

## **Between Longstanding Hostilities and Unwanted Alliances – the Crucial Aspects of Balkan Policy of Albanian State in Twentieth Century**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Text analyses the evolution of Albanian State in Balkans during Twentieth Century, as a State created with the important influence of external factors. The specific process of exemplification and strengthening of Albania based on the unique model of relations with Balkan states and European Powers. Endangered by policy of neighbour States, Albania choose the way of regular changes of strategic partners. These source of these changes one can find in the “fear of division” and also in ideological orientation. In this article, Albanian attempts for the strengthening of its statehood were seen mainly as a sign of fear for political and economic isolation. The effectiveness of these efforts was verificated in the last decade of Twentieth Century, when the regional crisis testimony that Albania became crucial stability factor in the Balkans.

**Keywords:** *Albania, Balkans, foreign policy, Great Powers, Greece, Enver Hoxha, Yugoslavia*

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The establishment of Principality of Albania in 1913 ended the process of the creation of national states in the Balkans in the 19th century. The first modern Albanian State, foreseen by Declaration of Independence (signed in Vlora on 28 November 1912) met with a generally negative attitude from neighbouring Balkan countries, pretending to the lands inhabited by Albanian people. The southern part of Albania was described as Southern Epirus by Greek diplomacy, in the Athens’ opinion was treated as a part of Greece a territory to be included into the Greek State in the future. The incorporation of Epirus, in the opinion of Greek politics, could be an act of historical justice and substantiated also in an ethnic and economic perspective. The similar argument was used by Montenegrin diplomacy to the Shkoder question and wider area around this city. Also in this case ethnic motives were mixed with economic arguments, and Shkoder was treated as part of Montenegro because of traditional economic links with this state. For the Serbian State, control over Albanian territory could be the easiest way to connect with the Adriatic coast. The idea of creating the modern Albanian state was criticised at first as an “artificial quasi-state”, made by Italian and Austro-Hungarian diplomats, and as a temporary solution met with various forms of defiance and negation. The military alliance of Balkan states, established before First Balkan War was practically not only against Ottoman Turkey, but also against national aspirations of Albanian and Macedonian peoples. During the First Balkan War, started in October 1912, the armies of Balkan allies acted as occupation forces, and did not respect any form of Albanian autonomy or self-reliance. We can

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find the motives of this behaviour not only in political plans, but also in deep-rooted Ottoman fears of Albanians. The Albanian image among the Slavic communities in the Balkans was traditionally fulfilled by simple coincidence, identified Albanian people with irregular formations of bashibouzuks and even in many cases from the 19th century we can find image of Albanian identified with the typical Balkan bandits. The similar scheme was described by Elias Skoulidas, who analysed a problem of stereotyping in the Greek press in the 1830's and in the text of Đorđe Stefanović, who studied Albanian images in Serbian culture<sup>1</sup>. Fear against Albanians was described even by Pouqueville, but reminiscences of "horrible Arnauts" in Morea probably stem from the 1768-1774 uprisings, crushed by irregular units in Ottoman service<sup>2</sup>. Not only memory was the implication for this fear, as even the appearance of marching Arnauts could be terrifying. Mackenzie and Irby write of the Macedonian people, for whom the news of an arrival of armed Albanian fighters was horrible. In this former case, horror was caused not only by Albanian clothes and guns but also because their language was *not speakable for other people*<sup>3</sup>.

On 29 July 1913 the Conference of Ambassadors (London Conference) defined the status of the future Albanian state as an "autonomical, sovereign and neutral principality, with the guarantees of the Powers"<sup>4</sup>. The Organical Statute, approved by the Powers on 10 July 1914, described Albania as a sovereign country, but under the control of six European countries. The Albanian Principality would be managed for ten years (or more – if it will be necessary) by the International Control Committee (ICC, created by delegates of Austro-Hungary, France, Russia, Germany, Great Britain, Italy and one Albanian). This body took the control over civil administration and finances of the new state<sup>5</sup>. In 1913 the signing of the Florence Protocol started the process of demarcating Albanian boundaries<sup>6</sup>.

