion produced the conversion of about two-thirds of the empire's Albanians.

The Ottoman Turks first focused their conversion campaigns on the Roman Catholic Albanians of the north and then on the Orthodox population of the south. The authorities increased taxes, especially poll taxes, to make conversion economically attractive. During and after a Christian counteroffensive against the Ottoman Empire from 1687 to 1690, when Albanian Catholics revolted against their Muslim overlords, the Ottoman pasha of Pec, a town in the south of present-day Yugoslavia, retaliated by forcing entire Albanian villages to accept Islam. Albanian beys then moved from the northern mountains to the fertile lands of Kosovo, which had been abandoned by thousands of Orthodox Serbs fearing reprisals for their collaboration with the Christian forces.

Most of the conversions to Islam took place in the lowlands of the Shkumbin River valley, where the Ottoman Turks could easily apply pressure because of the area's accessibility. Many Albanians, however, converted in name only and secretly continued to practice Christianity. Often one branch of a family became Muslim while another remained Christian, and many times these families celebrated their respective religious holidays together. As early as the eighteenth century, a mystic Islamic sect, the Bektashi dervishes, spread into the empire's Albanian-populated lands. Probably founded in the late thirteenth century in Anatolia, Bektashism became the janissaries' official faith in the late sixteenth century. The Bektashi sect contains features of the Turks' pre-Islamic religion and

emphasizes man as an individual. Women, unveiled, participate in Bektashi ceremonies on an equal basis, and the celebrants use wine despite the ban on alcohol in the Quran. The Bektashis became the largest religious group in southern Albania after the sultan disbanded the janissaries in 1826. Bektashi leaders played key roles in the Albanian nationalist movement of the late nineteenth century and were to a great degree responsible for the Albanians' traditional tolerance of religious differences.

During the centuries of Ottoman rule, the Albanian lands remained one of Europe's most backward areas. In the mountains north of the Shkumbin River, Geg herders maintained their self-governing society comprised of clans. An association of clans was called a *bajrak* (see Glossary). Taxes on the northern tribes were difficult if not impossible for the Ottomans to collect because of the rough terrain and fierceness of the Albanian highlanders. Some mountain tribes succeeded in defending their independence through the centuries of Ottoman rule, engaging in intermittent guerrilla warfare with the Ottoman Turks, who never deemed it worthwhile to subjugate them. Until recent times, Geg clan chiefs, or *bajraktars*, exercised patriarchal powers, arranged marriages, mediated quarrels, and meted out punishments. The tribesmen of the northern Albanian mountains recognized no law but the Code of Lek, a collection of tribal laws transcribed in the fourteenth century by a Roman Catholic priest. The code regulates a variety of subjects, including blood vengeance. Even today, many Albanian highlanders regard the canon as the supreme law of the land.

South of the Shkumbin River, the mostly peasant Tosks lived in compact villages under elected rulers. Some Tosks living in settlements high in the mountains maintained their independence and often escaped payment of taxes. The Tosks of the lowlands, however, were easy for the Ottoman authorities to control. The Albanian tribal system disappeared there, and the Ottomans imposed a system of military fiefs under which the sultan granted soldiers and cavalymen temporary landholdings, or *timars*, in exchange for military service. By the eighteenth century, many military fiefs had effectively become the hereditary landholdings of economically and politically powerful families who squeezed wealth from their hard-strapped Christian and Muslim tenant farmers. The beys, like the clan chiefs of the northern mountains, became virtually independent rulers in their own provinces, had their own military contingents, and often waged war against each other to increase their landholdings and power. The Sublime Porte (see Glossary) attempted to press a divide-and-rule policy to keep the local beys

from uniting and posing a threat to Ottoman rule itself, but with little success.

Local Albanian Leaders in the Early Nineteenth Century

The weakening of Ottoman central authority and the *timar* system brought anarchy to the Albanian-populated lands. In the late eighteenth century, two Albanian centers of power emerged: Shkodër, under the Bushati family; and Janina, under Ali Pasha of Tepelenë. When it suited their goals, both places cooperated with the Sublime Porte, and when it was expedient to defy the central government, each acted independently.

The Bushati family dominated the Shkodër region through a network of alliances with various highland tribes. Kara Mahmud Bushati attempted to establish an autonomous principality and expand the lands under his control by playing off Austria and Russia against the Sublime Porte. In 1785 Kara Mahmud's forces attacked Montenegrin territory, and Austria offered to recognize him as the ruler of all Albania if he would ally himself with Vienna against the Sublime Porte. Seizing an opportunity, Kara Mahmud sent the sultan the heads of an Austrian delegation in 1788, and the Ottomans appointed him governor of Shkodër. When he attempted to wrest land from Montenegro in 1796, however, he was defeated and beheaded. Kara Mahmud's brother, Ibrahim, cooperated with the Sublime Porte until his death in 1810, but his successor, Mustafa Pasha Bushati, proved to be recalcitrant despite participation in Ottoman military campaigns against Greek revolutionaries and rebel pashas. He cooperated with the mountain tribes and brought a large area under his control.

Ali Pasha (1741–1822), the Lion of Janina, was born to a powerful clan from Tepelenë and spent much of his youth as a bandit. He rose to become governor of the Ottoman province of Rumelia, which included Albania, Macedonia, and Thrace, before establishing himself in Janina. Like Kara Mahmud Bushati, Ali Pasha wanted to create an autonomous state under his rule. When Ali Pasha forged links with the Greek revolutionaries, Sultan Mahmud II decided to destroy him. The sultan first discharged the Albanian from his official posts and recalled him to Constantinople. Ali Pasha refused and put up a formidable resistance that Britain's Lord Byron immortalized in poems and letters. In January 1822, however, Ottoman agents assassinated Ali Pasha and sent his head to Constantinople. Nevertheless, it took eight more years before the Sublime Porte would move against Mustafa Pasha Bushati. The sultan sent Reshid Pasha, an Ottoman general, to Bitola (then called Monastir, in Macedonia), where he invited 1,000 Muslim Albanian

leaders to meet him; in August 1830 Reshid Pasha had about 500 of the Albanian leaders killed. He then turned on Mustafa Pasha, who surrendered and spent the rest of his life as an official in Constantinople.

After crushing the Bushatis and Ali Pasha, the Sublime Porte introduced a series of reforms, known as the *tanzimat*, which were aimed at strengthening the empire by reining in fractious pashas. The government organized a recruitment program for the military and opened Turkish-language schools to propagate Islam and instill loyalty to the empire. The *timars* officially became large individual landholdings, especially in the lowlands. In 1835 the Sublime Porte divided the Albanian-populated lands into the *vilayets* of Janina and Rumelia and dispatched officials from Constantinople to administer them. After 1865 the central authorities redivided the Albanian lands among the *vilayets* of Shkodër, Janina, Bitola, and Kosovo. The reforms angered the highland Albanian chieftains, who found their privileges reduced with no apparent compensation, and the authorities eventually abandoned efforts to control the chieftains. Ottoman troops crushed local rebellions in the lowlands, however, and conditions there remained bleak. Large numbers of Tosks emigrated to join sizable Albanian émigré communities in Romania, Egypt, Bulgaria, Constantinople, southern Italy, and later the United States. As a result of contacts maintained between the Tosks and their relatives living or returning from abroad, foreign ideas began to seep into Albania.

National Awakening and the Birth of Albania, 1876–1918

By the 1870s, the Sublime Porte's reforms aimed at checking the Ottoman Empire's disintegration had clearly failed. The image of the "Turkish yoke" had become fixed in the nationalist mythologies and psyches of the empire's Balkan peoples, and their march toward independence quickened. The Albanians, because of the preponderance of Muslims who had links with Islam and internal social divisions, were the last of the Balkan peoples to develop a national consciousness. That consciousness was triggered by fears that the Ottoman Empire would lose its Albanian-populated lands to the emerging Balkan states—Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria, and Greece. In 1878 Albanian leaders formed the Prizren League, which pressed for territorial autonomy; and after decades of unrest a major uprising exploded in the Albanian-populated Ottoman territories in 1912, on the eve of the First Balkan War. When Serbia, Montenegro, and Greece laid claim to Albanian lands during the war, the Albanians declared independence. The European

Great Powers endorsed an independent Albania in 1913, after the Second Balkan War. The young state, however, collapsed within weeks of the outbreak of World War I.

The Rise of Albanian Nationalism

The 1877–78 Russo-Turkish War dealt a decisive blow to Ottoman power in the Balkan Peninsula, leaving the empire with only a precarious hold on Macedonia and the Albanian-populated lands. The Albanians' fear that the lands they inhabited would be partitioned among Montenegro, Serbia, Bulgaria, and Greece fueled the rise of Albanian nationalism. The first postwar treaty, the abortive Treaty of San Stefano (see Glossary) signed on March 3, 1878, assigned Albanian-populated lands to Serbia, Montenegro, and Bulgaria. Austria-Hungary and Britain blocked the arrangement because it awarded Russia a predominant position in the Balkans and thereby upset the European balance of power. A peace conference to settle the dispute was held later in the year in Berlin.

The Treaty of San Stefano triggered profound anxiety among the Albanians meanwhile, and it spurred their leaders to organize a defense of the lands they inhabited. In the spring of 1878, influential Albanians in Constantinople—including Abdyl Frasheri, the Albanian national movement's leading figure during its early years—organized a secret committee to direct the Albanians' resistance. In May the group called for a general meeting of representatives from all the Albanian-populated lands. On June 10, 1878, about eighty delegates, mostly Muslim religious leaders, clan chiefs, and other influential people from the four Albanian-populated Ottoman *vilayets*, met in the Kosovo town of Prizren. The delegates set up a standing organization, the Prizren League, under the direction of a central committee that had the power to impose taxes and raise an army. The Prizren League worked to gain autonomy for the Albanians and to thwart implementation of the Treaty of San Stefano, but not to create an independent Albania.

At first the Ottoman authorities supported the Prizren League, but the Sublime Porte pressed the delegates to declare themselves to be first and foremost Ottomans rather than Albanians. Some delegates supported this position and advocated emphasizing Muslim solidarity and the defense of Muslim lands, including present-day Bosnia and Hercegovina. Other representatives, under Frasheri's leadership, focused on working toward Albanian autonomy and creating a sense of Albanian identity that would cut across religious and tribal lines. Because conservative Muslims constituted a majority of the representatives, the Prizren League supported maintenance of Ottoman suzerainty.

Albania: A Country Study

In July 1878, the league sent a memorandum to the Great Powers at the Congress of Berlin, which had been called to settle the unresolved problems of the Russo-Turkish War. The memorandum demanded that all Albanians be united in a single Ottoman province that would be governed from Bitola by a Turkish governor, who would be advised by an Albanian committee elected by universal suffrage.

The Congress of Berlin ignored the league's memorandum, and Germany's Otto von Bismarck even proclaimed that an Albanian nation did not exist. The congress ceded to Montenegro the cities of Bar and Podgorica and areas around the mountain villages of Gusinje and Plav, which Albanian leaders considered Albanian territory. Serbia also won Albanian-inhabited lands. The Albanians, the vast majority loyal to the empire, vehemently opposed the territorial losses. Albanians also feared the possible loss of Epirus to Greece. The Prizren League organized armed resistance efforts in Gusinje, Plav, Shkodër, Prizren, Prevesa, and Janina. A border tribesman at the time described the frontier as "floating on blood."

In August 1878, the Congress of Berlin ordered a commission to trace a border between the Ottoman Empire and Montenegro. The congress also directed Greece and the Ottoman Empire to negotiate a solution to their border dispute. The Great Powers expected the Ottomans to ensure that the Albanians would respect the new borders; they ignored the fact that the sultan's military forces were too weak to enforce any settlement and that the Ottomans could only benefit by the Albanians' resistance. The Sublime Porte, in fact, armed the Albanians and allowed them to levy taxes, and when the Ottoman army withdrew from areas awarded to Montenegro under the Treaty of Berlin, Roman Catholic Albanian tribesmen simply took control. The Albanians' successful resistance to the treaty forced the Great Powers to alter the border, returning Gusinje and Plav to the Ottoman Empire and granting Montenegro the mostly Muslim Albanian-populated coastal town of Ulcinj. But the Albanians there refused to surrender as well. Finally, the Great Powers blockaded Ulcinj by sea and pressured the Ottoman authorities to bring the Albanians under control. The Great Powers decided in 1881 to cede Greece only Thessaly and the small Albanian-populated district of Arta.

Faced with growing international pressure to "pacify" the refractory Albanians, the sultan dispatched a large army under Dervish Turgut Pasha to suppress the Prizren League and deliver Ulcinj to Montenegro. Albanians loyal to the empire supported the Sublime Porte's military intervention. In April 1881, Dervish Pasha's 10,000 men captured Prizren and later crushed the resistance at

Ulcinj. The Prizren League's leaders and their families were arrested and deported. Frasheri, who originally received a death sentence, was imprisoned until 1885 and exiled until his death seven years later. In the three years it survived, the Prizren League effectively made the Great Powers aware of the Albanian people and their national interests. Montenegro and Greece received much less Albanian-populated territory than they would have won without the league's resistance.

