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Viewing cable 97TIRANA1976, BIOGRAPHY OF NEW ALBANIAN PRIME MINISTER

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97TIRANA1976	1997-08-08 15:24	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Tirana

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 TIRANA 001976

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SUBJECT: BIOGRAPHY OF NEW ALBANIAN PRIME MINISTER
FATOS NANO

(U) CLASSIFIED BY AMB. M. R. LINO FOR REASONS
1.5. (B) AND (D).

BIOGRAPHIC MATERIAL

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¶1. (U) PERSONAL DATA: FATOS NANO WAS BORN IN TIRANA ON SEPTEMBER 16, 1952. HE IS MARRIED TO HIS HIGH SCHOOL SWEETHEART, AND THEY HAVE TWO ALMOST-GROWN CHILDREN, A BOY AND A GIRL. THE BOY, 17 OR 18, IS STUDYING AT AN AMERICAN COLLEGE IN THESELONNKI, GREECE. THE GIRL, 16 OR 17, IS STUDYING IN LYON, FRANCE.

¶2. (U) EDUCATION: NANO GRADUATED FROM THE ECONOMICS FACULTY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TIRANA IN 1975, WITH A SPECIALIZATION IN POLITICAL ECONOMY.

¶3. (U) PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

-- FROM 1975-1978, NANO WORKED IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE METALLURGICAL MILLS IN ELBASAN.

-- FROM 1978-1981, HE WORKED AS A RESEARCHER IN WORLD ECONOMY IN THE INSTITUTE OF MARXISM-LENINISM IN TIRANA.

-- FROM 1981-1984, HE WORKED AS AN ECONOMIST IN THE PRISKA AGRICULTURAL FARM IN TIRANA.

-- FROM 1984-1990, HE WORKED AS A RESEARCHER ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROBLEMS AND ON REFORMS OF MARKET ECONOMIES IN EAST BLOC COUNTRIES, AGAIN IN THE MARXIST-LENINIST INSTITUTE IN TIRANA.

-- CONCURRENTLY, FROM 1978-1990, HE ALSO TAUGHT AND LECTURED IN SEVERAL FACULTIES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TIRANA.

¶4. (U) POLITICAL EXPERIENCE: IN DECEMBER OF 1990, NANO WAS APPOINTED SECRETARY GENERAL OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS. IN JANUARY AND FEBRUARY OF 1991, HE CARRIED OUT THE FUNCTION OF DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER FOR ECONOMIC REFORM, UNDER PRESIDENT ALIA AND PRIME MINISTER CARCANI. FROM MARCH TO MAY OF 1991, HE WAS APPOINTED PRIME MINISTER OF THE CARETAKER GOVERNMENT THAT PREPARED THE FIRST MULTI-PARTY ELECTIONS (MARCH 31, 1991) INITIATING THE TRANSITION TO A DEMOCRATIC SYSETM.

¶5. (U) FROM MAY TO JUNE OF 1991, HE WAS GIVEN A SECOND MANDATE AS PRIME MINISTER. HE WAS ELECTED A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FROM 1991-1992 AND AGAIN IN 1992, ALTHOUGH HIS SECOND TERM IN PARLIAMENT WAS INTERRUPTED. HE WAS ARRESTED ON CHARGES OF CORRUPTION ON JULY 30, 1993 AND SENTENCED IN 1994 TO 12 YEARS IN PRISON IN A TRIAL MARRED BY FLAGRANT VIOLATIONS OF LEGAL PROCEDURES. HE WAS DECLARED A POLITICAL PRISONER BY AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, HELSINKI HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH, THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY UNION, AND OTHER GROUPS. HE WAS RELEASED FROM PRISON MARCH 14, 1997 IN THE GENERAL UPHEAVAL AND CRISIS, AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER OFFICIALLY PARDONED BY PRESIDENT BERISHA.

