

Political transition of Albania 1985-1991

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Abstract

Political transition of Albania is a phenomenon that started since the death of Enver Hoxha, the dictator of communist regime in Albania. After the death of Enver Hoxha on 11 April 1985, Ramiz Alia was appointed as his successor, who for 40 years had been at Enver Hoxha's side as his most trusted man. He succeeded Hoxha for nearly 6 years believing that he would maintain the communist system. Ramiz Alia came on duty as the head of the Albanian state when the economic situation was very precarious. Political and economic legacy left by Hoxha was almost miserable. The country had the severest political system throughout the communist bloc. In a political point of view, the country's new leader was elected precisely to continue the political legacy of former leader Hoxha. Ramiz Alia was forced to take immediate measures to change the degraded situation. He undertook several reforms to improve the situation in the country. Among other things, Alia expressed the equality of Albanian citizens, freedoms and human rights. Events were passing each other, marking a great historical importance. Among other things, Alia approved the political pluralism giving way to significant social changes. Echoes of these events and the positive developments in the country do not remain outside the attention of internationals. The arrival of political pluralism and the establishment of democratic party, the first opposition party in the country and other political entities exposed the European dream of Albanians. Massive movements in the form of protests and rallies, aimed at overturning the communist regime in the country. Main objective of this paper is the analysis of the Political transition of Albania 1985-1991.

Keywords: Transition, Policy, Albania, dictatorship, pluralism.

Introduction

Albania was the last country that broke away from communism. Unlike Romania or other eastern countries, Albania had to overcome this regime in the 90s. For more than 40 years, Hoxha led his small country, isolated in a remote corner of the Balkans. His complex personality has left marks on every aspect of life in Albania (Vickers, 2001, 209).¹

After Hoxha's death, Ramiz Alia took the lead of the government, his most trusted man. Alia was born in Shkoder on 18 October 1925. In 1943, he joins the Communist Party and in 1948 is elected member of the Party Central Committee. In 1954, Alia finished his advanced studies in the Soviet Union. Under the patronage of the Hoxhas couple, he was appointed to various posts, such as Minister of education and culture in the years 1955-1958, member of the Political Bureau and secretary of the Central Committee of the Albanian Labor Party for ideology and propaganda, MP etc. For 9 years from 1982 to 1991 he held the post of head of state in the communist regime. On 30 November 1991 he was elected president, and was the first president emerged from multi-party parliament, and held this position until 9 April 1992, until his successor

Sali Berisha was elected. He is the first senior communist official who admitted to be removed from duty by democratic elections. Alia resigned on 3 April of 1992. Although with the intention to continue the same political line, Alia realized that the system that he was running was in agony and because of this, the creation of new parties was allowed. Western countries insisted more and more in the changing of political situation of the country. Hoxha's death was one more reason for the Westerners to intervene in changes of regime in Albania. On the other hand, the developments in Communist East were not helping the Albanian government. Dissident movement in Poland and Czechoslovakia, but even Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union, were showing that the solidarity of the communist regimes in the east had begun to erode. Domestic difficulties were being added to the international situation. Economic stagnation started since the 70s had already deteriorated and the country were facing a real economic crisis for which the new leader of the Albanian Labor Party, Ramiz Alia had to take immediate measures. Despite his stated desire to "continuing the work of Enver Hoxha", needs were demanding immediate changes. On 10 May 1989, the official Tirana had the first break, this also due to reforms undertaken by Ramiz Alia. At the report he presented, he introduced equality of Albanian citizens and how the Albanian state guarantees all citizens their rights (Schrapel, Pandelejmoni & Pinari, 2016,120- 121). Ramiz Alia has merit that the systems switching were not polarized in a degree that could turn it into a civil war. Although in different ways, the act of admission of pluralism with a bureau decision showed an emancipation for all Eastern European countries.

Enver Hoxha's death and the fall of the communist system in Albania

Albania's history of the twentieth century is the history of numerous deep caesuras. In the space between "ottoman times" and "post-communist transition", the Albanian society underwent some radical political turnaround times associated with significant social and cultural consequences... (Attempt No. 32 - 33.2014, 2).