The vision of an Albanian State as a factor of Balkan instability, dangerous for its neighbours was a constant argument in policy of negation and it could be amplified mention about temporary character of Principality. The activity of so-called Vorioepirots, inspired and supported by the Greek State took advantage of the weak structures of the new Albanian state. The tendency to accuse Albanian political elites of hostility against minorities was typical for 1912-1914 (the first years of Albanian

<sup>1</sup> Elias Skoulidas, *The Perception of the Albanians in Greece in the 1830's and 40's: The Role of the Press*, [in:] *Albanian Identities. Myth and History*, ed. S. Schwandner-Sievers, B. Fischer, (London 2002), Đorđe Stefanović, *Seeing the Albanians through Serbian Eyes: The Inventors of the Tradition of Intolerance and Their Critics, 1804-1939*, *European History Quarterly* No. 3, p.465-492.

<sup>2</sup> Francois Pouqueville, *Travels in the Morea, Albania, and other parts of the Ottoman empire*, (London, Barnard & Sultzer, 1820), p.12.

<sup>3</sup> Warrington Smyth, *A Year with the Turks or Sketches of Travel in the European and Asiatic Dominions of the Sultan*, (New York 1854), p.184-185, Georgina Muir Mackenzie, Paulina Irby, *Travels in the Slavonic Provinces of Turkey-in-Europe*, (London, Alexander Strahan, 1866), p.166.

<sup>4</sup> *Proceedings of Ambassadors Meeting held on July 29, 1913* – see: *British documents on the origins of the war 1898-1914*, vol. IX, part.2, (London 1934), p.943.

<sup>5</sup> The Albanian delegate was Myfid Libohova, and the first meeting of ICC was in 16 October 1913. (Arben Puto, *Qeveria e Vlores përballë Komisionit Nderkombetar të Kontrollit*, *Studime Historike* No. 1, 1976, p.4)

<sup>6</sup> Constantin Chekrezi, *Albania – Past and Present*, (New York, The MacMillan Company, 1919), p. 119

State), but still existed in Greek political rhetoric in the 1920's and 1930's.

The concept of Albanian instability could be strengthened also by social and religious divisions in this society. Even though we may see Albanian society as a relatively tolerant nation, and as a unique Balkan example of a multiconfessional nation, the possibility of conflict was not totally excluded. In the beginning of the 1920's, when the Ottoman Empire still existed, Albanian political elites presented something like mixed religious identity. This could be attributed mainly to dominant Islamic community (circa 70 % of the population), identified mostly as Ottoman-Albanian. Their autonomy was always the guarantee of their link with the Porta, although the efforts to reduce this autonomy by Tanzimat reforms were the impulse for the next uprisings and treating the Turks as enemies<sup>7</sup>. The idea of full independence of Albania spread gradually and was inspired mainly by ex-deputies of the Ottoman Parliament, who in 1912 lost the possibility of carrying the legal political activity in Ottoman political life. The dramatic events of the First Balkan War could have pushed Albanians into the cooperation with Ottoman Turkey, now not so dangerous to Albania as Balkan Allies.

The temporary character of the Albanian state was clearly seen during the First World War. Albania was not the crucial battlefield of this conflict, but the territories of the Principality changed their status and were divided between the neighbours. Not only did Greece, Montenegro and Serbia, participate in this division, but so did Italy, Austro-Hungary, Bulgaria and France.. Even in the autumn of 1918, when Tirana and Shkoder were under the control of the Serbian army, and southern Albania by Italian and French armies, the possibility of the Albanian state rebuilding seemed very doubtful. The confirmation of this opinion could be the Tittoni-Venizelos agreement (July 29, 1919), practically dividing the Principality of Albania between Italy and Greece<sup>8</sup>.