Formidable barriers frustrated Albanian leaders' efforts to instill in their people an Albanian rather than an Ottoman identity. Divided into four *vilayets*, Albanians had no common geographical or political nerve center. The Albanians' religious differences forced nationalist leaders to give the national movement a purely secular character that alienated religious leaders. The most significant factor uniting the Albanians, their spoken language, lacked a standard literary form and even a standard alphabet. Each of the three available choices, the Latin, Cyrillic, and Arabic scripts, implied different political and religious orientations opposed by one or another element of the population. In 1878 there were no Albanian-language schools in the most developed of the Albanian-inhabited areas—Gjirokastër, Berat, and Vlorë—where schools conducted classes either in Turkish or in Greek (see Education: Pre-Communist Era, ch. 2).

In the late nineteenth century, Albanian intellectuals began devising a single, standard Albanian literary language and making demands that it be used in schools. In Constantinople in 1879, Sami Frasheri founded a cultural and educational organization, the Society for the Printing of Albanian Writings, whose membership comprised Muslim, Catholic, and Orthodox Albanians. Naim Frasheri, the most-renowned Albanian poet, joined the society and wrote and edited textbooks. Albanian émigrés in Bulgaria, Egypt, Italy, Romania, and the United States supported the society's work. Others opposed it. The Greeks, who dominated the education of Orthodox Albanians, joined the Turks in suppressing the Albanians' culture, especially Albanian-language education. In 1886 the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople threatened to excommunicate anyone found reading or writing Albanian, and priests taught that God would not understand prayers uttered in Albanian.

The Ottoman Empire continued to crumble after the Congress of Berlin. The empire's financial troubles prevented Sultan Abdül Hamid II from reforming his military, and he resorted to repression to maintain order. The authorities strove without success to control the political situation in the empire's Albanian-populated lands, arresting suspected nationalist activists. When the sultan

refused Albanian demands for unification of the four Albanian-populated *vilayets*, Albanian leaders reorganized the Prizren League and incited uprisings that brought the Albanian lands, especially Kosovo, to near anarchy. The imperial authorities again disbanded the Prizren League in 1897, executed its president in 1902, and banned Albanian-language books and correspondence. In Macedonia, where Bulgarian-, Greek-, and Serbian-backed terrorists were fighting Ottoman authorities and one another for control, Muslim Albanians suffered attacks, and Albanian guerrilla groups retaliated. In 1906 Albanian leaders meeting in Bitola established the secret Committee for the Liberation of Albania. A year later, Albanian guerrillas assassinated the Greek Orthodox metropolitan of Korçë.

In 1906 opposition groups in the Ottoman Empire emerged, one of which evolved into the Committee of Union and Progress, more commonly known as the Young Turks, which proposed restoring constitutional government in Constantinople, by revolution if necessary. In July 1908, a month after a Young Turk rebellion in Macedonia supported by an Albanian uprising in Kosovo and Macedonia escalated into widespread insurrection and mutiny within the imperial army, Sultan Abdül Hamid II agreed to demands by the Young Turks to restore constitutional rule. Many Albanians participated in the Young Turks uprising, hoping that it would gain their people autonomy within the empire. The Young Turks lifted the Ottoman ban on Albanian-language schools and on writing the Albanian language. As a consequence, Albanian intellectuals meeting in Bitola in 1908 chose the Latin alphabet as a standard script. The Young Turks, however, were set on maintaining the empire and not interested in making concessions to the myriad nationalist groups within its borders. After securing the abdication of Abdül Hamid II in April 1909, the new authorities levied taxes, outlawed guerrilla groups and nationalist societies, and attempted to extend Constantinople's control over the northern Albanian mountainmen. In addition, the Young Turks legalized the *bastinado*, or beating with a stick, even for misdemeanors, banned the carrying of rifles, and denied the existence of an Albanian nationality. The new government also appealed for Islamic solidarity to break the Albanians' unity and used the Muslim clergy to try to impose the Arabic alphabet.

The Albanians refused to submit to the Young Turks' campaign to "Ottomanize" them by force. New Albanian uprisings began in Kosovo and the northern mountains in early April 1910. Ottoman forces quashed these rebellions after three months, outlawed Albanian organizations, disarmed entire regions, and closed down

schools and publications. Montenegro, preparing to grab Albanian-populated lands for itself, supported a 1911 uprising by the mountain tribes against the Young Turks regime; the uprising grew into a widespread revolt. Unable to control the Albanians by force, the Ottoman government granted concessions on schools, military recruitment, and taxation and sanctioned the use of the Latin script for the Albanian language. The government refused, however, to unite the four Albanian-inhabited *vilayets*.

The Balkan Wars and Creation of Independent Albania

In May 1912, the Albanians once more rose against the Ottoman Empire and took the Macedonian capitol, Skopje, by August. Stunned, the Young Turks regime acceded to some of the rebels' demands. The First Balkan War, however, erupted before a final settlement could be worked out. Most Albanians remained neutral during the war, during which the Balkan allies—the Serbs, Bulgarians, and Greeks—quickly drove the Turks to the walls of Constantinople. The Montenegrins surrounded Shkodër with the help of northern Albanian tribes anxious to fight the Ottoman Turks. Serb forces took much of northern Albania, and the Greeks captured Janina and parts of southern Albania.

An assembly of eighty-three Muslim and Christian leaders meeting in Vlorë in November 1912 declared Albania an independent country and set up a provisional government. However, in its concluding Treaty of London of May 1913, an ambassadorial conference decided the major questions concerning the Albanians after the First Balkan War. One of Serbia's primary war aims was to gain an Adriatic port, preferably Durrës. Austria-Hungary and Italy opposed giving Serbia an Adriatic outlet, which they feared would become a Russian port. They instead supported the creation of an autonomous Albania. Russia backed Serbia's and Montenegro's claims to Albanian-inhabited lands. Britain and Germany remained neutral. Chaired by Britain's foreign secretary, Sir Edward Grey, the ambassadors' conference initially decided to create an autonomous Albania under continued Ottoman rule, but with the protection of the Great Powers. This solution, as detailed in the Treaty of London, was abandoned in the summer of 1913 when it became obvious that the Ottoman Empire would, in the Second Balkan War, lose Macedonia and hence its overland connection with the Albanian-inhabited lands.

In July 1913, the Great Powers opted to recognize an independent, neutral Albanian state ruled by a constitutional monarchy and under the protection of the Great Powers. The August 1913

Treaty of Bucharest established that independent Albania was a country with about 28,000 square kilometers of territory and a population of 800,000. Montenegro, whose tribesmen had resorted to terror, mass murder, and forced conversion in territories it coveted, had to surrender Shkodër. Serbia reluctantly succumbed to an ultimatum from Austria-Hungary, Germany, and Italy to withdraw from northern Albania. The treaty, however, left large areas, notably Kosovo and western Macedonia, with majority Albanian populations outside the new state and failed to solve the region's nationality problems.

Territorial disputes have divided the Albanians and Serbs since the Middle Ages, but none more so than the clash over the Kosovo region. Serbs consider Kosovo their Holy Land. They argue that their ancestors settled in the region during the seventh century, that medieval Serbian kings were crowned there, and that in the mid-fourteenth century the Serbs' greatest medieval ruler, Stefan Dusan, established the seat of his empire for a time near Prizren. More important, numerous Serbian Orthodox shrines, including the patriarchate of the Serbian Orthodox Church, are located in Kosovo. The key event in the Serbs' national mythology, the defeat of their forces by the Ottoman Turks, took place at Kosovo Polje in 1389. For their part, the Albanians claim the land based on the argument that they are the descendants of the ancient Illyrians, the indigenous people of the region, and have been there since before the first Serb ever set foot in the Balkans. Although the Albanians have not left architectural remains similar to the Serbs' religious shrines, the Albanians point to the fact that Prizren was the seat of their first nationalist organization, the Prizren League, and call the region the cradle of their national awakening. Finally, Albanians claim Kosovo based on the fact that their kinsmen have constituted the vast majority of Kosovo's population since at least the eighteenth century.

When the Great Powers recognized an independent Albania, they also established the International Control Commission, which endeavored to exert and expand its authority and elbow out the Vlorë provisional government and the rival government of Esad Pasha Toptani, who enjoyed the support of large landowners in central Albania and boasted a formidable militia. The control commission drafted a constitution that provided for a National Assembly of elected local representatives, the heads of the Albanians' major religious groups, ten persons nominated by the prince, and other noteworthy persons. The Great Powers chose Prince Wilhelm of Wied, a thirty-five-year-old German army captain, to head the new

state. In March 1914, he moved into a Durrës building hastily converted into a palace.

After independence local power struggles, foreign provocations, miserable economic conditions, and modest attempts at social and religious reform fueled Albanian uprisings aimed at the prince and the control commission. Ottoman propaganda, which appealed to uneducated peasants loyal to Islam and Islamic spiritual leaders, attacked the Albanian regime as a puppet of the large landowners and Europe's Christian powers. Greece, unhappy that the Great Powers did not award it southern Albania, also encouraged uprisings against the Albanian government, and armed Greek bands carried out atrocities against Albanian villagers. Italy plotted with Esad Pasha to overthrow the new prince. Montenegro and Serbia plotted with the northern tribesmen. For their part, the Great Powers gave Prince Wilhelm, who was unversed in Albanian affairs, intrigue, or diplomacy, little moral or material backing. A general insurrection in the summer of 1914 stripped the prince of control except in Durrës and Vlorë.

World War I and Its Effects on Albania

Political chaos engulfed Albania after the outbreak of World War I. Surrounded by insurgents in Durrës, Prince Wilhelm departed the country in September 1914, just six months after arriving, and subsequently joined the German army and served on the Eastern Front. The Albanian people split along religious and tribal lines after the prince's departure. Muslims demanded a Muslim prince and looked to Turkey as the protector of the privileges they had enjoyed. Other Albanians became little more than agents of Italy and Serbia. Still others, including many beys and clan chiefs, recognized no superior authority. In late 1914, Greece occupied southern Albania, including Korçë and Gjirokastër. Italy occupied Vlorë, and Serbia and Montenegro occupied parts of northern Albania until a Central Powers offensive scattered the Serbian army, which was evacuated by the French to Thessaloniki. Austro-Hungarian and Bulgarian forces then occupied about two-thirds of the country.

Under the secret Treaty of London signed in April 1915, the Triple Entente powers promised Italy that it would gain Vlorë and nearby lands and a protectorate over Albania in exchange for entering the war against Austria-Hungary. Serbia and Montenegro were promised much of northern Albania, and Greece was promised much of the country's southern half. The treaty left a tiny Albanian state that would be represented by Italy in its relations with the other major powers. In September 1918, Entente forces broke through the Central Powers' lines north of Thessaloniki, and within

days Austro-Hungarian forces began to withdraw from Albania. When the war ended on November 11, 1918, Italy's army had occupied most of Albania; Serbia held much of the country's northern mountains; Greece occupied a sliver of land within Albania's 1913 borders; and French forces occupied Korçë and Shkodër as well as other regions with sizable Albanian populations, such as Kosovo, which were later handed over to Serbia.

Interwar Albania, 1918–41

Albania achieved real statehood after World War I, in part because of the diplomatic intercession of the United States. The country suffered from a debilitating lack of economic and social development, however, and its first years of independence were fraught with political instability. Unable to survive in a predatory world without a foreign protector, Albania became the object of tensions between Italy and the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Yugoslavia), which were both bent on controlling the country. With the kingdom's military assistance, Ahmed Bey Zogu, the son of a clan chieftain, emerged victorious from an internal political power struggle in late 1924. Zogu, however, quickly turned his back on Belgrade and looked to Mussolini's Italy for patronage. In 1928 Zogu coaxed the country's parliament to declare Albania a kingdom and name him king. King Zog remained a hidebound conservative, and Albania was the only Balkan state where the government did not see fit to introduce a comprehensive land reform between the two world wars. Mussolini's forces finally overthrew Zog when they occupied Albania in 1939.

Albania's Reemergence after World War I

Albania's political confusion continued in the wake of World War I. The country lacked a single recognized government, and Albanians feared, with justification, that Greece, Yugoslavia, and Italy would succeed in extinguishing Albania's independence and carve up the country. Italian forces controlled Albanian political activity in the areas they occupied. The Serbs, who largely dictated Yugoslavia's foreign policy after World War I, strove to take over northern Albania, and the Greeks sought to control southern Albania. A delegation sent by a postwar Albanian National Assembly that met at Durrës in December 1918 defended Albanian interests at the Paris Peace Conference, but the conference denied Albania official representation. The National Assembly, anxious to keep Albania intact, expressed willingness to accept Italian protection and even an Italian prince as a ruler so long as it would mean Albania did not lose territory.

In January 1919, the Serbs attacked the Albanian inhabitants of Gusinje and Plav with regular troops and artillery after the Albanians had appealed to Britain for protection. The Serb forces massacred some of the Albanians and forced about 35,000 people to flee to the Shkodër area. In Kosovo the Serbs subjected the Albanians to brutalities, stripped them of territory under the guise of land reform, and rewarded Serb colonists with homesteads. In response, Albanians continued guerrilla warfare in both Serbia and Montenegro.

