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1. INTRODUCTION

The idea of carrying research on social change in Albania of the 1990s, focusing on the transformations of Albanians' identities, crystallised more than a year ago. Together with it, came the understanding that this was a difficult task to carry ahead. The recent social, political and economic upheaval in the country have thoroughly tested the approach followed to investigate, producing a stance in which further questions continue to raise, and answers need to be continuously modified and substantiated. Under these circumstances, the analysis and the conceptualisation of the Albanian reality becomes more challenging, pointing at the need for continuos research and continuous reflections on the implications for policy.

The Albanian discourse of pre-1990 mainly dealt with past and future issues. There was 'reluctance' to address the present issues, a 'present tense deficiency' that can partly explain the little sociological research carried in Albania, and by Albanians themselves during the communist regime. Predictions on totalitarianism, and transition theories in general, do not help to understand much of the post-communist change either. This paper modestly tries to fill up this vacuum in relation to post-communist Albania. It does so by grasping the momentum and trying to get beyond it, by combining historical analysis with the interpretation of research findings of field work undertaken in summer 1996, by critically utilising concepts such as democratisation, transition, civil society, identity. Its constraints relate to the nature of reality that is being analysed, i.e. the fluidity and the speed of the process. They relate to the absence of a profound analysis of the previous authoritarian system, as well as to the degree of selfcensorship of the Albanians themselves that affects the credibility of the data. It hopes, in the end, to give some understanding of the patterns and processes of post-communist change, to raise questions that relate to the process of nation-state building, civil society, and politics of identity, and finally to reflect on policy.

The research utilises primary and secondary data. Quantitative and qualitative methods are combined in interpreting the findings of summer 1996. Nearly 500 people in three regions of Albania were requested to fill up a formatted questionnaire and representatives of various groups were interviewed.

The paper is divided into five chapters. Chapter two provides a historical frame in which the complex present reality is situated and the most important moments in Albanians' history are highlighted. By critically utilising modernisation theories, the chapter intends to provide a frame in which past, present and future can stand. It considers the implications of the late national-building process and interprets the external conditionality on Albanians' 'backwardness'. The unfolding of the Albanian state within the capitalist paradigm of modernisation, as well as the emergence of the 'unsolved national question' are also analysed. Moreover, it provides an interpretation of the 'real-existing' socialism, the legacies of which condition the actual process.

Chapter three tests the main theoretical assumptions related to post-communist change and points to the problematic relationship between concepts of democracy, democratisation, free market, civil society. The last period of the communist rule is retaken, followed by

an overall discussion of the special kind of social change of the 1990s. The final section focuses on the changing realities between the multi-party elections of 1991 and 1992.

Chapter four highlights the characteristics of 1992-1997 period and provides an interpretation of the recent crisis. This analysis is supported by research findings of summer 1996, which focus was the transformation of identities and mentalities. It considers the transformation of the political, economic and social structures and institutions from the coming into power of the anti-Communist opposition (March 1992) to the present, examining the inherent contradictions of the adoption of the Western model in the context of a non-Western state and society. Section two refers to the factors that provoked the recent crisis. Finally, in section three the above analysis is supported with relevant data gathered during summer 1996, focusing on the transformation of mentalities and personal and collective identities.

Chapter five concludes on the characteristics and factors of post-communist change of the 1990s, highlighting the need for further research.

2. THE LATE NATIONAL-BUILDING PROCESS AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ALBANIAN STATE WITHIN TWO MODERNISATION PARADIGMS

2.1. Albania: 'A Geographical Expression'- The Albanian State: 'A Historical Accident'

Albania is part of the Balkans, a region which it is said to produce more history than it can consume. The people of the region themselves are very sensitive to their past. So a reasonable question would be: Why do we need history? Can history explain the present? If yes, to what extent is this possible?

First, understanding the nature of the past assists in evaluating the controversies of the present, though history or the past cannot fully explain the present or predict the future. There exist different ideas on this subject. For Chirot, researcher of Eastern Europe, and with reference to it, the past can set very definite limits on change and affect its general direction (1989:13). In this respect, Albanians are facing today their future as well as the unsolved questions and determinants of the past.