The process of making a sovereign Albanian state gained a significant patron in 1920, when President Woodrow Wilson vetoed the efforts for its division (this division was approved also by London). In this way Wilson approved Albanian boundaries, formed by Florence Protocol from 1913<sup>9</sup>. In the first years of the 1920's, the Albanian State was reborn, fully sovereign but still in the deep crisis of instability. Internal conflicts, based on political and clan divisions several times moved this country on the edge of civil war. The Albanian territories, mainly mountainous and with limited communication or access did not create necessary prerequisites for creation of a new common identity. In these circumstances, advance from the level of local identity to the common one was a long-term process, and activity of the State in solution of this problem was limited or even accidental.

The scepticism of Balkan neighbours of Albanian statehood was one from the decisive factors creating the first directions of Albanian diplomatic activity. The establishment of the Albanian diplomatic missions in first years of the 1920's showed

<sup>7</sup> Emine Evered, *Empire and Education Under the Ottomans: Politics, Reform and Resistance from the Tanzimat to the Young Turks*, (London & New York, I.B.Tauris, 2012), p.46.

<sup>8</sup> James Burgwyn, *Italian Foreign Policy in the Interwar Period, 1918-1940* (Greenwood Publishing Group, 1997), p.15.

<sup>9</sup> Arben Puto, *Historia diplomatike e çështjes shqiptare*, (Tirana, Akademia e Shkencave, 2003), p.319-320.

special interest in relations with Powers (Western Europe, USA and Turkey). In 1921-1922 one can see the first missions in Athens, Belgrade and Sofia but practically, it were autonomic activities of persons having widespread social contacts in Balkan countries (Ali Riza Kolonja in Belgrade and Dhimiter Berati in Sofia)<sup>10</sup>. If we can find the traces of making Balkan policy it started from 1925, when Ahmet Zogu, new President of Albania reduced the autonomy of diplomatic missions, and in consequence, their employees became government officials. This change was especially important in 1925-1926, when Yugoslavia became the strategic ally of Albania. This alliance, the first “Balkan alliance” in the short history of the Albanian state helped Ahmed Zogu to return to power, but in fact had a more personal rather than state character. Apart from the Yugoslavian military presence in Albania (realised practically by White-Russian officers), Kingdom of Slovenes, Croats and Serbs had limited possibilities for strengthening the new regime in Tirana and this alliance was only a short-term solution. The high price of this cooperation – changes in the Albanian-Yugoslavian border and the lost of St Naum to Yugoslavian kingdom created frustration among Albanian political elites<sup>11</sup>.

This kind of frustration was an absolutely natural reaction, if we understand the fear of division in Tirana and the propaganda vision of a “temporary Albanian state” that was still active in neighbouring states. Even in the 1950's Albania still was classical example of a state unsure of the stability of its boundaries. It developed an extreme sensitivity to the Northern Epirus problem, regularly reminded by Greek diplomacy<sup>12</sup>. The Tittoni-Venizelos Agreement (signed in July 20, 1919), the activity of Greece during Paris Peace Conference (July to October 1946) and even the Balkan Pact (1953) were treated by Albanians as a real danger for their sovereignty. If the Montenegrin aspirations to Shkoder were practically a marginal problem after creation of Yugoslavian state, the Yugoslav-Albanian boundary became the typical “hot border”. This image was created by a “small war” in 1921-1924, and hundreds of incidents started in 1948 till the skirmishes in the last years of the Twentieth Century (identified with an activity of Kosovo Liberation Army). The political emigrees were the extremely active factor in this conflict, and played a decisive role in causing instability. Among various forms of destabilisation one example caused by Yugoslavia is worth mentioning. The short-lived unrecognized state, called the Republic of Mirdita (created in 1921) was an example of active Yugoslav support for local separatism in Albania<sup>13</sup>. This quasi-state demonstrated discrimination against Catholics in Albania, as the majority of its political elite were Moslem (with the support of Orthodox Belgrade). The artificial character of this state was apparent to the special

<sup>10</sup> Tadeusz Czekalski, *Albania w latach 1920-1924: aparat państwowy i jego funkcjonowanie*, (Katowice, Śląska Agencja Prasowa, 1998), p.105.