At the Paris Peace Conference in January 1920, negotiators from France, Britain, and Greece agreed to divide Albania among Yugoslavia, Italy, and Greece as a diplomatic expedient aimed at finding a compromise solution to the territorial conflict between Italy and Yugoslavia. The deal was done behind the Albanians' backs and in the absence of a United States negotiator.

Members of a second Albanian National Assembly held at Lushnjë in January 1920 rejected the partition plan and warned that Albanians would take up arms to defend their country's independence and territorial integrity. The Lushnjë National Assembly appointed a four-man regency to rule the country. A bicameral parliament was also created, appointing members of its own ranks to an upper chamber, the Senate. An elected lower chamber, the Chamber of Deputies, had one deputy for every 12,000 people in Albania and one for the Albanian community in the United States. In February 1920, the government moved to Tiranë, which became Albania's capital.

One month later, in March 1920, President Woodrow Wilson intervened to block the Paris agreement. The United States underscored its support for Albania's independence by recognizing an official Albanian representative to Washington, and in December the League of Nations recognized Albania's sovereignty by admitting it as a full member. The country's borders, however, remained unsettled.

Albania's new government campaigned to end Italy's occupation of the country and encouraged peasants to harass Italian forces. In September 1920, after a siege of Italian-occupied Vlorë by Albanian forces, Rome abandoned its claims on Albania under the 1915 Treaty of London and withdrew its forces from all of Albania except Sazan Island at the mouth of Vlorë Bay. Yugoslavia, however, pursued a predatory policy toward Albania, and after Albanian tribesmen clashed with Serb forces occupying the northern part of the country, Yugoslav troops took to burning villages and killing and expelling civilians. Belgrade then recruited a disgruntled Geg clan chief, Gjon Markagjoni, who led his Roman

Catholic Mirditë tribesmen in a rebellion against the regency and parliament. Markagjoni proclaimed the founding of an independent "Mirditë Republic" based in Prizren, which had fallen into Serbian hands during the First Balkan War. Finally, in November 1921, Yugoslav troops invaded Albanian territory beyond the areas they were already occupying. Outraged at the Yugoslav attack and Belgrade's lies, the League of Nations dispatched a commission composed of representatives of Britain, France, Italy, and Japan that reaffirmed Albania's 1913 borders. Yugoslavia complained bitterly but had no choice but to withdraw its troops. The so-called Mirditë Republic disappeared.

Social and Economic Conditions after World War I

Extraordinarily undeveloped, the Albania that emerged after World War I was home to something less than a million people divided into three major religious groups and two distinct classes: those people who owned land and claimed semifeudal privileges and those who did not. The landowners had always held the principal ruling posts in the country's central and southern regions, but many of them were steeped in the same Oriental conservatism that had brought decay to the Ottoman Empire. The landowning elite expected that they would continue to enjoy precedence. The country's peasants, however, were beginning to dispute the landed aristocracy's control. Muslims made up the majority of the landowning class as well as most of the pool of Ottoman-trained administrators and officials. Thus Muslims filled most of the country's administrative posts.

In northern Albania, the government directly controlled only Shkodër and its environs. The highland clans were suspicious of a constitutional government legislating in the interests of the country as a whole, and the Roman Catholic Church became the principal link between Tiranë and the tribesmen. In many instances, administrative communications were addressed to priests for circulation among their parishioners.

Poor and remote, Albania remained decades behind other Balkan countries in educational and social development. Illiteracy plagued almost the entire population. About 90 percent of the country's peasants practiced subsistence agriculture, using ancient methods and tools, such as wooden plows. Much of the country's richest farmland lay under water in malaria-infested coastal marshlands. Albania lacked a banking system, a railroad, a modern port, an efficient military, a university, and a modern press. The Albanians had Europe's highest birthrate and infant mortality rate, and life expectancy for men was about thirty-eight years. In the post

World War I period, the American Red Cross opened schools and hospitals at Durrës and Tiranë, and one Red Cross worker founded an Albanian chapter of the Boy Scouts that all boys between twelve and eighteen years old were subsequently required by law to join. Although hundreds of schools opened across the country, in 1938 only 36 percent of Albanian children of school age were receiving education of any kind.

Despite the meager educational opportunities, literature flourished in Albania between the two world wars. A Franciscan priest, Gjergj Fishta, Albania's greatest poet, dominated the literary scene with his poems on the Albanians' perseverance during their quest for freedom.

Independence also brought changes to religious life in Albania. The ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople recognized the autocephaly of the Albanian Orthodox Church after a meeting of the country's Albanian Orthodox congregations in Berat in August 1922. The most energetic reformers in Albania came from the Orthodox, who wanted to see Albania move quickly away from its Muslim, Turkish past, during which Christians made up the underclass. Albania's conservative Sunni Muslim community broke its last ties with Constantinople in 1923, formally declaring that there had been no caliph (see Glossary) since the Prophet Muhammad himself and that Muslim Albanians pledged primary allegiance to their native country. The Muslims also banned polygyny and allowed women to choose whether or not to wear a veil.

Government and Politics

Albania's first political parties emerged only after World War I. Even more than in other parts of the Balkans, political parties were impermanent gatherings centered on prominent persons who created temporary alliances to achieve their personal aims. The major conservative party, the Progressive Party, attracted some northern clan chiefs and prominent Muslim landholders of southern Albania whose main platform was firm opposition to any agricultural reform program that would transfer their lands to the peasantry. The country's biggest landowner, Shefqet Bey Verlaci, led the Progressive Party. The Popular Party's ranks included the reform-minded Orthodox bishop of Durrës, Fan S. Noli, who was imbued with Western ideas at his alma mater, Harvard University, and had even translated Shakespeare and Ibsen into Albanian. The Popular Party also included Ahmed Zogu, the twenty-four-year-old son of the chief of the Mati, a central Albanian Muslim tribe. The future King Zog drew his support from some northern clans

and kept an armed gang in his service, but many Geg clan leaders refused to support either main party.

Interwar Albanian governments appeared and disappeared in rapid succession. Between July and December 1921 alone, the premiership changed hands five times. The Popular Party's head, Xhafer Ypi, formed a government in December 1921, with Noli as foreign minister and Zogu as internal affairs minister. Noli, however, resigned soon after Zogu, in an attempt to disarm the lowland Albanians, resorted to repression, despite the fact that bearing arms was a traditional custom. When the government's enemies attacked Tiranë in early 1922, Zogu stayed in the capital and, with the help of the British ambassador, repulsed the assault. He took over the premiership later in the year and turned his back on the Popular Party by announcing his engagement to the daughter of the Progressive Party leader, Shefqet Beg Verlaci.

Zogu's protégés organized themselves into the Government Party. Noli and other Western-oriented leaders formed the Opposition Party of Democrats, which attracted Zogu's many personal enemies, ideological opponents, and people left unrewarded by his political machine. Ideologically, the Democrats included a broad sweep of people who advocated everything from conservative Islam to Noli's dreams of rapid modernization. Opposition to Zogu was formidable. Orthodox peasants in Albania's southern lowlands loathed Zogu because he supported the Muslim landowners' efforts to block land reform; Shkodër's citizens felt shortchanged because their city did not become Albania's capital; and nationalists were dissatisfied because Zogu's government did not press Albania's claims to Kosovo or speak up more energetically for the rights of the ethnic Albanian minorities in present-day Yugoslavia and Greece.

Zogu's party handily won elections for a National Assembly in early 1924. Zogu soon stepped aside, however, handing over the premiership to Verlaci in the wake of a financial scandal and an assassination attempt by a young radical that left Zogu wounded. The opposition withdrew from the assembly after the leader of a radical youth organization, Avni Rustemi, was murdered in the street outside the parliament building. Noli's supporters blamed the murder on Zogu's Mati clansmen, who continued to practice blood vengeance. After the walkout, discontent mounted, and by July 1924 a peasant-backed insurgency had won control of Tiranë. Noli became prime minister, and Zogu fled to Yugoslavia.

Fan Noli, an idealist, rejected demands for new elections on the grounds that Albania needed a "paternal" government. In a manifesto describing his government's program, Noli called for

abolishing feudalism, resisting Italian domination, and establishing a Western-style constitutional government. Scaling back the bureaucracy, strengthening local government, assisting peasants, throwing Albania open to foreign investment, and improving the country's bleak transportation, public health, and education facilities filled out the Noli government's overly ambitious agenda. Noli, however, encountered resistance to his program from people who had helped him oust Zogu, and he never attracted the foreign aid necessary to carry out his reform plans. Concerned over potential Italian domination, Noli criticized the League of Nations for failing to settle the threat facing Albania on its land borders.

Under Fan Noli, the government set up a special tribunal that passed death sentences, *in absentia*, on Zogu, Verlaci, and others and confiscated their property. In Yugoslavia Zogu recruited a mercenary army, and Belgrade furnished the Albanian leader with weapons, about 1,000 Yugoslav army regulars, and refugee troops from the Russian Civil War to mount an invasion that the Serbs hoped would bring them disputed areas along the border. After Noli's regime decided to establish diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, a bitter enemy of the Serbian ruling family, Belgrade began making wild allegations that the Albanian regime was about to embrace Bolshevism. On December 13, 1924, Zogu's Yugoslav-backed army crossed into Albanian territory. By Christmas Eve, Zogu had reclaimed the capital, and Noli and his government had fled to Italy.

Zogu quickly smothered Albania's experiment in parliamentary democracy. Looking after the interests of the large landowners, clan chiefs, and others with a vested interest in maintaining the old order, he undertook no serious reform measures. The parliament quickly adopted a new constitution, proclaimed Albania a republic, and granted Zogu dictatorial powers that allowed him to appoint and dismiss ministers, veto legislation, and name all major administrative personnel and a third of the Senate. On January 31, Zogu was elected president for a seven-year term. Opposition parties and civil liberties disappeared, opponents of the regime were murdered, and the press suffered strict censorship. Zogu ruled Albania using four military governors responsible to him alone. He appointed clan chieftains as reserve army officers, who were kept on call to protect the regime against domestic or foreign threats.

Italian Penetration

Belgrade, in return for aiding Zogu's invasion, expected repayment in the form of territory and influence in Tiranë. It is certain that Zogu promised Belgrade frontier concessions before the

invasion, but once in power the Albanian leader continued to press Albania's own territorial claims. On July 30, 1925, the two nations signed an agreement returning the town of Saint Naum on Lake Ohrid and other disputed borderlands to Yugoslavia. The larger country, however, never reaped the dividends it hoped for when it invested in Zogu. He shunned Belgrade and turned Albania toward Italy for protection.

Advocates of territorial expansion in Italy gathered strength in October 1922 when Benito Mussolini took power in Rome. His fascist supporters undertook an unabashed program aimed at establishing a new Roman empire in the Mediterranean region that would rival Britain and France. Mussolini saw Albania as a foothold in the Balkans, and after the war the Great Powers in effect recognized an Italian protectorate over Albania.

In May 1925, Italy began a penetration into Albania's national life that would culminate fourteen years later in its occupation and annexation of Albania. The first major step was an agreement between Rome and Tiranë that allowed Italy to exploit Albania's mineral resources. Soon Albania's parliament agreed to allow the Italians to found the Albanian National Bank, which acted as the Albanian treasury even though its main office was in Rome and Italian banks effectively controlled it. The Albanians also awarded Italian shipping companies a monopoly on freight and passenger transport to and from Albania.

In late 1925, the Italian-backed Society for the Economic Development of Albania began to lend the Albanian government funds at high interest rates for transportation, agriculture, and public-works projects, including Zogu's palace. In the end, the loans turned out to be subsidies.

In mid-1926 Italy set to work to extend its political influence in Albania, asking Tiranë to recognize Rome's special interest in Albania and accept Italian instructors in the army and police. Zogu resisted until an uprising in the northern mountains pressured the Albanian leader to conclude the First Treaty of Tiranë with the Italians in November 1926. In the treaty, both states agreed not to conclude any agreements with any other states prejudicial to their mutual interests. The agreement, in effect, guaranteed Zogu's political position in Albania as well as the country's boundaries. In November 1927, Albania and Italy entered into a defensive alliance, the Second Treaty of Tiranë, which brought an Italian general and about forty officers to train the Albanian army. Italian military experts soon began instructing paramilitary youth groups. Tiranë also allowed the Italian navy access to the port of Vlorë, and the Albanians received large deliveries of armaments from Italy.

Zog's Kingdom

In 1928 Zogu secured the parliament's consent to its own dissolution. A new constituent assembly amended the constitution, making Albania a kingdom and transforming Zogu into Zog I, "King of the Albanians." International recognition arrived forthwith, but many Albanians regarded their country's nascent dynasty as a tragic farce. The new constitution abolished the Senate, creating a unicameral National Assembly, but King Zog retained the dictatorial powers he had enjoyed as President Zogu. Soon after his coronation, Zog broke off his engagement to Shefqet Bey Verlaci's daughter, and Verlaci withdrew his support for the king and began plotting against him. Zog had accumulated a great number of enemies over the years, and the Albanian tradition of blood vengeance required them to try to kill him. Zog surrounded himself with guards and rarely appeared in public. The king's loyalists disarmed all of Albania's tribes except for his own Mati tribesmen and their allies, the Dibra. Nevertheless, on a visit to Vienna in 1931, Zog and his bodyguards fought a gun battle with would-be assassins on the Opera House steps.