¶6. (U) NANO WAS ELECTED CHAIRMAN OF THE SOCIALIST PARTY IN THE FOUNDING CONGRESS OF THIS PARTY ON JUNE 12, 1991, AND WAS RECONFIRMED IN THIS POST IN THE SECOND CONGRESS OF THE PARTY IN AUGUST, 1996, WHILE HE WAS STILL IN PRISON.

¶7. (U) OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES: NANO HAS PUBLISHED A NUMBER OF COMPARATIVE STUDIES ON MARKET ECONOMIES, ON THE REFORMS IN EAST BLOC COUNTRIES, AND ON THE FUNCTIONING OF EUROPEAN MARKETS. HE HAS ALSO PUBLISHED ARTICLES AND RESEARCH STUDIES HE PRESENTED TO SCIENTIFIC CONFERENCES, BOTH IN ALBANIA AND ABROAD. NANO RECEIVED THE THIRD MOST IMPORTANT PRIZE IN THE COUNTRY FOR A STUDY ON THE SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS FOR COUNTRIES IN TRANSITION.

¶8. (U) LANGUAGES: NANO SPEAKS FLUENT ITALIAN AND GOOD ENGLISH. HE ALSO SPEAKS RUSSIAN, SERBO-CROATIAN, SPANISH, AND SOME GREEK.

COMMENTARY

¶9. (C) FATOS NANO WAS BORN INTO A FAMILY THAT WAS PART OF THE ELITE OF THE COMMUNIST REGIME. HIS FATHER WAS THE DIRECTOR OF STATE RADIO AND TELEVISION FOR MANY YEARS. NANO HIMSELF GRADUATED FROM "SAMI FRASHERI" HIGH SCHOOL IN TIRANA, RESERVED FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE NOMENKLATURA. HE LEARNED

FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND TO PLAY THE GUITAR. IN HIS SECOND YEAR OF HIGH SCHOOL, HE FOUNDED A ROCK GROUP (HE WAS THE LEAD SINGER) THAT PLAYED THE MUSIC OF THE BEATLES, STRICTLY FORBIDDEN TO THE GENERAL PUBLIC AT THE TIME.

¶10. (C) ACCORDING TO SOME REPORTS, WHEN NANO WAS WORKING IN THE MARXIST-LENINIST INSTITUTE, HE WAS SINGLED OUT BY HOXHA'S WIFE, WHO HEADED THE INSTITUTE, FOR SPECIAL FAVOR. SHE REPORTEDLY FOLLOWED HIS CAREER AND HELPED HIM AT STRATEGIC POINTS TO MOVE FROM JOB TO JOB.

¶11. (C) HE WAS APPOINTED DEPUTY PM IN EARLY 1991, AND AFTER THE FALL OF THE CARCANI GOVERNMENT BECAME PM. AFTER FOUR WEEKS IN THIS POST, HE HAD TO PREPARE THE ELECTIONS OF MARCH 31. HE RAN AND WON AS A CANDIDATE OF THE PARTY OF LABOR IN TIRANA IN THE RUN-OFF ROUND OF THIS ELECTION. IN THE NEW GOVERNMENT HE WAS AGAIN APPOINTED PM. THE NEW JOB, HOWEVER, DID NOT LAST LONGER THAN THE FIRST. ONE WEEK AFTER HIS INSTALLATION, THE GENERAL STRIKE ORGANIZED BY THE INDEPENDENT UNIONS BEGAN AND HE RESIGNED A COUPLE OF WEEKS LATER. YLLI BUFI TOOK OVER AS PRIME MINISTER TO HEAD AN EQUALLY SHORT-LIVED GOVERNMENT.

¶12. (C) IN THE TENTH CONGRESS OF THE LABOR PARTY, IN JUNE, 1991, HE WON THE EMPTY SEAT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY. THE WRITER DRITERO AGOLLI WAS HIS MAIN RIVAL IN THAT CONTEST. IN THE SAME CONGRESS, THE PARTY OF LABOR'S NAME WAS CHANGED TO THE SOCIALIST PARTY OF ALBANIA.