<sup>11</sup> In July 1925 Albanian government handed over St. Naum (Shen Naum) on Lake Ochrid and Vermosh area to Yugoslavian state, ending the long border dispute – Paskal Milo, *Shqipëria dhe Jugosllavia 1918-1927* (Tirana, 8 Nentori, 1991), p.373-376.

<sup>12</sup> Tadeusz Czekalski, *Północny Epir i Czamuria – współczesne oblicze sporu grecko-albańskiego*, [in:] *Naród – państwo- Europa Środkowa w XIX i XX wieku*, ed. Artur Patek, Wojciech Rojek, (Krakow, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego, 2006), p. 305-311.

<sup>13</sup> Proclamation of Republic in Northern Albania, *League of Nations, Official Journal*, 1921/8, p.884; Ivo Banač, *The National Question in Yugoslavia: Origins, History, Politics* (Cornell University Press, 1988), p.301.

commission sent to disputed area by the League of Nations.

The three years of Republic of Albania (1928-1928) can be seen as a real chance for radical change – from the status of endangered country to a key stabilizing factor in Balkans. In practice, the poor and backward Albanian state looked for a strategic partner ready to help in its modernisation. This could not be played by Yugoslavian state (deeply affected by internal ethnic crisis) nor by Greece – the scene of several military coup d'états. The choice of fascist Italy, as a state in conflict with Greece and Yugoslavia started the process of Albanian isolation in the Balkan area. Some attempts of making a platform of Balkan political cooperation, made in 1930-1932 were contested by Albania, still emphasized the question of Albanian minorities as a crucial obstacle in process of cooperation. As a result of persistent negative attitude to Albanian minorities in their countries, neighbouring Balkans states did not invite Albania to join the Balkan Entente in 1934. This fact was treated by Albanian diplomacy as an offence and later offers going to Tirana were unsuccessful. The official stance of Albania was based on the opinion that every multilateral Balkan pact without guarantees of European Powers is not worthy of mention<sup>14</sup>.

The example of “independent” Albanian policy (although practically under Italian control) was the coronation of Zog I in 1928, who took the title “King of Albanians” (Mbret te Shqiptareve). The dangerous context of this title, and above all the monarchical aspiration of his Albanian clan had generated mixed feelings in Europe. The doubts of Belgrade to the title of Zog I only delayed his approval for some months. Soothing comments of American and British diplomats calmed Belgrade’s suspicions about the real ambitions of a new monarch<sup>15</sup>. The Turkish veto lasted much longer. For Kemal Atatürk, President of the Turkish Republic, the coronation of Zog I was typical usurpation and could not be accepted by Ankara<sup>16</sup>.

The final phase of Italian domination in Albania started with the aggression of Italian army in April, 1939. This act began the long five-year period of Italian, and then German, occupation of Albania. In their policy, the occupation states in a very clear way (but not always effective) stoked Albanian phobias about the aggressive aspirations of its neighbours. The new state--Greater Albania—made of territories inhabited by Albanians and fully controlled by Italy and Germany created misleading hopes of making Albania one of the decisive players in Balkan area. The establishment of Greater Albania and simultaneous destruction of Yugoslav and Greek states birthed only false promises and aspirations, which inspired the next generations. If the idea of collaboration with Italy and Germany never was commonly accepted by Albanian society, the idea of making from a weak and backward state (as in the time of Zog I) one of the decisive Powers in the Balkans was a realisation of a dream of Albanian political elites.

More than forty years of 20th century Albanian history is connected

<sup>14</sup> Ilir Ushtelenca, *Diplomacia e mbretit Zogu Ire*, (Tirana, 1995), p. 268-269.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 216.