Zog remained sensitive to steadily mounting disillusion with Italy's domination of Albania. The Albanian army, though always less than 15,000-strong, sapped the country's funds, and the Italians' monopoly on training the armed forces rankled public opinion. As a counterweight, Zog kept British officers in the Gendarmerie despite strong Italian pressure to remove them. In 1931 Zog openly stood up to the Italians, refusing to renew the 1926 First Treaty of Tiranë. In 1932 and 1933, Albania could not make the interest payments on its loans from the Society for the Economic Development of Albania. In response, Rome turned up the pressure, demanding that Tiranë name Italians to direct the Gendarmerie; join Italy in a customs union; grant Italy control of the country's sugar, telegraph, and electrical monopolies; teach the Italian language in all Albanian schools; and admit Italian colonists. Zog refused. Instead, he ordered the national budget slashed by 30 percent, dismissed the Italian military advisers, and nationalized Italian-run Roman Catholic schools in the northern part of the country.

By June 1934, Albania had signed trade agreements with Yugoslavia and Greece, and Mussolini had suspended all payments to Tiranë. An Italian attempt to intimidate the Albanians by sending a fleet of warships to Albania failed because the Albanians only allowed the forces to land unarmed. Mussolini then attempted to buy off the Albanians. In 1935 he presented the Albanian government 3 million gold francs as a gift.

Zog's success in defeating two local rebellions convinced Mussolini that the Italians had to reach a new agreement with the Albanian king. A government of young men led by Mehdi Frasheri, an enlightened Bektashi administrator, won a commitment from Italy to fulfill financial promises that Mussolini had made to Albania and to grant new loans for harbor improvements at Durrës and other projects that would keep the Albanian government afloat. Soon Italians began taking positions in Albania's civil service, and Italian settlers were allowed into the country.

Through all the turmoil of the interwar years, Albania remained Europe's most economically backward nation. Peasant farmers accounted for the vast majority of the Albanian population. Albania had practically had no industry, and the country's potential for hydroelectric power was virtually untapped. Oil represented the country's main extractable resource. A pipeline between the Kuçovë oil field and the port at Vlorë expedited shipments of crude petroleum to Italy's refineries after the Italians took over the oil-drilling concessions of all other foreign companies in 1939. Albania also possessed bitumen, lignite, iron, chromite, copper, bauxite, manganese, and some gold. Shkodër had a cement factory; Korçë, a brewery; and Durrës and Shkodër, cigarette factories that used locally grown tobacco.

During much of the interwar period, Italians held most of the technical jobs in the Albanian economy. Albania's main exports were petroleum, animal skins, cheese, livestock, and eggs, and prime imports were grain and other foodstuffs, metal products, and machinery. In 1939 the value of Albania's imports outstripped that of its exports by about four times. About 70 percent of Albania's exports went to Italy. Italian factories furnished about 40 percent of Albania's imports, and the Italian government paid for the rest.

Italian Occupation

As Germany annexed Austria and moved against Czechoslovakia, Italy saw itself becoming a second-rate member of the Axis. After Hitler invaded Czechoslovakia without notifying Mussolini in advance, the Italian dictator decided in early 1939 to proceed with his own annexation of Albania. Italy's King Victor Emmanuel III criticized the plan to take Albania as an unnecessary risk.

Rome, however, delivered Tiranë an ultimatum on March 25, 1939, demanding that it accede to Italy's occupation of Albania. Zog refused to accept money in exchange for countenancing a full Italian takeover and colonization of Albania, and on April 7, 1939, Mussolini's troops invaded Albania. Despite some stubborn resistance, especially at Durrës, the Italians made short work of

the Albanians. Unwilling to become an Italian puppet, King Zog, his wife Queen Geraldine Apponyi, and their infant son Skander fled to Greece and eventually to London. On April 12, the Albanian parliament voted to unite the country with Italy. Victor Emmanuel III took the Albanian crown, and the Italians set up a fascist government under Shefqet Verlaci and soon absorbed Albania's military and diplomatic service into Italy's.

After the German army had defeated Poland, Denmark, and France, a still-jealous Mussolini decided to use Albania as a springboard to invade Greece. The Italians launched their attack on October 28, 1940, and at a meeting of the two fascist dictators in Florence, Mussolini stunned Hitler with his announcement of the Italian invasion. Mussolini counted on a quick victory, but Greek resistance fighters halted the Italian army in its tracks and soon advanced into Albania. The Greeks took Korçë and Gjirokastër and threatened to drive the Italians from the port city of Vlorë. The chauvinism of the Greek troops fighting in Albania cooled the Albanians' enthusiasm for fighting the Italians, and Mussolini's forces soon established a stable front in central Albania. In April 1941, Germany and its allies crushed both Greece and Yugoslavia, and a month later the Axis gave Albania control of Kosovo. Thus Albanian nationalists ironically witnessed the realization of their dreams of uniting most of the Albanian-populated lands during the Axis occupation of their country.

World War II and the Rise of Communism, 1941–44

Between 1941 and 1944, communist partisans and nationalist guerrillas fought Italian and German occupation forces, and more often each other, in a brutal struggle to take control of Albania. Backed by Yugoslavia's communists and armed with British and United States weaponry, Albania's partisans defeated the nationalists in a civil war fought between Italy's capitulation in September 1943 and the withdrawal of German forces from Albania in late 1944. Military victory, and not the lure of Marxism, brought the Albanian communists from behind the scenes to center stage in Albania's political drama. Although Albanian writers never tired of pointing out that the communists had "liberated" Albania without a single Soviet soldier setting foot on its territory, they often neglected to mention that the communist forces in Albania were organized by the Yugoslavs and armed by the West or that the Axis retreat from Albania was in response to military defeats outside the country.

The Communist and Nationalist Resistance

Faced with an illiterate, agrarian, and mostly Muslim society monitored by Zog's security police, Albania's communist movement attracted few adherents in the interwar period. In fact, the country had no full-fledged communist party before World War II. After Fan Noli fled in 1924 to Italy and later the United States, several of his leftist protégés migrated to Moscow, where they affiliated themselves with the Balkan Confederation of Communist Parties and through it the Communist International (Comintern), the Soviet-sponsored association of international communist parties. In 1930 the Comintern dispatched Ali Kelmendi to Albania to organize communist cells. But Albania had no working class for the communists to exploit, and Marxism appealed to only a minute number of quarrelsome, Western-educated, mostly Tosk, intellectuals and to landless peasants, miners, and other persons discontented with Albania's obsolete social and economic structures. Forced to flee Albania, Kelmendi fought in the Garibaldi International Brigade during the Spanish Civil War and later moved to France, where together with other communists, including a student named Enver Hoxha, he published a newspaper. Paris became the Albanian communists' hub until Nazi deportations depleted their ranks after the fall of France in 1940.

Enver Hoxha and another veteran of the Spanish Civil War, Mehmet Shehu, eventually rose to become the most powerful figures in Albania during the decades after the war. The dominant figure in modern Albanian history, Enver Hoxha rose from obscurity to lead his people for a longer time than any other ruler. Born in 1908 to a Muslim Tosk landowner from Gjirokastër who returned to Albania after working in the United States, Hoxha attended the country's best college-preparatory school, the National Lycée in Korçë. In 1930 he attended the university in Montpellier, France, but lost an Albanian state scholarship for neglecting his studies. Hoxha subsequently moved to Paris and Brussels. After returning to Albania in 1936 without earning a degree, he taught French for years at his former lycée and participated in a communist cell in Korçë. When the war erupted, Hoxha joined the Albanian partisans. Shehu, also a Muslim Tosk, studied at Tiranë's American Vocational School. He went on to a military college in Naples but was expelled for left-wing political activity. In Spain Shehu fought in the Garibaldi International Brigade. After internment in France, he returned to Albania in 1942 and fought with the partisans, gaining a reputation for brutality.

In October 1941, the leader of Communist Party of the Yugoslavia,

Josip Broz Tito, dispatched agents to Albania to forge the country's disparate, impotent communist factions into a monolithic party organization. Within a month, they had established a Yugoslav-dominated Albanian Communist Party of 130 members under the leadership of Hoxha and an eleven-member Central Committee. The party at first had little mass appeal, and even its youth organization netted few recruits. In mid-1942, however, party leaders increased their popularity by heeding Tito's order to muffle their Marxist-Leninist propaganda and call instead for national liberation. In September 1942, the party organized a popular front organization, the National Liberation Movement (NLM), from a number of resistance groups, including several that were strongly anticommunist. During the war, the NLM's communist-dominated partisans, in the form of the National Liberation Army, did not heed warnings from the Italian occupiers that there would be reprisals for guerrilla attacks. Partisan leaders, on the contrary, counted on using the lust for revenge such reprisals would elicit to win recruits.

A nationalist resistance to the Italian occupiers emerged in October 1942. Ali Klissura and Midhat Frasherri formed the Western-oriented and anticommunist Balli Kombetar (National Union), a movement that recruited supporters from both the large landowners and peasantry. The Balli Kombetar opposed King Zog's return and called for the creation of a republic and the introduction of some economic and social reforms. The Balli Kombetar's leaders acted conservatively, however, fearing that the occupiers would carry out reprisals against innocent peasants or confiscate the landowners' estates. The nationalistic Geg chieftains and the Tosk landowners often came to terms with the Italians, and later the Germans, to prevent the loss of their wealth and power.

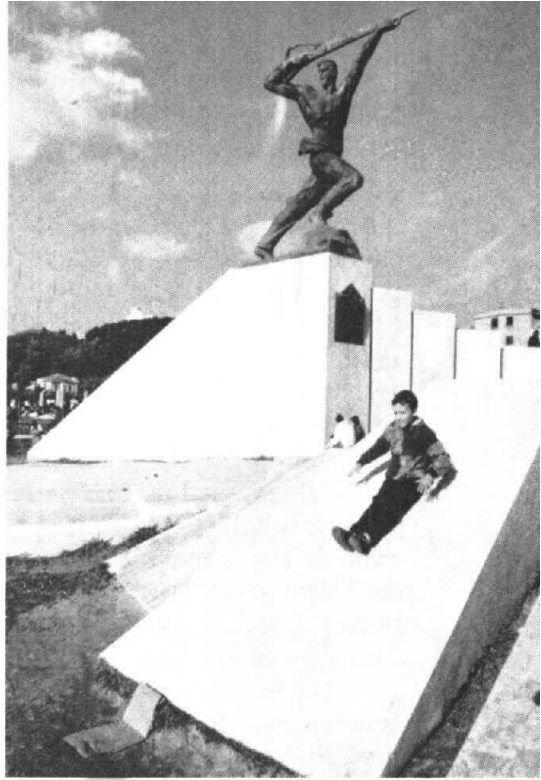
With the overthrow of Mussolini's fascist regime and Italy's surrender in 1943, the Italian military and police establishment in Albania buckled. Albanian fighters overwhelmed five Italian divisions, and enthusiastic recruits flocked to the guerrilla forces. The communists took control of most of Albania's southern cities, except Vlorë, which was a Balli Kombetar stronghold, and nationalists attached to the NLM gained control over much of the north. British agents working in Albania during the war fed the Albanian resistance fighters with information that the Allies were planning a major invasion of the Balkans and urged the disparate Albanian groups to unite their efforts. In August 1943, the Allies convinced communist and Balli Kombetar leaders to meet in the village of Mukaj, near Tiranë, and form a Committee for the Salvation of Albania that would coordinate their guerrilla operations. The two

groups eventually ended all collaboration, however, over a disagreement on the postwar status of Kosovo. The communists, under Yugoslav tutelage, supported returning the region to Yugoslavia after the war, while the nationalist Balli Kombetar advocated keeping the province. The delegates at Mukaj agreed that a plebiscite should be held in Kosovo to decide the matter; but under Yugoslav pressure, the communists soon reneged on the accord. A month later, the communists attacked Balli Kombetar forces, igniting a civil war that was fought for the next year, mostly in southern Albania.

Germany occupied Albania in September 1943, dropping paratroopers into Tiranë before the Albanian guerrillas could take the capital, and the German army soon drove the guerrillas into the hills and to the south. Berlin subsequently announced it would recognize the independence of a neutral Albania and organized an Albanian government, police, and military. The Germans did not exert heavy-handed control over Albania's administration. Rather, they sought to gain popular support by backing causes popular with Albanians, especially the annexation of Kosovo. Some Balli Kombetar units cooperated with the Germans against the communists, and several Balli Kombetar leaders held positions in the German-sponsored regime. Albanian collaborators, especially the Skanderbeg SS Division, also expelled and killed Serbs living in Kosovo. In December 1943, a third resistance organization, an anticommunist, anti-German royalist group known as Legality, took shape in Albania's northern mountains. Legality, led by Abaz Kupa, largely consisted of Geg guerrillas who withdrew their support for the NLM after the communists renounced Albania's claims on Kosovo.