Secondly, history can be used to make history, which means i) reconstruction of collective memories as regards nation, alliances, orientations, and ii) utilisation of history in providing clues to 'corresponding' moments of the present, in particular, in history's turning points, such as the present transition.

A third answer comes from a recognition of a need for history to be written by the Albanians themselves, for there exists a lot of distortion, ignorance and abuse of the historical past for political reasons, by non-Albanians and Albanians as well. Often Albanians have been represented by their neighbours as people 'with no history'; on the other hand, Albanian historians of the communist regime presented Albania as a historical desert, for which the starting point was the glorious communist epoch.

2.1.1. Pre - Ottoman period

Albania, is included in most of the current research as part of Eastern Europe, which, in my opinion, represents an artificial categorisation and, as such, a problematic single entity. Nowadays, most of the scholars on Eastern Europe/Balkans agree to a redefinition of the region's *delayed development* or *arrested modernisation* and trace back this experience to the early centuries before Ottoman rule.

According to a world-system perspective, Balkan backwardness, in other words *slow growth* and *dependent development*, can be explained in terms of the peripheral role the region played in the West's development. The explanation that the world-system model provides is dominated by economic determinism, and generally speaking, most of the research on the nature and the causes of Balkan backwardness is dominated by either geographical, or cultural, or economic determinism. However, in the overall interpretation one can find complementary and significant explanations that relate to the Albanian case.

As regards the pre-Ottoman period, Albanian territories shared a longer and more fateful experience as borderlands of Byzantium, compared to Western Europe[1]. They were kept under constant military pressure. The imposition of taxes by the central and local power prompted peasant migration into the uplands, discouraging advancement beyond a natural economy and a peaceful pursuit and accumulation of the agricultural technique advanced in North-Western Europe[2]. The motive was survival, not commercial advantage. The lack of stability and autonomy disadvantaged the linking of the urban centres based on 'long term' negotiations and 'normal' market profits, rather than on military basis. As Lampe (1989) notes, Balkan status in general was *primarily of a military frontier*.

In that sense, a certain gap existed between Balkan and Western economies before the Ottoman rule and long ago before it was absorbed into the broader Western world market.

Complementary to this, is the opinion that the economic dynamism of Western Europe should be considered exceptional and unusual, compared to the rest of the world's slowness to change, progress, even its seeming tendency towards stagnation (see Chirot D.1989, Vajda M. 1990). In this view, Albania's 'backwardness' is not exceptional.

Finally, an answer to the question whether peripheralization or lack of contact with the West made for Albania's 'backwardness' leads to a consideration of the economic, political, social and cultural factors that relate to the Ottoman invasion period, 1500-1900.

2.1.2. The Ottoman invasion: 1500 - 1900 and the Albanian national-building process

In the year 393, under emperor Theodore's rule, the Roman Empire was divided into two. Albanian territories were administratively made a part of Byzantium. This line of division initially separating two empires, separated two religious worlds: the Catholic one, of Latin or Germanic domination, and the Orthodox Greek, Slav, and later Ottoman one. Confronted with two eminent dangers, Helenization and Slavization, the Latin character of Christianity in the Albanian lands prevented, to a certain degree, the assimilation of the Albanians, who inhabited the same territories with the Slavs[3]. In

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[1] As Lampe puts it 'Balkan experience stands apart from the rest of Eastern Europe, moreover, in its early juxtaposition to two successive colossi, the Byzantine and Ottoman empire' (Lampe J.R., 1989:179).

[2] Berting argues that 'Western Europe is the birth place of a unique, universal technological culture' a point often neglected in the analysis of the European identity or European culture. In his view, since the sixteenth century, technological development had been imbued with the cultural development, contributing to a rising awareness of an European consciousness. (Berting J., 1990) To further the argument, the powerful development model, known in modern economics and sociology as the 'industrial convergence thesis', is determined by two forces: the rise of rationality and the large-scale international markets. This two elements are missing in the Albanian picture.

[3] P. Bogdani, Albanian writer of the seventeenth century, in the introduction of his work "Cuneus", affirms that Slavs in order to differentiate the Catholic religion called it "arbanaska vera" (Plasari A. 1992:21). free translation.