<sup>16</sup> For next three years Albanian authorities banned distribution of Turkish prints in Albania, treating policy of Ankara as hostile against Albania. The conflict ended in 1931 with the formal recognition of Zog’s monarchic title. - Jason Tomes, *King Zog Self-Made Monarch of Albania*, (London, Sutton Publishing, 2003), p.102-103.

with communist dictatorship. The genesis of Albanian communism can be found in Soviet Moscow. In August 1927 the first Albanian communist group, recruited from students, started its activity under the patronage of Comintern<sup>17</sup>. In 1930, some members of the Moscow group went to France, and the rest of them to Albania. Their activity brought very limited effects. Until 1941 the Albanian communist movement was represented by some quarrelling circles, which could not create any central structure. The Communist Party of Albania, established in November 1941, was a last one in the Balkans, and appeared when a majority of the “Moscow group” was dead or politically marginalised. The creation of the Party and their structures was under total control of Yugoslav Communist Party and its emissaries. The delegates of Yugoslav Communist Party—Dušan Mugoša and Miladin Popović—prepared the first documents of the Albanian party, its programme and controlled party discipline<sup>18</sup>. In this time Albanian communist activists did not know even basic meanings as a *Political Bureau* or *plenum*, and their guidebook to communism was the primitive Serbian translation of *History of the CPSU(b)*. The liberation of Albania in 1944 was carried without help from the Red Army, and Yugoslav authorities took full control over the Albanian partisan army and the new communist state.

The main purpose of Yugoslavia’s patronage of Albania from 1944 to 1948 was the unification of the two states and a reduction of the Kremlin’s influence in Albania. From the Albanian perspective this period brought a real effort to absorb Albania into Yugoslavia by political, economic and military instruments. In practice Yugoslavia could realise the biggest fear of Albanians since 1912 – liquidation of Albanian sovereignty, in this case by closer cooperation between communist leaders of both countries. The Tito-Stalin break in 1948 moved Albania into the strict control of the Soviet Union, but the idea of total integration or liquidation of the Albanian state was definitely lost. The distance between Albania and its new patron and also the anti-Yugoslav and anti-Greek policy of the Kremlin increased the role of Albania and created a significant feeling of safety.

The loyalty of Albanians to the Kremlin was severely tested when Nikita Khrushchev came to power. The de-Stalinization policy was extremely dangerous for the leadership of the Albanian communist party, and personally its leader – Enver Hoxha. Very dangerous for them was also the rapprochement between Moscow and Belgrade, started in 1955, over the heads of Albanian communists. It also forced Albanian communists to revise their policy toward Belgrade<sup>19</sup>. The loss of the trust was the first step on the way to the next radical move – the Soviet-Albanian break in 1961. This was possible because Albanian communists found their next strategic partner – the Chinese Communist Party—contesting Soviet leadership in the world communist movement.

From 1961 the Chinese way to communism and negative attitude of Beijing toward Yugoslavia were the strong pillars of Albanian policy. Far from their Chinese

<sup>17</sup> Kristo Frashëri, *Historia e lëvizjes së majte në Shqipëri dhe themelimin të PKSh-se 1878-1941 (veshtrim historik me një shtojcë dokumentare)*, (Tiranë, Akademia e Shkencave e Shqipërisë, 2006), p.37.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem., p. 230-232.

<sup>19</sup> Aleksandar Zivotic, *Jugoslavija, Albanija i velike sile (1945-1961)*, (Belgrad, Arhipelag INIS, 2011), p.518-528.

ally, Albania gained limited autonomy, but in the case of danger, the real help of Asiatic partner was problematic. In this situation, Albanian authorities sent mixed signals – the rhetoric of a circled fortress juxtaposed with a series of friendly gestures toward its neighbours. If Greece under the power of Black Colonels junta could not be a partner for Albania, this role could be played after the 1970's by Tito's Yugoslavia. Apart from ideological differences and personal interests of the communist leaders<sup>20</sup>, the Albanian-Yugoslav relations in the 1970's seemed to be friendly. The first move on this path was made by Josip Broz Tito, who called Albanian communist leaders in August 1970 "to lose ideological differences for common interests in defence of national sovereignty." In 1971 the diplomatic missions of both countries were brought to embassy level. Yugoslavia became the main European trading partner of Albania and cultural cooperation between Albanians from both countries reached the highest point<sup>21</sup>.