The Communist Takeover of Albania

The communist partisans regrouped and, thanks to freshly supplied British weapons, gained control of southern Albania in January 1944. In May they called a congress of members of the National Liberation Front (NLF, as the movement was by then called) at Përmet, which chose an Anti-Fascist Council of National Liberation to act as Albania's administration and legislature. Hoxha became the chairman of the council's executive committee and the National Liberation Army's supreme commander. The communist partisans defeated the last Balli Kombetar forces in southern Albania by mid-summer 1944 and encountered only scattered resistance from the Balli Kombetar and Legality when they entered central and northern Albania by the end of July. The British military mission urged the nationalists not to oppose the communists' advance, and the Allies evacuated Kupa to Italy. Before



*War memorial in Durrës
Courtesy Fred Conrad*

the end of November, the Germans had withdrawn from Tiranë, and the communists, supported by Allied air cover, had no problem taking control of the capital. A provisional government the communists had formed at Berat in October administered Albania with Enver Hoxha as prime minister, and in late 1944 Hoxha dispatched Albanian partisans to help Tito's forces rout Albanian nationalists in Kosovo.

Albania stood in an unenviable position after World War II. Greece and Yugoslavia hungered for Albanian lands they had lost or claimed. The NLF's strong links with Yugoslavia's communists, who also enjoyed British military and diplomatic support, guaranteed that Belgrade would play a key role in Albania's postwar order. The Allies never recognized an Albanian government in exile or King Zog, nor did they ever raise the question of Albania or its borders at any of the major wartime conferences. No reliable statistics on Albania's wartime losses exist, but the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration reported about 30,000 Albanian war dead, 200 destroyed villages, 18,000 destroyed houses, and about 100,000 people left homeless. Albanian official statistics claim somewhat higher losses.

Communist Albania

Official Albanian writers and artists presented the history of communist Albania as the saga of a backward, besieged people marching

toward a Stalinist utopia. The actual story of communist Albania is, however, quintessentially dystopian: a bleak inventory of bloody purges and repression, a case study in betrayal and obsessive xenophobia, and a cacophony of bitter polemics.

After five years of party infighting and extermination campaigns against the country's anticommunist opposition, Enver Hoxha and Mehmet Shehu emerged as the dominant figures in Albania. The duumvirate concentrated primarily on securing and maintaining their power base and secondarily on preserving Albania's independence and reshaping the country according to the procrustean precepts of orthodox Stalinism. In pursuit of these goals, the communist elite co-opted or terrorized the entire Albanian population into blind obedience, herding them into obligatory front organizations, bombarding them with propaganda, and disciplining them with a police force that completely disregarded legal, ethical, religious, or political norms. Hoxha and Shehu dominated Albania and denied the Albanian people the most basic human and civil rights by presenting themselves, as well as the communist party and state security apparatus they controlled, as the vigilant defenders of the country's independence. After Albania's break with Yugoslavia in late 1948, Albania was a client of the Soviet Union. Following the Soviet Union's rapprochement with Tito after Stalin's death, Albania turned away from Moscow and found a new benefactor in China. When China's isolation ended in the 1970s, Albania turned away from its giant Asian patron and adopted a strict policy of autarky that brought the country economic ruin. But through it all, Hoxha engineered an elaborate cult of personality (see Glossary) whose spokesmen elevated his persona to the status of a god-man. When he died in 1985, few Albanian eyes were without tears.

Consolidation of Power and Initial Reforms

A tiny collection of militant communists moved quickly after World War II to subdue all potential political enemies in Albania, break the country's landowners and minuscule middle class, and isolate Albania from the noncommunist world. By early 1945, the communists had liquidated, discredited, or driven into exile most of the country's interwar elite. The internal affairs minister, Koçi Xoxe, a pro-Yugoslav erstwhile tinsmith, presided over the trial and the execution of thousands of opposition politicians, clan chiefs, and members of former Albanian governments, who were condemned as "war criminals." Thousands of their family members were imprisoned for years in work camps and jails and later exiled for decades to state farms built on reclaimed marshlands. The

communists' consolidation of control also produced a shift in political power in Albania from the northern GEGs to the southern Tosks. Most communist leaders were middle-class Tosks, and the party drew most of its recruits from Tosk-inhabited areas; the GEGs, with their centuries-old tradition of opposing authority, distrusted the new Albanian rulers and their alien Marxist doctrines.

In December 1945, Albanians elected a new People's Assembly, but only candidates from the Democratic Front (previously the National Liberation Movement, then the National Liberation Front) appeared on the electoral lists, and the communists used propaganda and terror tactics to gag the opposition. Official ballot tallies showed that 92 percent of the electorate voted and that 93 percent of the voters chose the Democratic Front ticket. The assembly convened in January 1946, annulled the monarchy, and transformed Albania into a "people's republic." After months of angry debate, the assembly adopted a constitution that mirrored the Yugoslav and Soviet constitutions. Then in the spring, the assembly members chose a new government. Hoxha, the Albanian Communist Party's first secretary, became prime minister, foreign minister, defense minister, and the army's commander in chief. Xoxe remained both internal affairs minister and the party's organizational secretary. In late 1945 and early 1946, Xoxe and other party hard-liners purged moderates who had pressed for close contacts with the West, a modicum of political pluralism, and a delay in the introduction of strict communist economic measures until Albania's economy had more time to develop. Hoxha remained in control despite the fact that he had once advocated restoring relations with Italy and even allowing Albanians to study in Italy.

The communists also undertook economic measures to expand their power. In December 1944, the provisional government adopted laws allowing the state to regulate foreign and domestic trade, commercial enterprises, and the few industries the country possessed. The laws sanctioned confiscation of property belonging to political exiles and "enemies of the people." The state also expropriated all German- and Italian-owned property, nationalized transportation enterprises, and canceled all concessions granted by previous Albanian governments to foreign companies.

The government took major steps to introduce a Stalinist-style centrally planned economy in 1946. It nationalized all industries, transformed foreign trade into a government monopoly, brought almost all domestic trade under state control, and banned land sales and transfers. Planners at the newly founded Economic Planning Commission emphasized industrial development, and in 1947 the government introduced the Soviet cost-accounting system.

In August 1945, the provisional government adopted the first sweeping agricultural reforms in Albania's history. The country's 100 largest landowners, who controlled close to a third of Albania's arable land, had frustrated all agricultural reform proposals before the war. The communists' reforms were aimed at squeezing large landowners out of business, winning peasant support, and increasing farm output to avert famine. The government annulled outstanding agricultural debts, granted peasants access to inexpensive water for irrigation, and nationalized forest and pastureland. Under the Agrarian Reform Law, which redistributed about half of Albania's arable land, the government confiscated property belonging to absentee landlords and people not dependent on agriculture for a living. The few peasants with agricultural machinery were permitted to keep up to forty hectares of land; the landholdings of religious institutions and peasants without agricultural machinery were limited to twenty hectares; and landless peasants and peasants with tiny landholdings were given up to five hectares, although they had to pay nominal compensation. Thus tiny farmsteads replaced large private estates across Albania. By mid-1946 Albanian peasants were cultivating more land and producing higher corn and wheat yields than ever before.

Albanian-Yugoslav Tensions

Until Yugoslavia's expulsion from the Cominform (see Glossary) in 1948, Albania acted like a Yugoslav satellite, and Tito aimed to use his choke hold on the Albanian party to incorporate the entire country into Yugoslavia. After Germany's withdrawal from Kosovo in late 1944, Yugoslavia's communist partisans took possession of the province and committed retaliatory massacres against Albanians. Before World War II, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia had supported transferring Kosovo to Albania, but Yugoslavia's postwar communist regime insisted on preserving the country's prewar borders. In repudiating the 1943 Mukaj agreement under pressure from the Yugoslavs, Albania's communists had consented to restore Kosovo to Yugoslavia after the war. In January 1945, the two governments signed a treaty reincorporating Kosovo into Yugoslavia as an autonomous province. Shortly thereafter, Yugoslavia became the first country to recognize Albania's provisional government.

In July 1946, Yugoslavia and Albania signed a treaty of friendship and cooperation that was quickly followed by a series of technical and economic agreements laying the groundwork for integrating the Albanian and Yugoslav economies. The pacts provided for coordinating the economic plans of both states, standardizing their

monetary systems, and creating a common pricing system and a customs union. So close was the Yugoslav-Albanian relationship that Serbo-Croatian became a required subject in Albanian high schools. Yugoslavia signed a similar friendship treaty with Bulgaria, and Marshal Tito and Bulgaria's Georgi Dimitrov talked of plans to establish a Balkan federation to include Albania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. Yugoslav advisers poured into Albania's government offices and its army headquarters. Tiranë was desperate for outside aid, and about 20,000 tons of Yugoslav grain helped stave off famine. Albania also received US\$26.3 million from the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration immediately after the war but had to rely on Yugoslavia for investment and development aid.

The Yugoslav government clearly regarded investment in Albania as investment in the future of Yugoslavia itself. Joint Albanian-Yugoslav companies were created for mining, railroad construction, the production of petroleum and electricity, and international trade. Yugoslav investments led to the construction of a sugar refinery in Korçë, a food-processing plant in Elbasan, a hemp factory at Rrogozhinë, a fish cannery in Vlorë, and a printing press, telephone exchange, and textile mill in Tiranë. The Yugoslavs also bolstered the Albanian economy by paying three times the world price for Albanian copper and other materials.

Relations between Albania and Yugoslavia declined, however, when the Albanians began complaining that the Yugoslavs were paying too little for Albanian raw materials and exploiting Albania through the joint stock companies. In addition, the Albanians sought investment funds to develop light industries and an oil refinery, while the Yugoslavs wanted the Albanians to concentrate on agriculture and raw-material extraction. The head of Albania's Economic Planning Commission and one of Hoxha's allies, Nako Spiru, became the leading critic of Yugoslavia's efforts to exert economic control over Albania. Tito distrusted Hoxha and the other intellectuals in the Albanian party and, through Xoxe and his loyalists, attempted to unseat them.

In 1947 Yugoslavia's leaders engineered an all-out offensive against anti-Yugoslav Albanian communists, including Hoxha and Spiru. In May Tiranë announced the arrest, trial, and conviction of nine People's Assembly members, all known for opposing Yugoslavia, on charges of antistate activities. A month later, the Communist Party of Yugoslavia's Central Committee accused Hoxha of following "independent" policies and turning the Albanian people against Yugoslavia. Apparently attempting to buy support inside the Albanian Communist Party, Belgrade extended Tiranë

US\$40 million worth of credits, an amount equal to 58 percent of Albania's 1947 state budget. A year later, Yugoslavia's credits accounted for nearly half of the state budget. Relations worsened in the fall, however, when Spiru's commission developed an economic plan that stressed self-sufficiency, light industry, and agriculture. The Yugoslavs complained bitterly, and when Spiru came under criticism and failed to win support from anyone in the Albanian party leadership, he committed suicide.

The insignificance of Albania's standing in the communist world was clearly highlighted when the emerging East European nations did not invite the Albanian party to the September 1947 founding meeting of the Cominform. Rather, Yugoslavia represented Albania at Cominform meetings. Although the Soviet Union gave Albania a pledge to build textile and sugar mills and other factories and to provide Albania agricultural and industrial machinery, Stalin told Milovan Djilas, at the time a high-ranking member of Yugoslavia's communist hierarchy, that Yugoslavia should "swallow" Albania.

The pro-Yugoslav faction wielded decisive political power in Albania well into 1948. At a party plenum in February and March, the communist leadership voted to merge the Albanian and Yugoslav economies and militaries. Hoxha, to the core an opportunist, even denounced Spiru for attempting to ruin Albanian-Yugoslav relations. During a party Political Bureau (Politburo) meeting a month later, Xoxe proposed appealing to Belgrade to admit Albania as a seventh Yugoslav republic. When the Cominform expelled Yugoslavia on June 28, however, Albania made a rapid about-face in its policy toward Yugoslavia. The move surely saved Hoxha from a firing squad and as surely doomed Xoxe to one. Three days later, Tiranë gave the Yugoslav advisers in Albania forty-eight hours to leave the country, rescinded all bilateral economic agreements with its neighbor, and launched a virulent anti-Yugoslav propaganda blitz that transformed Stalin into an Albanian national hero, Hoxha into a warrior against foreign aggression, and Tito into an imperialist monster.

Albania entered an orbit around the Soviet Union, and in September 1948 Moscow stepped in to compensate for Albania's loss of Yugoslav aid. The shift proved to be a boon for Albania because Moscow had far more to offer than hard-strapped Belgrade. The fact that the Soviet Union had no common border with Albania also appealed to the Albanian regime because it made it more difficult for Moscow to exert pressure on Tiranë. In November at the First Party Congress of the Albanian Party of Labor (APL), the former Albanian Communist Party renamed at Stalin's suggestion,

Hoxha pinned the blame for the country's woes on Yugoslavia and Xoxe. Hoxha had had Xoxe sacked as internal affairs minister in October, replacing him with Shehu. After a secret trial in May 1949, Xoxe was executed. The subsequent anti-Titoist purges in Albania brought the liquidation of fourteen members of the party's thirty-one-person Central Committee and thirty-two of the 109 People's Assembly deputies. Overall, the party expelled about 25 percent of its membership. Yugoslavia responded with a propaganda counterattack, canceled its treaty of friendship with Albania, and in 1950 withdrew its diplomatic mission from Tiranë.