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these centuries, Albanian territories, borderlands of Byzantium, were turned into battlefields in which not simply two Churches, but two worlds encountered each other: the Western Roman one and the Balkan-Byzantine one. Romans, Venetians and Normans wanted to traverse the sea, aiming at Constantinople and Jerusalem; Bulgarians, Serbs and later Ottomans needed political access to the Adriatic. In these circumstances, Albanian nobles, not only in war, but often in alliance among themselves as well as with the Slavs and Greeks, tried to find an equilibrium. Understanding that for their neighbours, the idea of religion and nation went together, they looked for support from the Roman Church. The eminent Albanian figure of our century, Fan Noli, (1976) has written: *"Catholicism gave Albania the state unity it needed, and linked it with the European Christian world"*[4]. However, it was only the Ottoman threat that made the Albanian nobles pact on establishing their military state, led by George Castriot Scanderbeg, in order to resist the invader. This represents a significant early point in history, in which the Albanians tried to write their own national story. The Ottoman conquest interrupted this process, at a very early phase, and also added a new element in the picture, the conversion to Islam. This conditioning intensified the Albanians' tendency to question their relationship to the two worlds. The effort to find and re-find themselves amid two civilisations, has persistently stamped their way of living, their customs, their history and their spiritual and mental constitution.

Ottoman hegemony was the principal constraint on Albanian development, uninterruptedly imposed for more than four centuries. It hindered to the extreme any autonomous form of local development and paralysed the thin communications that existed between the urban coastal centres and Western Europe[5]. The resistance led by George Castriot Scanderbeg, 1443-1468, seems to have been the only independent period. It could temporarily check the invasion of Albanian main lands, but it was soon followed by grave repercussions. The feudal features of the Ottoman administration, and its imposition on the Albanian population, prevented any kind of capitalist growth. Rural disorder, because of heavy taxes, and unreliable army units, also made internal trade less attractive, from the seventeenth century onwards. This was serious enough for it stimulated migration in the unreachable mountainous regions, strengthening the old cyclical patters of the natural economy, and customary law - *'Kanun'* .

The new division of the land into *'cifliks'* (seventeenth century) was feudal in character. The double external conditionality to maintain them was persistent for more than two centuries, and it intermingled with internal happenings and factors such as the demographic thinness, geographic disadvantages, massive religious conversion. It's accurate to quote the conclusion of the economic historian Patrick O'Brien that *"for the economic growth of the core, the periphery was peripheral"* (in Lampe, ibid)

If we consider shortly the last century's condition, which, at the same time, represents the dawn of modernity in the Albanian lands we note that the Albanian population were not given many economic alternatives, but *'ciflik'* share cropping, heavy taxes

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[4] Originally in Albanian, my translation.

[5] "Trade flourished for a time, but the Ottoman orientation to overland expansion and the military conflicts with Venice and Western European maritime powers eventually cut into Mediterranean trade ...by the last decades of the sixteenth century" (Lampe, ibid:183)

and difficult terms of trade in towns. Most chose upland retreat for livestock raising. Terrain and their guerrilla tactics provided protection. For the second option, trade, foreign investment by the West was absent. In this respect, the limited size of the domestic market and the shortage of industrial labour[6], are factors that persistently influenced in widening the gap with the developed European economies even after independence (1912).

In parenthesis, there seem to be a contradiction between the statement on Balkan's 'production and consumption' of history and the long oblivion that Ottoman rule brought to the Albanian lands. Being in the margin of a backward empire meant both stagnation and backwaters, and a lesser degree of affectedness by the internal dynamics of the system itself. In my opinion, being in the margin would also mean a lesser degree of suppression, and centralisation, so more room for flexibility and manoeuvre. Evidence of this, are the persistence of the cyclical patterns of the natural economy, or the growing autonomy of the three *'pashaliks'* (principalities) in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, which feudal leaders failed to cooperate for a common strategy to increase their autonomy from the High Porte, and thus their resistance was doomed to fail.

Related to the first question raised 'peripheralization or lack of contact' with the West, I would rather respond with a non-economic term: *'alienation'*. The following paragraphs will clarify this point.