In the period of the Sino-Albanian alliance (1961-1977), the Yugoslav problems were not a priority of Albanian diplomacy. The situation changed just after the Tirana-Beijing break in 1977<sup>22</sup>. A separate department was created in the Albanian ministry of foreign affairs to concentrate on the question of Kosovo and Yugoslav minority policy. The characteristic effect of the department work was to collect articles published by the official Albanian government newspaper "Zeri i Popullit" and edit them into brochure form<sup>23</sup>. The change of the course in Albanian foreign policy after 1977 brought increasing interest in economic cooperation with European countries while preserving ideological dogmas (Albanian communist constitution forbade the taking of foreign credits), and still ignoring the politics of *detente* promoted by Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Trade agreements with Italy, France and Scandinavian countries did not change the dominant position of Yugoslavia in Albanian balance of trade. The greater trade possibilities were stopped by the question of a railway line Shkoder-Titograd. This line was the only one connecting Albanian railways with outer world and its construction was delayed by Albania.

The process of normalisation in Albanian foreign policy and escape from isolationism was delayed by ideological obstacles and also by Enver Hoxha personally. The radical changes started in 1985, after his death and the transfer of power to the new political leadership with Ramiz Alia as a head of state. Among Albanian political elites, Alia represented the northern part of Albania (something unique in this group) and had a greater sensitivity to the Kosovo problem (and limited trust towards Yugoslavia) but also he was not strongly connected with anti-Greek stereotypes and prejudices. In the end of the 1980's Albania found itself in a very complicated position – the growing Kosovo conflict forced Tirana to give gestures of solidarity with their

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<sup>20</sup> The international position of Josip Broz Tito as one of a leaders of non-alignment countries clearly inspired Enver Hoxha to become a leader of anti-revisionist and „real Marxist” communist parties of the world.

<sup>21</sup> Paulin Kola, *In search of Greater Albania*, (London, C. Hurst & Co. Publishers, 2003), p.132.

<sup>22</sup> Apart of ideological differences, the nail in the coffin of Sino-Albanian cooperation was Josip Broz Tito visit in Beijing (30 August – 7 September 1977), taken without consultation with Tirana.

<sup>23</sup> Ramiz Alia, *Jeta ime. Kujtime*, (Tirana, Botimet Toena, 2010), p.173-174.

compatriots and to attempt to internationalize the Kosovo problem. Unavoidably, this led to tensions in relations with Yugoslavia. The first of Alia's speeches on maintaining the "constant political line of Hoxha" in 1985, just two years after his death, seemed to be an illusion. Greece became step by step a strategic political partner for Albania in the Balkans. Paradoxically, the collection of selected articles by Hoxha concerning Greece and published after his death under the title "Two friendly nations" could justify the pro-Greek turnabout in Albanian policy<sup>24</sup>. The symbolic new phase in Albanian-Greek relations started in June, 1986, when in Dropull (near the Greek border) was the inauguration of a new irrigation system. The speech of Foto Cami, who represented Central Committee of Albanian Party of Labour, contained an expression about ending all conflicts between Albania and Greece. In Cami's opinion two countries can solve all "problems of the past" in the spirit of mutual understanding<sup>25</sup>. The increasing significance of Greece in Albanian foreign policy also stemmed from the crisis in Albanian-Italian relations. At the beginning of the 1980's, Italy was the most important "road to the West" for Albania. The unforeseen incident – "Popaj crisis" changed this priority<sup>26</sup>. The role of architect of Albanian-Greek rapprochement was played by Karolos Papoulias, at this time Greek minister of foreign affairs, who had familiar links with Northern Epirus. His Tirana visit in 1987 preceded the meeting of premiers of both countries in 1988. With a help of Greek socialists from PASOK party, Albanian diplomacy returned to the Balkan political cooperation, realised on the level of ministry of foreign affairs. In 1987 the Yugoslav minister of foreign affairs, Raif Dizdarević, sent an official note to Albanian ambassador in Belgrade with invitation to the nearest Balkan conference<sup>27</sup>. In February 1988, Albanian minister Reis Malile was a participant in a Belgrade conference, symbolically breaking the wall of isolation between the two countries.