Deteriorating Relations with the West

Albania's relations with the West soured after the communist regime's refusal to allow free elections in December 1945. Albania restricted the movements of United States and British personnel in the country, charging that they had instigated anticommunist uprisings in the northern mountains. Britain announced in April that it would not send a diplomatic mission to Tiranë, the United States withdrew its mission in November, and both the United States and Britain opposed admitting Albania to the United Nations (UN). The Albanian regime feared that the United States and Britain, which were supporting anticommunist forces in the civil war in Greece, would back Greek demands for territory in southern Albania; and anxieties grew in July when a United States Senate resolution backed the Greek demands.

A major incident between Albania and Britain erupted in 1946 after Tiranë claimed jurisdiction over the channel between the Albanian mainland and the Greek island of Corfu. Britain challenged Albania by sailing four destroyers into the channel. Two of the ships struck mines on October 22, 1946, and forty-four crew members died. Britain complained to the UN and the International Court of Justice, which, in its first case ever, ruled against Tiranë.

After 1946 the United States and Britain began implementing an elaborate covert plan to overthrow Albania's communist regime by backing anticommunist and royalist forces within the country. By 1949 the United States and British intelligence organizations were working with King Zog and the fanatic mountainmen of his personal guard. They recruited Albanian refugees and émigrés from Egypt, Italy, and Greece; trained them in Cyprus, Malta, and the Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany); and infiltrated them into Albania. Guerrilla units entered Albania in 1950 and 1952, but Albanian security forces killed or captured all of them. Kim Philby, a Soviet double agent working as a liaison officer between the British intelligence service and the United States Central

Intelligence Agency, had leaked details of the infiltration plan to Moscow, and the security breach claimed the lives of about 300 infiltrators.

A wave of subversive activity, including the failed infiltration and the March 1951 bombing of the Soviet embassy in Tiranë, encouraged the Albanian regime to implement harsh internal security measures. In September 1952, the assembly enacted a penal code that required the death penalty for anyone over eleven years old found guilty of conspiring against the state, damaging state property, or committing economic sabotage.

Albania and the Soviet Union

Albania became dependent on Soviet aid and know-how after the break with Yugoslavia in 1948. In February 1949, Albania gained membership in the communist bloc's organization for coordinating economic planning, the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). Tiranë soon entered into trade agreements with Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Romania, and the Soviet Union. Soviet and East European technical advisers took up residence in Albania, and the Soviet Union also sent Albania military advisers and built a submarine installation on Sazan Island. After the Soviet-Yugoslav split, Albania and Bulgaria were the only countries the Soviet Union could use to funnel war matériel to the communists fighting in Greece. What little strategic value Albania offered the Soviet Union, however, gradually shrank as nuclear arms technology developed.

Anxious to pay homage to Stalin, Albania's rulers implemented new elements of the Stalinist economic system. In 1949 Albania adopted the basic elements of the Soviet fiscal system, under which state enterprises paid direct contributions to the treasury from their profits and kept only a share authorized for self-financed investments and other purposes. In 1951 the Albanian government launched its first five-year plan, which emphasized exploiting the country's oil, chromite, copper, nickel, asphalt, and coal resources; expanding electricity production and the power grid; increasing agricultural output; and improving transportation. The government began a program of rapid industrialization after the APL's Second Party Congress and a campaign of forced collectivization of farmland in 1955. At the time, private farms still produced about 87 percent of Albania's agricultural output, but by 1960 the same percentage came from collective or state farms.

Soviet-Albanian relations remained warm during the last years of Stalin's life despite the fact that Albania was an economic liability for the Soviet Union. Albania conducted all its foreign trade

with Soviet bloc countries in 1949, 1950, and 1951 and over half its trade with the Soviet Union itself. Together with its satellites, the Soviet Union underwrote shortfalls in Albania's balance of payments with long-term grants (see *Dependence on the Soviet Union, 1948-60*, ch. 3).

Although far behind Western practice, health care and education improved dramatically for Albania's 1.2 million people in the early 1950s. The number of Albanian doctors increased by a third to about 150 early in the decade (although the doctor-patient ratio remained unacceptable by most standards), and the state opened new medical training facilities. The number of hospital beds rose from 1,765 in 1945 to about 5,500 in 1953. Better health care and living conditions produced an improvement in Albania's dismal infant mortality rate, lowering it from 112.2 deaths per 1,000 live births in 1945 to 99.5 deaths per 1,000 births in 1953 (see *Medical Care and Nutrition*, ch. 2). The education system, considered a tool for propagating communism and creating the academic and technical cadres necessary for construction of a socialist state and society, also improved dramatically. The number of schools, teachers, and students doubled between 1945 and 1950. Illiteracy declined from perhaps 85 percent in 1946 to 31 percent in 1950. The Soviet Union provided scholarships for Albanian students and supplied specialists and study materials to improve instruction in Albania. The Enver Hoxha University at Tiranë was founded in 1957, and the Albanian Academy of Sciences opened fifteen years later. Despite these advances, however, education in Albania suffered as a result of restrictions on freedom of thought. For example, educational institutions had scant influence on their own curricula, methods of teaching, or administration (see *Education under Communist Rule*, ch. 2).

Stalin died in March 1953, and apparently fearing that the Soviet ruler's demise might encourage rivals within the Albanian party's ranks, neither Hoxha nor Shehu risked traveling to Moscow to attend his funeral. The Soviet Union's subsequent movement toward rapprochement with the hated Yugoslavs rankled the two Albanian leaders. Tiranë soon came under pressure from Moscow to copy, at least formally, the new Soviet model for a collective leadership. In July 1953, Hoxha handed over the foreign affairs and defense portfolios to loyal followers, but he kept both the top party post and the premiership until 1954, when Shehu became Albania's prime minister. The Soviet Union, responding with an effort to raise the Albanian leaders' morale, elevated diplomatic relations between the two countries to the ambassadorial level.

Despite some initial expressions of enthusiasm, Hoxha and Shehu mistrusted Nikita Khrushchev's programs of "peaceful coexistence" and "different roads to socialism" because they appeared to pose the threat that Yugoslavia might again try to take control of Albania. Hoxha and Shehu were also alarmed at the prospect that Moscow might prefer less dogmatic rulers in Albania. Tiranë and Belgrade renewed diplomatic relations in December 1953, but Hoxha refused Khrushchev's repeated appeals to rehabilitate posthumously the pro-Yugoslav Xoxe as a gesture to Tito. The Albanian duo instead tightened their grip on their country's domestic life and let the propaganda war with the Yugoslavs grind on. In 1955 Albania became a founding member of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (see Glossary), better known as the Warsaw Pact, the only military alliance the nation ever joined. Although the pact represented the first promise Albania had obtained from any of the communist countries to defend its borders, the treaty did nothing to assuage the Albanian leaders' deep mistrust of Yugoslavia.

Hoxha and Shehu tapped the Albanians' deep-seated fear of Yugoslav domination in order to remain in power during the thaw following the Twentieth Party Congress of the Communist party of the Soviet Union in 1956, when Khrushchev denounced Stalin's crimes in his "secret speech." Hoxha defended Stalin and blamed the Titoist heresy for the troubles vexing world communism, including the disturbances in Poland and the rebellion in Hungary in 1956. Hoxha mercilessly purged party moderates with pro-Soviet and pro-Yugoslav leanings, but he toned down his anti-Yugoslav rhetoric after an April 1957 trip to Moscow, where he won cancellation of about US\$105 million in outstanding loans and about US\$7.8 million in additional food assistance. By 1958, however, Hoxha was again complaining about Tito's "fascism" and "genocide" against Albanians in Kosovo. He also grumbled about a Comecon plan for integrating the East European economies, which called for Albania to produce agricultural goods and minerals instead of emphasizing development of heavy industry. On a twelve-day visit to Albania in 1959, Khrushchev reportedly tried to convince Hoxha and Shehu that their country should aspire to become socialism's "orchard."

Albania and China

Albania played a role in the Sino-Soviet conflict far outweighing both its size and its importance in the communist world. By 1958 Albania stood with China in opposing Moscow on issues of peaceful coexistence, de-Stalinization, and Yugoslavia's "separate road to socialism" through decentralization of economic life. The

Soviet Union, other East European countries, and China all offered Albania large amounts of aid. Soviet leaders also promised to build a large Palace of Culture in Tiranë as a symbol of the Soviet people's "love and friendship" for the Albanians. But despite these gestures, Tiranë was dissatisfied with Moscow's economic policy toward Albania. Hoxha and Shehu apparently decided in May or June 1960 that Albania was assured of Chinese support, and they openly sided with China when sharp polemics erupted between China and the Soviet Union. Ramiz Alia, at the time a candidate-member of the Politburo and Hoxha's adviser on ideological questions, played a prominent role in the rhetorical battle.

The Sino-Soviet split burst into the open in June 1960 at a Romanian Workers' Party congress, at which Khrushchev attempted to secure condemnation of Beijing. Albania's delegation, alone among the European delegations, supported the Chinese. The Soviet Union immediately retaliated by organizing a campaign to oust Hoxha and Shehu in the summer of 1960. Moscow cut grain deliveries to Albania during a drought, and the Soviet embassy in Tiranë overtly encouraged a pro-Soviet faction in the APL to speak out against the party's pro-Chinese stand. Moscow also apparently was involved in a plot within the APL to unseat Hoxha and Shehu by force. But given their tight control of the party machinery, the army, and Shehu's secret police, the Directorate of State Security (*Drejtorija e Sigurimit të Shtetit—Sigurimi*), the two Albanian leaders easily parried the threat. Five pro-Soviet Albanian leaders were eventually tried and executed. China immediately began making up for the cancellation of Soviet wheat shipments despite a paucity of foreign currency and its own economic hardships.

Albania again sided with China when Hoxha launched an attack on the Soviet Union's leadership of the international communist movement at the November 1960 Moscow conference of the world's eighty-one communist parties. Hoxha inveighed against Khrushchev for encouraging Greek claims to southern Albania, sowing discord within the APL and the army, and using economic blackmail. "Soviet rats were able to eat while the Albanian people were dying of hunger," Hoxha railed, referring to purposely delayed Soviet grain deliveries. Communist leaders loyal to Moscow described Hoxha's performance as "gangsterish" and "infantile," and the speech extinguished any chance of an agreement between Moscow and Tiranë. For the next year, Albania played proxy for China. Pro-Soviet communist parties, reluctant to confront China directly, criticized Beijing by castigating Albania. China, for its part, frequently gave prominence to the Albanians' fulminations

against the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, which Tiranë referred to as a “socialist hell.”

Hoxha and Shehu continued their harangue against the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia at the APL's Fourth Party Congress in February 1961. During the congress, the Albanian government announced the broad outlines of the country's Third Five-Year Plan (1961-65), which allocated 54 percent of all investment to industry, thereby rejecting Khrushchev's wish to make Albania primarily an agricultural producer. Moscow responded by canceling aid programs and lines of credit for Albania, but the Chinese again came to the rescue.

After additional sharp exchanges between Soviet and Chinese delegates over Albania at the Communist Party of the Soviet Union's Twenty-Second Party Congress in October 1961, Khrushchev lambasted the Albanians for executing a pregnant, pro-Soviet member of the Albanian party Politburo, and the Soviet Union finally broke diplomatic relations with Albania in December. Moscow then withdrew all Soviet economic advisers and technicians from the country, including those at work on the Palace of Culture, and halted shipments of supplies and spare parts for equipment already in place in Albania. In addition, the Soviet Union continued to dismantle its naval installations on Sazan Island, a process that had begun even before the break in relations.

China again compensated Albania for the loss of Soviet economic support, supplying about 90 percent of the parts, foodstuffs, and other goods the Soviet Union had promised. Beijing lent the Albanians money on more favorable terms than Moscow, and, unlike Soviet advisers, Chinese technicians earned the same low pay as Albanian workers and lived in similar housing. China also presented Albania with a powerful radio transmission station from which Tiranë sang the praises of Stalin, Hoxha, and Mao Zedong for decades. For its part, Albania offered China a beachhead in Europe and acted as China's chief spokesman at the UN. To Albania's dismay, however, Chinese equipment and technicians were not nearly so sophisticated as the Soviet goods and advisers they replaced. Ironically, a language barrier even forced the Chinese and Albanian technicians to communicate in Russian. Albanians no longer took part in Warsaw Pact activities or Comecon agreements. The other East European communist nations, however, did not break diplomatic or trade links with Albania. In 1964 the Albanians went so far as to seize the empty Soviet embassy in Tiranë, and Albanian workers pressed on with construction of the Palace of Culture on their own.

The shift away from the Soviet Union wreaked havoc on Albania's economy. Half of its imports and exports had been geared toward Soviet suppliers and markets, so the souring of Tiranë's relations with Moscow brought Albania's foreign trade to near collapse as China proved incapable of delivering promised machinery and equipment on time. The low productivity, flawed planning, poor workmanship, and inefficient management at Albanian enterprises became clear when Soviet and East European aid and advisers were withdrawn. In 1962 the Albanian government introduced an austerity program, appealing to the people to conserve resources, cut production costs, and abandon unnecessary investment.