The year 1985 marked the death of Enver Hoxha, the leader of the Albanian Labor Party and the Albanian State for four consecutive decades. Enver Hoxha died in difficult times, when the country was experiencing a severe economic and political crisis. His death added further the uncertainty, but at the same time, it created an opportunity for the country's new leadership, to change the course followed until that time, to adjust to the time. Two days after Hoxha's death ALP Central Committee, elected Alia to the post of First Secretary of the ALP (Academy of Science 2009, 348). With the arrival of Ramiz Alia in power, the preservation of the Hoxha regime became the subject of any policy. He stated that: "Loyalty to the teaching and Enver Hoxha's road would be a guarantee on the progress and protection of the independence of the country" (Gjecovi & Milo, Tirana, 348).

Ramiz Alia came in leading the country in a difficult situation, due to the deep crisis that had covered the country in almost all areas. Mitigation and its overcoming could come only with the implementation of deep reforms. Albania, in particular, its economy was on a par with some third world countries regardless of the situation in the center of Europe. Enver Hoxha's dictatorship was uniform with socialist regime

of Stalin. Isolation from the outside world was accompanied with ignorance of the people in domestic affairs (De Waal, 2005, 5).

Situated in front of this domestic situation, which was creating more and more dissatisfaction in the country, and the situation in the eastern countries which had already inverted totalitarian systems, as well as the persistence of internationals who sought to intervene to improve the situation in the country, Alia was forced to take a series of reforms to improve the situation.

Despite the Enverist-Stalinist, anti-American and anti-Soviet political rhetoric, Alia allowed the development of relations with other countries after 1987 by abandoning the policy of neglect of the country in multilateral relations (Duke, 2007, 314).

Following careful steps to centralization and liberalization, he conducted a foreign policy more flexible by improving relations with a number of European countries. In his speech at the ninth Congress of the Labor Party, in November 1986, Alia said; "To love freedom, democracy, peace, the aspiration of European people. Guided by the principles of equality, non-interference in internal affairs, territorial integrity and national sovereignty, our country to maintain normal relations with most European countries trying to develop them in favor of the common interest. With France, Austria, Switzerland, Sweden and other Nordic countries, our relations are developing in a positive direction. We believe that with joint efforts, we can find further cooperation. The emphasis of Alice in "non-interference in internal affairs, territorial integrity, seemed to have more benefits for Balkan neighbors of Albania, which had distance with the Northern Europe countries. Faster Relations with Albanians neighbors in Yugoslavia and Greece had some progress during the end of the 1980s. In February 1988, Albania took part in the Balkan Conference of Foreign Ministers in Belgrade, the first official meeting with 6 Balkan countries in more than 50 years. With this participation, Albania showed a good gesture by ensuring neighbors, especially Yugoslavia for the country good intention, for the establishment of the main structures of cooperation in the region (Vickers, 2001, 211).

Albania started political reforms in a moderate form, for social and economic reasons, about a year before the collapse of the Communist regime in Eastern Europe in 1989. However the 1989 revolution, particularly the fall of the regime in Romania, signaled Albanian leadership that the old policies of international isolation should be given an end immediately and to adopt reforms. The Albanian people, who were isolated began to be informed what was happening in the outside world, when they began to watch Italian, Greek and Yugoslav tv. The first thing that Albanian intellectuals had at the end of 1989 was the publication of human rights (Vickers, 2001, 213).

On December 11 the XIII plenum of the Central Committee of the Albanian Labour Party was held, which *inter alia* adopted the decision on the approval of political pluralism in paragraph 5 of the decision as follows: "plenum expressed the opinion that is in favor of further democratization of the country life and pluralism, the creation of independent political organizations in accordance with applicable laws" (Alia, 2010).

This decision opened the way to significant social changes. The Communist regime did not allow for any type of organization for 45 years beyond party and state structures. This decision ended monism in place and on 12 December 1990 the

Democratic Party was established, which in its program provided political pluralism, market economy, independence of powers, guaranteeing the freedoms and human rights and cooperation with western countries.

The need for change was transformed in interior calls of the Albanians. Some cities of Albania began to feel the first signs of anti-communist movement, which although kept in silence by censorship regime, they were possible to be echoed in the West. Situated in front of this situation and western attitudes, Ramiz Alia in the Secretariat meeting of the Central Committee of the ALP on 26 March 1990, invited members of the Political bureau to accept some concessions in order to preserve the main pillars of the regime (Schrapel, Pandelejmoni & Pinari 2016, 122).