2.1.3. Culture - a survival kit

Balkan history can be considered as an intercultural exploration among people who border on each other, and construct out of the same raw materials. 'Initially', Albanian culture was shaped significantly under the influence of Greek and Roman culture, whereas in the centuries to follow the ever-changing conditions created a lack of balance between endogenous and exogenous factors, providing no time for sufficient adaptation, or better allowing only one consistent pattern - survival adaptation. A lot was put at stake. Since then, culture, to be conceived as a broad realm of human relations, was used, invented and re-invented as a survival and resistance kit, normalising the assimilation tendencies of more populous, prosperous or powerful people, Romans, Greeks, Serbs and Turks. As previously mentioned, Islam was a significant element that was added in the old dichotomy between East and West. Though fiercely resistant in maintaining their language, Albanians, as Vickers puts it, "*wore religion lightly, changing faith for political reasons*" (Vickers M., cited in Miall H.1995:26). The Ottoman conquest resulted in large-scale conversions to Islam (65% of the population); the process continued for nearly three centuries and met a lot of resistance. It is well known that Albanians living in Shpat, Elbasan district, Lumi, Vlora district or Malesia e Madhe (The Highlands) still use two names, a Christian one within the family, and a Muslim one for official use. Religious conversion was use to construct an identity different to the unconverted Christian Albanians, and this process, to a certain degree, questioned the existence of the Albanians as one distinct people,

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[6] Lampe notes that in Balkan, in general, the urban share of population, everywhere decisive for mass marketing, remained about 12 per cent. (Lampe ibid:201)

and counterweighted the common traditional values that Albanians recognised for their own.

Christianity, was one of the basic elements for the construction of Europe's identity, and Albanians, by the end of the last century, did not present a Christian nation any longer. By Westerners, they were perceived as part of 'the other' bloc. Was this the price of survival-adaptation?

The Albanian culture, during seventeenth and eighteenth century, had very few contacts with the Western culture and only few territories were exposed to the progressive ideas on human development and the capitalist process. Albania's image in the West, was either mantled with romanticism[7], or used to represent 'the other - the strange' in the construction of a modern European identity. Both approaches resulted in the alienation of Albanians.

The dilemma of finding the place where they belong, torments Albanians even today. The gap between 'being oneself' or 'being what one should be' is even more striking. In the modernisation context of the beginning of the century, this dilemma was reshaped in the struggle for a national identity and modern state. It was transformed even more in the state of war between the two paradigms of modernity, capitalism and socialism. The partial solution of the national question gave rise to even more complex questions. The next session will consider Albanians' history in this process, critically employing the modernisation perspective.

2.2. The Transitional Century - The Long Road to Modernity

2.2.1. Albanian modern nation state: The capitalist cradle

"Sun that rises, where it sets" **Naim Frasheri (Albanian Renaissance poet)**

The end of the last century marks the disintegration of the Ottoman empire. The Ottoman invasion froze the national-building process at its earlier stage, and the Albanians were the last in the Balkans to develop a national movement. The process was reinitiated; the Albanian state was advocated by wise men, Renaissance leaders, most of whom got education in the West and spent their life out of the invaded country. It was part of the modernization package, a project which went undisputed for its achievements in the West. As the advocacy for autonomy rapidly moved towards independence, it was clear that the project was too ambitious to be realised within Young Turks reforms (1908). Within the national movement two fronts were rapidly distinguished. The first one, the 'utopians', tried to integrate Albania into Europe[8], whereas the second one 'a la jeun-turque' kept close relations with the old

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[7] A classical example of this is Byron's poem "Child Harold", in which the best qualities of the Albanians are praised.

[8] Chirot notes that the great, overwhelming impact of the West on the other regions, as it came to contact with them, and on Eastern Europe in particular, was political. In the case of the local elites he concludes that 'Western commerce may have been economically constructive or destructive, but Western political intervention always posed a deadly threat to local elites' (Chirot D., 1989:11).

master, declaring that "*Albania is one with Turkey*" (cited in Plasari A. 1992:37). This came with a recognition for a need for social emancipation through massive education in the mother tongue, and economic progress following the model of the industrialising capitalist West. Economic and political power achieved through participation in the national movement, delegitimized the power of the invaders, as well as questioned the ascribed power of Albanian big landlords.