In October 1964, Hoxha hailed Khrushchev's fall from power, and the Soviet Union's new leaders made overtures to Tiranë. It soon became clear, however, that the new Soviet leadership had no intention of changing basic policies to suit Albania, and relations failed to improve. Tiranë's propaganda continued for decades to refer to Soviet officials as "treacherous revisionists" and "traitors to communism," and in 1964 Hoxha said that Albania's terms for reconciliation were a Soviet apology to Albania and reparations for damages inflicted on the country. Soviet-Albanian relations dipped to new lows after the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, when Albania responded by officially withdrawing from the alliance.

The Cultural and Ideological Revolution

In the mid-1960s, Albania's leaders grew wary of a threat to their power by a burgeoning bureaucracy. Party discipline had eroded. People complained about malfeasance, inflation, and low-quality goods. Writers strayed from the orthodoxy of socialist realism, which demanded that art and literature serve as instruments of government and party policy. As a result, after Mao unleashed the Cultural Revolution in China in 1965, Hoxha launched his own Cultural and Ideological Revolution. The Albanian leader concentrated on reforming the military, government bureaucracy, and the economy as well as on creating new support for his Stalinist system. The regime abolished military ranks, reintroduced political commissars into the military, and renounced professionalism in the army. Railing against a "white-collar mentality," the authorities also slashed the salaries of mid- and high-level officials, ousted administrators and specialists from their desk jobs, and sent such persons to toil in the factories and fields. Six ministries, including the Ministry of Justice, were eliminated. Farm collectivization spread to even the remote mountains. In addition, the government attacked dissident writers and artists, reformed its education system,

and generally reinforced Albania's isolation from European culture in an effort to keep out foreign influences.

In 1967 the authorities conducted a violent campaign to extinguish religious life in Albania, claiming that religion had divided the Albanian nation and kept it mired in backwardness. Student agitators combed the countryside, forcing Albanians to quit practicing their faith. Despite complaints, even by APL members, all churches, mosques, monasteries, and other religious institutions had been closed or converted into warehouses, gymnasiums, and workshops by year's end. A special decree abrogated the charters by which the country's main religious communities had operated. The campaign culminated in an announcement that Albania had become the world's first atheistic state, a feat touted as one of Enver Hoxha's greatest achievements (see Hoxha's *Antireligious Campaign*, ch. 2).

Traditional kinship links in Albania, centered on the patriarchal family, were shattered by the postwar repression of clan leaders, collectivization of agriculture, industrialization, migration from the countryside to urban areas, and suppression of religion. The postwar regime brought a radical change in the status of Albania's women. Considered second-class citizens in traditional Albanian society, women performed most of the work at home and in the fields. Before World War II, about 90 percent of Albania's women were illiterate, and in many areas they were regarded as chattels under ancient tribal laws and customs. During the Cultural and Ideological Revolution, the party encouraged women to take jobs outside the home in an effort to compensate for labor shortages and to overcome their conservatism. Hoxha himself proclaimed that anyone who trampled on the party's edict on women's rights should be "hurled into the fire" (see *Social Structure under Communist Rule*, ch. 2).

The Break with China and Self-Reliance

Albanian-Chinese relations had stagnated by 1970, and when the Asian superpower began to reemerge from isolation in the early 1970s, Mao and the other Chinese leaders reassessed their commitment to tiny Albania. In response, Tiranë began broadening its contacts with the outside world. Albania opened trade negotiations with France, Italy, and the recently independent Asian and African states, and in 1971 it normalized relations with Yugoslavia and Greece. Albania's leaders abhorred China's renewal of contacts with the United States in the early 1970s, and its press and radio ignored President Richard Nixon's trip to Beijing in 1972. Albania actively worked to reduce its dependence on China by



*Albanian painting in
the socialist-realist style
Courtesy Charles Sudetic*

diversifying trade and improving diplomatic and cultural relations, especially with Western Europe. But Albania shunned the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe and was the only European country that refused to take part in the Helsinki Conference of July 1975. Soon after Mao's death in 1976, Hoxha criticized the new leadership as well as Beijing's pragmatic policy toward the United States and Western Europe. The Chinese responded by inviting Tito to visit Beijing in 1977 and ending assistance programs for Albania in 1978.

The break with China left Albania with no foreign protector. Tiranë ignored calls by the United States and the Soviet Union to normalize relations. Instead, Albania expanded diplomatic ties with Western Europe and the developing nations and began stressing the principle of self-reliance as the keystone of the country's strategy for economic development. However, Hoxha's cautious opening toward the outside world had stirred up nascent movements for change inside Albania. As the dictator's health slipped, muted calls arose for the relaxation of party controls and greater openness. In response, Hoxha launched a series of purges that removed the defense minister and many top military officials. A year later, Hoxha purged ministers responsible for the economy and replaced them with younger persons.

As Hoxha's health declined, the dictator began planning for an orderly succession. He worked to institutionalize his policies, hoping

to frustrate any attempt his successors might make to venture from the Stalinist path he had blazed for Albania. In December 1976, Albania adopted its second Stalinist constitution of the postwar era. The document "guaranteed" Albanians freedom of speech, the press, organization, association, and assembly but subordinated these rights to the individual's duties to society as a whole. The constitution enshrined in law the idea of autarky and prohibited the government from seeking financial aid or credits or from forming joint companies with partners from capitalist or revisionist communist countries. The constitution's preamble also boasted that the foundations of religious belief in Albania had been abolished.

In 1980 Hoxha turned to Ramiz Alia to succeed him as Albania's communist patriarch, overlooking his long-standing comrade-in-arms, Mehmet Shehu. Hoxha first tried to convince Shehu to step aside voluntarily, but when this move failed Hoxha arranged for all the members of the Politburo to rebuke him for allowing his son to become engaged to the daughter of a former bourgeois family. Shehu allegedly committed suicide on December 18, 1981. It is suspected, however, that Hoxha had him killed. Hoxha, obviously fearing retaliation, purged the members of Shehu's family and his supporters within the police and military. In November 1982, Hoxha announced that Shehu had been a foreign spy working simultaneously for the United States, British, Soviet, and Yugoslav intelligence agencies in planning the assassination of Hoxha himself. "He was buried like a dog," the dictator wrote in the Albanian edition of his book, *The Titoites*.

Hoxha went into semiretirement in early 1983, and Alia assumed responsibility for Albania's administration. Alia traveled extensively around Albania, standing in for Hoxha at major events and delivering addresses laying down new policies and intoning litanies to the enfeebled president. When Hoxha died on April 11, 1985, he left Albania a legacy of repression, technological backwardness, isolation, and fear of the outside world. Alia succeeded to the presidency and became legal secretary of the APL two days later. In due course, he became a dominant figure in the Albanian media, and his slogans appeared painted in crimson letters on signboards across the country. The APL's Ninth Party Congress in November 1986 featured Alia as the party's and the country's undisputed leader.

* * *

Because Albania's fate is so tightly interwoven with developments in the Balkans, it is recommended that readers unfamiliar with the

region first examine Barbara Jelavich's two-volume *History of the Balkans*, which provides an excellent overview as well as sections on Albania and the formation of the state. Robert Lee Wolff's *The Balkans in Our Time* is another useful survey of Balkan history. Edith Durham's *High Albania* and her other travelogues on Albania from the early twentieth century read like adventure novels and provide insight into the cultural underpinnings of the nationalism endemic to the Balkans. The best examination of the Albanian nationalist movement in the late nineteenth century and the creation of Albania itself are Stavro Skendi's *The Albanian National Awakening* and Joseph Swire's *Albania: The Rise of a Kingdom*. Anton Logoreci's *The Albanians: Europe's Forgotten Survivors* and Peter R. Pifti's *Socialist Albania since 1944: Domestic and Foreign Developments* are both solidly grounded surveys of Albania and its trials, especially after World War II. Postwar Albania, especially the last years of Enver Hoxha's regime, is well treated in Elez Biberaj's *Albania*. No reader on Albanian affairs, in fact no student of the former communist world, should overlook *With Stalin*, *The Titoites*, or Enver Hoxha's other official works, which would be right at home shelved beside George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and other works in the genre of dystopian fiction. (For further information and complete citations, see Bibliography.)

Chapter 2. The Society and Its Environment



Albanian family out for a stroll

EUROPE'S LEAST DEVELOPED country, Albania is located along the central west coast of the Balkan Peninsula. Albania's Adriatic and Ionian coasts are adjacent to shipping lanes that have been important since early Greek and Roman times. Tiranë, the capital and largest city, is less than an hour by air from eight other European capitals and barely more than two hours from the most distant of them. Yet, in large part because of its rugged terrain and, in recent times, its Stalinist regime, Albania remained isolated from the rest of Europe until the early 1990s.

Large expanses of mountainous and generally inaccessible terrain provided refuge for the Albanian nation and permitted its distinctive identity to survive throughout the centuries, in spite of successive foreign invasions and long periods of occupation. Kinship and tribal affiliations, a common spoken language, and enduring folk customs provided continuity and a sense of community. Foreign influence was inevitable, however. Additions and modifications to the language were made as a result of Latin, Greek, Slavic, and Turkish contacts. Lacking an organized religion as part of their Illyrian heritage, Albanians adopted the Muslim, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic faiths brought to them by their conquerors.

Following the Italian and German occupations of World War II, Albania was subjected to more than forty-six years of authoritarian rule, from which it was emerging, materially and spiritually impoverished, in 1992. Its churches and mosques had been destroyed, the school system was a shambles, hospitals struggled with extreme shortages of basic medical supplies, and the hungry, dejected people had come to rely entirely on foreign food aid and other forms of assistance. With the collapse of communism, a democratically elected government faced the formidable challenge of ending decades of self-imposed isolation, restoring public order, and improving social conditions for the more than 3.3 million people of Albania.

Physical Environment

National Boundaries

Albania, with a total area of 28,750 square kilometers, is slightly larger than the state of Maryland. It shares a 287-kilometer border with the Yugoslav republics of Montenegro and Serbia to the north,

a 151-kilometer border with the former Yugoslav republic of Macedonia to the north and east, and a 282-kilometer border with Greece to the south and southeast. Its coastline is 362 kilometers long. The lowlands of the west face the Adriatic Sea and the strategically important Strait of Otranto, which puts less than 100 kilometers of water between Albania and the heel of the Italian "boot."

The distinct ethnic character of the Albanian people and their isolation within a generally definable area underscored their demands for independence in the early twentieth century. In some places, however, the mingling of different ethnic groups has complicated the determination of national borders. Kosovo, across the northeastern Albanian border, is a Serbian-governed province, although ethnic Albanians make up over 90 percent of its population. Many Albanians still regard Kosovo's status as an issue. Greeks and Albanians live in the mountains on both sides of the southeastern Albanian boundary. Neither Greece nor Albania is satisfied with the division of nations effected by their common border.

With the exception of the coastline, all Albanian borders are artificial. They were established in principle at the 1912-13 conference of ambassadors in London. The country was occupied by Italian, Serbian, Greek, and French forces during World War I, but the 1913 boundaries were essentially reaffirmed by the victorious states in 1921. The original principle was to define the borders in accordance with the best interests of the Albanian people and the nationalities in adjacent areas. The northern and eastern borders were intended, insofar as possible, to separate the Albanians from the Serbs and Montenegrins; the southeast border was to separate Albanians and Greeks; the valuable western Macedonian lake district was to be divided among the three states—Albania, Greece, and Yugoslavia—whose populations shared the area. When there was no compromise involving other factors, borderlines were chosen to make the best possible separation of national groups, connecting the best marked physical features available.

Allowance was made for local economic situations, for example, to prevent separation of a village from its animals' grazing areas or from the markets for its produce. Political pressures also were a factor in the negotiations, but the outcome was subject to approval by powers having relatively abstract interests, most of which involved the balance of power rather than specific economic ambitions.

Division of the lake district among three states required that each of them have a share of the lowlands in the vicinity. Such an artificial distribution, once made, necessarily affected the borderlines to the

north and south. The border that runs generally north from the lakes, although it follows the ridges of the eastern highlands, stays sixteen to thirty-two kilometers west of the watershed divide. Because negotiators at the London conference declined to use the watershed divide as the northeast boundary of the new state of Albania, a large Albanian population in Kosovo was incorporated into Serbia.

In Albania's far north and the northeast mountainous sections, the border connects high points and follows mountain ridges through the largely inaccessible North Albanian Alps, known locally as Bjeshkët e Namuna. For the most part, there is no natural boundary from the highlands to the Adriatic, although Lake Scutari and a portion of the Bunë River south of it were used to mark Albania's northwest border. From the lake district south and southwest to the Ionian Sea, the country's southeast border goes against the grain of the land, crossing a number of ridges instead of following them.

Topography

The 70 percent of the country that is mountainous is rugged and often inaccessible. The remainder, an alluvial plain, receives precipitation seasonally, is poorly drained, and is alternately arid or flooded. Much of the plain's soil is of poor quality. Far from offering a relief from the difficult interior terrain, the alluvial plain is often as inhospitable as the mountains. Good soil and dependable precipitation, however, are found in intermontane river basins, in the lake district along the eastern frontier, and in a narrow band of slightly elevated land between the coastal plains and the interior mountains (see fig. 3).