This rapprochement was not longstanding. Albanian transformation in the 1990's opened new conflict areas, forgotten in the time of communist dictatorship. The Albanian mass migration provoked phobias in Greek society and negative stereotypes resurfaced<sup>28</sup>. The Albanian Orthodox Church, reborn after the atheist period was managed by Greek bishops and this change was perceived by Albanian rightists as a betrayal of the national cause. Suppressed for many years, the problem of a Greek minority took a special sense, with a growing political activity of Greeks. The most irritating for the new regime in Tirana was Greek government policy, treating illegal Albanian refugees as a "hostages" of Albanian attitudes toward the Greek

<sup>24</sup> Enver Hoxha, *Dy popuj miq pjesë nga ditari politik dhe dokumente të tjera për marrëdhëniet shqiptaro-greke, 1941-1984* (Tirana, 8 Nentori, 1985).

<sup>25</sup> *Zeri i Popullit*, June 2, 1986, p.3.

<sup>26</sup> The crisis in the bilateral relations began on 10 December 1985. On that day, the seven-member Popaj family managed to enter the grounds of the Italian Embassy in Tirana and requested political asylum. The Italians helped the Albanian family, ignoring the demands of the Albanian Foreign Ministry to hand the escapees into the hands of the police – Dilaver Sadikaj, *Politika e jashtme e shtetit shqiptar ne vitet '80*, *Studime Historike* No. 1-2, 1999, p.192-193.

<sup>27</sup> Robert Weiner, *Change in Eastern Europe*, (London 1994), p.147.

<sup>28</sup> Only in 1990-1992 more than 110 thousand Albanian refugees came to Greece, based on a cautious estimates – David Close, *Greece since 1945. Politics, Economy and Society*, (London, Longman Publishing House, 2002), p.196-197.

minority<sup>29</sup>.

Trying to describe the political position of Albania in Balkan region in the last years of 20th century, one can mention that it was a strong and accepted element of political stability in the area. The first phase of Albanian transformation found its tragic end in the economic catastrophe of 1997 and the danger of anarchy affected not only Albania but also neighbouring countries. During the reconstruction period, Albania tried to solve not only internal problems but also consequences of the 1999 war in Kosovo. The rapid construction of infrastructure (the traditional “Achilles heel” of the Albanian economy) and elevation of Albanian diplomacy, very active during Kosovo crisis opened the significant possibilities for building the position of this country in region. In first years after the Kosovo war the rapprochement Tirana-Belgrade was not possible, but Albanian socialists, who were in power from 1997 to 2005 returned to the idea of closer cooperation with Athens, even though it was sometimes similar to political patronage. Traditional friendly since the beginning of the 1990's were Albanian relations with Bulgaria. The political stability in Albania is also necessary in American plans for stability of the region, which could be seen as a strategic argument in Albanian geopolitics. The Stability Pact treated as a most advanced conception of cooperation of Balkan countries created promising perspectives for Albania – the rebuilding of its state after the 1997 catastrophe.

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<sup>29</sup> Minton F. Goldman, *Revolution and Change in Central and Eastern Europe: Political, Economic, and Social Challenges*, (New York, M.E. Sharpe, 1997), p. 79-80.

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