In 28 November, 1912 the Albanian National Assembly proclaimed the independent state of Albania, including all Albanian lands. This very significant act went counter to the ambitions of the neighbouring Serbs and Greeks. With the intervention, and the recognition by the Great Powers of a 'small' independent Albania in 1913, these ambitions were restrained, but half of the Albanian population was left out of borders in Kosova, Macedonia and Montenegro.

The Albanian state as recognised by the Big Powers in 1913: i) represented the historical aspiration of the Albanians to be free from the invader; ii) showed political realism on the part of the leading class to solve the issue under the conditions of more developed national movements by the neighbours; and iii) signified the impact of the external happenings on the Albanian development and the emergence of the unsolved national question'. Eversince, whereas for its neighbours Albania was a '*historical accident*', the unsatisfied divided Albanian population became one of the major underlying problems of the Balkans.

In the chaotic period of 1912-1920, Albania, though neutral, was terrain of foreign armies incursions, whereas during the 20s and 30s a certain stability was reached. The political life reflected the struggle for domination between the heads of tribes, the big landlords, who called themselves the 'fathers' of the Albanian independence with the young occidentalists, the liberals, who recognised the need of having the intellectuals' support. As Chirot notes '*the amusing imitators of the West*' had to built their Western aspirations on an Eastern reality. The agony of embracing Western modernisation was slowly penetrating all realms of society, but the degree of coherence remained very low.

The government crisis and conflict between the two fronts, the big feudal lords and occidentalists, brought the Bourgeois Democratic Revolution of June, 1924, which Government had a short life followed by the emerging into power of Ahmet Zogu, representative of the landlord class, eventually supported by the Serbs, and soon declaring himself King. This event goes to show the conservative nature and the authoritarian tendencies within the feudal class, that was against any radical changes that would question the land property. The 'occidentalist king' broke diplomatic relations with Turkey, rejected the Ottoman administrative methods, practised the occidental legislation, reorganised the administrative power, fashioned a precarious national unity, opened the country to the West, and in practise steadily became dependant on Italian financial assistance[9]. This represents the first attempt, on the part of Albanian political class to see Albanian state's existence and prosperity reliant on an

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[9] Relevant to this point is the general conclusion of Chirot on Balkan that 'fiscal and political imitation or reliance on the Western powers led to a form of dependency, that was not exactly straightforward economic peripheralization, but nevertheless economically inhibiting' (Chirot D., 1989:10).

external power. Unfortunately, throughout this century, independent of the ideological colours, Albanian leaders have inherited this mentality. The communist leaders heavily relied on Soviet Union, then China, Albanians politicians of the 1990s did not hesitate to include Albania in the Organisation of Islamic Countries.

2.2.2. Nation-state building versus regionalism

Nation building and the state formation process has been driven ahead by certain complex mechanisms, which, cannot simply be labelled 'modern' or 'traditional', 'advanced' or 'primitive'.

The social, economic and political integration of the Albanians was a very slow process. It departed from a common desire to affirm freedom and to break with the fatality of the old empire. But Albanian politics reflected i) the religious and social division among Albanians and ii) the influence of the Ottoman way of administration and governance. As an Albanian researcher of this century notes, '*the laws and the daily customs were established in order not to force so much the division among conquested and conquestors, but among Christians and Muslims*" (cited in Plasari A.,1992:35). Converted Albanians could get high political and military posts in the Empire, and often instead of struggling for their country's independence, under Sultan's order they got involved in suppressing Albania's neighbours independent movements. Under the Ottomans, mercenary, and military service with 'bedel'[10] became a way of living. Without absolutizing the phenomena, and also considering the possibility for manoeuvres to by-pass and not to execute each Ottoman administration decrees, as above mentioned, religion and nation represented two different things for the Albanians. In order to neutralise the de-unifying force of religion, which worked independent of the territory, the intellectuals consciously forged the credo that '*the religion of the Albanians is to be Albanian*'. They believed that this faith, transformed into action, could stand as the basis of an 'Albanian civic religion', the essence of the national identification process.