¶13. (C) FOR THE ELECTIONS OF MARCH, 1992, THE SOCIALIST PARTY WAS PREPARED TO FACE A MAJOR DEFEAT. IT IS DURING THIS TIME THAT NANO WAS ACCUSED OF COOKING UP A DEAL WITH BERISHA FOR SHIFTING POWER TO THE RIGHT, THAT WAS ALLEGEDLY DISCUSSED IN TRIESTE, ITALY, AT A CONFERENCE BOTH ATTENDED, IN THE PRESENCE OF MENTOR COKU. IN THE THOSE ELECTIONS, NANO WON AS A CANDIDATE IN KUCOVA. HIS RIVAL FOR THAT SEAT WAS PERIKLI TETA, NOW STATE SECRETARY IN THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE IN NANO'S GOVERNMENT.

¶14. (C) IN HIS LAST SPEECH TO PARLIAMENT BEFORE HIS ARREST, NANO ACCUSED FORMER U.S. AMBASSADOR WILLIAM RYERSON, THEN DCM CHRIS HILL, AND THE CIA FOR HAVING PLOTTED WITH BERISHA TO SET UP HIS PHONEY TRIAL. IN THE SAME SPEECH, NANO ACCUSED BERISHA OF TURNING ALBANIA INTO AN AMERICAN-RUN BANANA REPUBLIC.

¶15. (C) IN 1996, THERE WERE RUMORS HIS DAUGHTER WAS TAKING DRUGS WHILE HE WAS IN PRISON AND THAT HIS TEENAGE SON HAD GOTTEN OUT OF HIS MOTHER'S CONTROL, BECOMING REBELLIOUS AND UNRULY. WITH BOTH OF HIS CHILDREN CURRENTLY STUDYING OUTSIDE OF ALBANIA, WHATEVER THE TRUTH OF THE RUMORS, THEY SEEM TO BE DOING WELL NOW AND RECENTLY JOINED THEIR PARENTS AT A DAY A DURRES BEACH WHERE FOREIGNERS WERE PRESENT.

¶16. (C) NANO IS AN INTENSE, FOCUSED INDIVIDUAL WHO, AT ABOUT 5' 6" IS AVERAGE HEIGHT FOR AN ALBANIAN MALE. FORMERLY SLIM AND CLEANSHAVEN, HE EMERGED FROM PRISON WITH A SUBSTANTIAL WEIGHT GAIN AND A BEARD. MANY OLD ACQUAINTANCES SAID THEY DID NOT RECOGNIZE HIM AFTER HIS RELEASE. A HEAVY SMOKER, A SOCIAL ANIMAL WHO ENJOYS LATE-NIGHT SCHMOOZING WITH HIS INNER CIRCLE OF POLITICAL FRIENDS, NANO IS SERIOUS EVEN WHEN HE IS JOKING.

¶17. (C) HIS CLOSEST FRIEND WHO STUCK WITH HIM THROUGH THE WORST TIMES, WHEN HE WAS IN PRISON, IS BASHKIM ZENELI. ZENELI, WHO BESIDES NANO'S WIFE HAS BEEN HIS MOST INTIMATE CONFIDANT, HAS NOT BEEN GIVEN A PRESTIGIOUS HIGH-PROFILE POSITION. RATHER, AS MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT AND DEPUTY HEAD OF THE PARLIAMENTARY COMMISSION ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS, HE KEEPS A FAIRLY LOW PROFILE.

¶18. (C) NANO'S WIFE VISITED HIM ONCE A WEEK IN TEPELENA PRISON. THEY ARE VERY EVIDENTLY DEVOTED TO ONE ANOTHER AND WHILE SHE IS NOT AS PROFICIENT IN LANGUAGES AND DOES NOT SPEAK MUCH WHEN THEY ARE IN PUBLIC OR IN THE PRESENCE OF FOREIGNERS, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT NANO HOLDS HER OPINION IN HIGH REGARD.

LINO