By the end of 1989 began disturbances in the form of strikes, student protests, demonstrations in the streets and at the end of 1990 mass protests and public disturbances (De Waal 2005, 5).

The first massive citizen reaction to the dictatorship began in Shkoder on 14 January (Krasniqi, 1998, 19). Ramiz Alia, Enver Hoxha's successor, at the beginning of 1990 felt the need for measures which initially allowed pluralism. These measures allowed political demonstrations, the law on the secret ballot and the possibility of independent candidates (De Waal 2005, 5).

On 8 December 1990 Tirana University students initiated the first protest on campus. The protest began with economic claims and better conditions in the areas where they lived, then the protests escalated by political requirements. This student's protest was joined by teachers and citizens. One of the requirements of students was political pluralism, which is what Alia approved at the meeting with the student representatives. Alia declared for people that have already been accepted and formalized political pluralism the creation of opposition parties, considering them as important factors, which put their country into a new phase of political and social relations (Academy of Science 2009, 361). The role of this movement had a significant effect on the overthrow of the regime in the country.

Besides the importance of this movement, collapse of the communist regime in Albania was a process that had begun much earlier and Albanians were not the only actors. One of the factors that led to the submission of this regime was Western pressure to relinquish one of the pillars on which it relied: the denial of fundamental human rights and freedoms and the repression of the Albanian citizens (Schrapel & Pandelejmoni & Pinari 2016, 115).

What happened after 1990 was a peak moment in this story. It seems that isolation functioned as a dam into which accumulated great potential migration, which then exploded, giving Albanian emigration forms a dramatic flood with features that make it distinct from emigration to other countries of the world (Attempt No. 26 - 27, 2010, 3). On 12 December the Democratic Party of Albania was established, which continued with the creation of other political parties and ALP will end its activity and the Socialist Party of Albania would be established.

On 31 March 1991 general elections were held for the National Assembly. They will be held by the majority system while the country was divided into constituencies. For the first time for more than half a century the country was developing pluralistic elections. During March, election campaign between political parties ran tough.

Promises, meetings, party activists have created an extreme polarization of the electorate (Fevziu, 2011, 222).

The Albanian Labor Party emerged victorious from the elections, which brought consecutive concerns and dislikes in the country. On 30 April, the national assembly elected Ramiz Alia as President of the Republic of Albania. Alia currently a president, resigned from all positions in the Labor Party.

On 13 May, the national assembly appointed Prime Minister Fatos Nano and his cabinet, but situated in front of freezing conditions and different pressures of independent trade unions, Nano government resigned on 4 June 1991. Then it was created the stability government which was the result of agreement between the political forces on co-governance to the country's stability and its prime minister was elected Ylli Bufi. The Stability Government functioned only 6 months and its effects on the improvement of life in the country were minimal. On 6 December 1991, Prime Minister Ylli Bufi resigned as a result of the exit from the coalition of the Democratic Party. The government of the country until the elections of 22 March 1992, was trusted to a technical government headed by Vilson Ahmeti (Alia, 2010, 408).

In the parliamentary elections of 22 March 1992 where the Democratic Party of Albania won with Sali Berisha as its head. On 3 April 1992 Alia resigned from the post of president and the government of the country was left to the Democratic Party and its coalition.

Conclusions

Alia had managed to remain a key political figure through several political crises. Although he had some genuine concerns for stability and continuity, he was inflexible. He changed in response to the circumstances and requirements set by the reformists. He was the president who signed the law that allowed the creation of political parties and associations. This act signed on 12 December 1990 formally ended the one-party system and created the possibility of a plurality of political parties and other associations in the country. He is the first functionary of the communist system who held meetings with representatives of western countries after 40 years of isolation. Ramiz Alia is the first head of state who visited America after 45 years. On 1989, he made the historic visit to the assembly of the United Nations Organization. Democratic revolution that overthrew the dictatorship ended this situation and opened a new page in the history of Albania. He had a historical significance for the fate of Albanian democracy, for the country's future. The establishment of democratic rule created conditions that Albania and Albanians join the family of civilized nations and peoples of Europe and to move towards European integration and developments, providing an economic, social and cultural comprehensive development in the country.

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