In the far north, the mountains are an extension of the Dinaric Alps and, more specifically, the Montenegrin limestone plateau. Albania's northern mountains are more folded and rugged, however, than most of the plateau. The rivers have deep valleys with steep sides and arable valley floors. Generally unnavigable, the rivers obstruct rather than encourage movement within the alpine region. Roads are few and poor. Lacking internal communications and external contacts, a tribal society flourished in this area for centuries. Only after World War II were serious efforts made to incorporate the people of the region into Albanian national life.

A low coastal belt extends from the northern boundary southward to the vicinity of Vlorë. On average, it extends less than sixteen kilometers inland, but widens to about fifty kilometers in the Elbasan area in central Albania. In its natural state, the coastal belt is characterized by low scrub vegetation, varying from barren

to dense. There are large areas of marshlands and other areas of bare, eroded badlands. Where elevations rise slightly and precipitation is regular—in the foothills of the central uplands, for example—the land is highly arable. Marginal land is reclaimed wherever irrigation is possible.

Just east of the lowlands, the central uplands, called Çermenikë by Albanians, are an area of generally moderate elevations, between 305 and 915 meters, with a few points reaching above 1,520 meters. Shifting along the faultline that roughly defines the western edge of the central uplands causes frequent, and occasionally severe, earthquakes.

Although rugged terrain and points of high elevation mark the central uplands, the first major mountain range inland from the Adriatic is an area of predominantly serpentine rock (which derives its name from its dull green color and often spotted appearance), extending nearly the length of the country, from the North Albanian Alps to the Greek border south of Korçë. Within this zone, there are many areas in which sharp limestone and sandstone outcroppings predominate, although the ranges as a whole are characterized by rounded mountains.

The mountains east of the serpentine zone are the highest in Albania, exceeding 2,740 meters in the Mal Korab range. Together with the North Albanian Alps and the serpentine zone, the eastern highlands are the most rugged and inaccessible of any terrain on the Balkan Peninsula.

The three lakes of easternmost Albania—Lake Ohrid, Lake Prespa, and Prespa e Vogël—are remote and picturesque. Much of the terrain in their vicinity is not overly steep, and it supports a larger population than any other inland portion of the country. Albania's eastern border passes through Lake Ohrid; all but a small tip of Prespa e Vogël is in Greece; and the point at which the boundaries of three states meet is in Lake Prespa. Each of the two larger lakes has a total surface areas of about 260 square kilometers, and Prespa e Vogël is about one-fifth as large. The surface elevation is about 695 meters for Lake Ohrid and 855 meters for the other two lakes.

The southern mountain ranges are more accessible than the serpentine zone, the eastern highlands, or the North Albanian Alps. The transition to the lowlands is less abrupt, and the arable valley floors are wider. Limestone, the predominant mineral, is responsible for the cliffs and clear water of the coastline southeast of Vlorë. Erosion of a blend of softer rocks has provided the sediment that has caused wider valleys to form in the southern mountain area than those characteristic of the remainder of the country. This

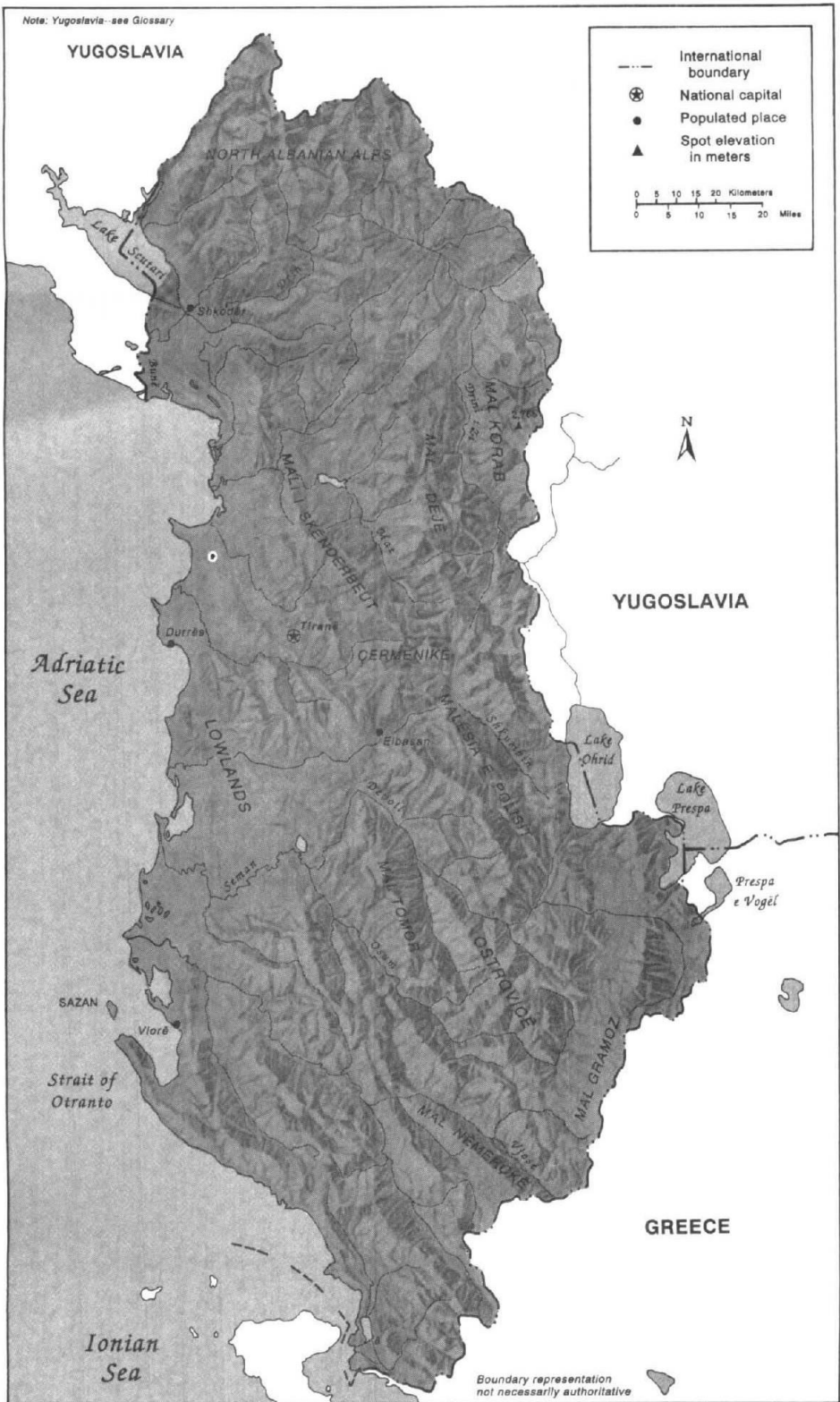


Figure 3. Topography and Drainage

terrain encouraged the development of larger landholding, thus influencing the social structure of southern Albania.

Drainage

Nearly all of the precipitation that falls on Albania drains into the rivers and reaches the coast without even leaving the country. In the north, only one small stream escapes Albania. In the south, an even smaller rivulet drains into Greece. Because the topographical divide is east of the Albanian border with its neighbors, a considerable amount of water from other countries drains through Albania. An extensive portion of the basin of the Drini i Bardhë River, called Beli Drim by Serbs, is in the Kosovo area, across Albania's northeastern border. The three eastern lakes that Albania shares with its neighboring countries, as well as the streams that flow into them, drain into the Drini i Zi. The watershed divide in the south also dips nearly seventy-five kilometers into Greece at one point. Several tributaries of the Vjosë River rise in that area.

With the exception of the Drini i Zi, which flows northward and drains nearly the entire eastern border region before it turns westward to the sea, most of the rivers in northern and central Albania flow fairly directly westward to the sea. In the process, they cut through the ridges rather than flow around them. This apparent geological impossibility occurs because the highlands originally were lifted without much folding. The streams came into existence at that time. The compression and folding of the plateau into ridges occurred later. The folding process was rapid enough in many instances to dam the rivers temporarily. The resulting lakes existed until their downstream channels became wide enough to drain them. This sequence created the many interior basins that are typically a part of the Albanian landform. During the lifetime of the temporary lakes, enough sediment was deposited in them to form the basis for fertile soils. Folding was rarely rapid enough to force the streams into radically different channels.

The precipitous fall from higher elevations and the highly irregular seasonal flow patterns that are characteristic of nearly all streams in the country reduce the economic value of the streams. They erode the mountains and deposit the sediment that created the lowlands and continues to augment them, but the rivers flood when there is local rainfall. When the lands are parched and need irrigation, the rivers usually are dry. Their violence when they are full makes them difficult to control, and they are unnavigable. The Bunë River is an exception. It is dredged between Shkodër and the Adriatic Sea and can be negotiated by small ships. In contrast to their history of holding fast to their courses in the mountains,

the rivers constantly change channels on the lower plains, making waste of much of the land they create.

The Drin River is the largest and most constant stream. Fed by melting snows from the northern and eastern mountains and by the more evenly distributed seasonal precipitation of that area, its flow does not have the extreme variations characteristic of nearly all other rivers in the country. Its normal flow varies seasonally by only about one-third. Along its length of about 282 kilometers, it drains nearly 5,957 square kilometers within Albania. As it also collects water from the Adriatic portion of the Kosovo watershed and the three border lakes (Lake Prespa drains to Lake Ohrid via an underground stream), its total basin encompasses about 15,540 square kilometers.

The Seman and Vjosë are the only other rivers that are more than 160 kilometers long and have basins larger than 2,600 square kilometers. These rivers drain the southern regions and, reflecting the seasonal distribution of rainfall, are torrents in winter and nearly dry in the summer in spite of their length. This variable nature also characterizes the many shorter streams. In the summer, most of them carry less than a tenth of their winter averages, if they are not altogether dry.

Although the sediment carried by the mountain torrents continues to be deposited, new deposits delay exploitation. Stream channels rise as silt is deposited in them and eventually become higher than the surrounding terrain. Shifting channels frustrate development in many areas. Old channels become barriers to proper drainage and create swamps or marshlands. In general, it is difficult to build roads or railroads across the lowlands or otherwise use the land.

Irrigation has been accomplished on a small scale by Albanian peasants for many years. Large irrigation projects were not completed, however, until after World War II. Such projects include the Vjosë-Levan-Fier irrigation canal, with an irrigation capacity of 15,000 hectares, and the reservoir at Thanë in Lushnjë District, with an irrigation capacity of 35,100 hectares. In 1986 nearly 400,000 hectares of land, or 56 percent of the total cultivated area, were under irrigation, compared with 29,000 hectares, or 10 percent of the total cultivated area, in 1938.

Climate

With its coastline facing the Adriatic and Ionian seas, its highlands backed upon the elevated Balkan landmass, and the entire country lying at a latitude subject to a variety of weather patterns during the winter and summer seasons, Albania has a high number

of climatic regions for so small an area. The coastal lowlands have typically Mediterranean weather; the highlands have a Mediterranean continental climate. In both the lowlands and the interior, the weather varies markedly from north to south.

The lowlands have mild winters, averaging about 7°C. Summer temperatures average 24°C, humidity is high, and the weather tends to be oppressively uncomfortable. In the southern lowlands, temperatures average about five degrees higher throughout the year. The difference is greater than five degrees during the summer and somewhat less during the winter.

Inland temperatures are affected more by differences in elevation than by latitude or any other factor. Low winter temperatures in the mountains are caused by the continental air mass that dominates the weather in Eastern Europe and the Balkans. Northerly and northeasterly winds blow much of the time. Average summer temperatures are lower than in the coastal areas and much lower at higher elevations, but daily fluctuations are greater. Daytime maximum temperatures in the interior basins and river valleys are very high, but the nights are almost always cool.

Average precipitation is heavy, a result of the convergence of the prevailing airflow from the Mediterranean Sea and the continental air mass. Because the convergence usually comes at the point where the terrain rises, the heaviest rain falls in the central uplands. Vertical currents initiated when the Mediterranean air is uplifted also cause frequent thunderstorms. Many of these storms are accompanied by high local winds and torrential downpours.

When the continental air mass is weak, Mediterranean winds drop their moisture farther inland. When there is a dominant continental air mass, cold air spills onto the lowland areas, which occurs most frequently in the winter. Because the season's lower temperatures damage olive trees and citrus fruits, groves and orchards are restricted to sheltered places with southern and western exposures even in areas with high average winter temperatures.

Lowland rainfall averages from 1,000 millimeters to more than 1,500 millimeters annually, with the higher levels in the north. Nearly 95 percent of the rain falls in the winter.

Rainfall in the upland mountain ranges is heavier. Adequate records are not available, and estimates vary widely, but annual averages are probably about 1,800 millimeters and are as high as 2,550 millimeters in some northern areas. The seasonal variation is not quite as great in the coastal area.

The higher inland mountains receive less precipitation than the intermediate uplands. Terrain differences cause wide local variations, but the seasonal distribution is the most consistent of any area.