Another complex mechanism that inhibited national integration was **regionalism**, the spirit of which has always influenced Albanian politics and social relations in general. Albanians inhabited distinctive territories of lowland and highlands, in distinctive 'cifliks', and due to the absence of infrastructure did not establish relations out of their communities. Relying on an isolated natural economy, they recognised as their own the laws and the norms established by this group which in return provided a certain degree of security. The interaction between leaders of these regions, usually big landlords often was conflictual, and resistance against the invader was the only unifying element in the picture. The resistance to the new central power continued also after the Independence with two extreme experiments: the proclamation of the autonomous Mirdita principality (a Northern region), Korca French Republic (South-East Albania), which goes to show that consolidation was neither simply a matter of good will, nor could it be resolved by decrees. Aware of the circumstances, the Albanian intellectuals evoked the glorious time of the national unity of the fifteenth century, and furthered their searching to prove Yllyrian genesis of the Albanians, providing for Albanians'

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[10] *Bedel* was the name for a person, who was paid for discharging another's military service.

contiguity in space and their attachment to place and homeland. This also was a direct response to the chauvinistic ambitions of the neighbours. How far their strategies could reach is questionable, for massive education was never fulfilled; by 1939, nearly 90% of the population remained illiterate and, secondly, infrastructure and communication within and among regions was nearly non-existent.

Territorial integration was determinantly affected by the fact, that half the Albanian territories were left outside state borders. In reality, the Albanian nation and the independent Albanian state were two different realities; this half dependent with half independent status has ever influenced Albanians' definition and identification process.

2.2.3. Culture - the most visible but also the most problematic of forces for societal integration

There exist different views on the relevance and the centrality of culture in national societies. Edward Shils observes that *'economic and political integration rather than cultural forces have borne the primary responsibility for the integration of masses into the modern states'* (cited in Schudson M. 1994:22).

The Catholic clergymen, under the protection of the Roman Church to a certain degree acted independently to neutralise the omnipresence of the Ottoman invasion, particularly in the Northern regions of the country. Still, theirs remained an elite culture, often written in Latin.

With reference to popular culture, Albanian songs, customs and myths reflect the penetration of Islam; they show a certain degree of hybridisation of the ancient Albanian rituals with Islamic practises. The heroes of ancient ballads have got both Christian and Muslim names. Even, the Albanian national hero, George Castriot - Scanderbeg could not escape the symbiosis. If we think of culture as a way of action for survival and resistance to assimilation (and five centuries of conquest could not be only five centuries of uninterrupted struggle), then religious conversion was a kind of adaptation that put a lot of values at stake, but did not bring assimilation.

In their encounter with modernisation, Albanians of the lowlands reacted differently from the highlanders. This division usually has been perceived as a North -*'gege'* - and South -*'toske'* division, evidently persistent since the Middle ages. But, as Smith (1991) notes, regions are difficult to define; their centres are often multiple and their boundaries ragged. Referring to culture, and conscious of the problematic relations between culture and territory, I argue that that what is perceived as a North - *'gege'*, and South *'toske'* division can also be constructed as *'lowland'* versus *'highland'* subcultures. The question is: To what degree, and under what circumstances were layers of culture apparently invented, reconstructed differently in the two regions, responding differently to the changing reality of the beginning of the century?

In parenthesis, there are no differences between a Southern highlander and a Northern one, in terms of their spiritual or mental constitution. Both lowlanders and highlanders, Northerners and Southerners, invested emotionally in language, common symbols, myths and stories of the past. In my view, the main difference was in terms of degree of exposure to the Western world, to the modernisation project set in motion by the

new Albanian state. The lowlanders were traditionally more exposed to the West than their compatriots. Since this exposure was more or less gradual, their adaptation was smoother that their "awkward" fellow countrymen. The process of communication with the West was never completely interrupted in the few existing urban coastal centres (the role of the clergy was mentioned above), whereas highlanders who found retreat and autonomy in the mountains were isolated from the changes of the modern century. The rising bourgeois class tried to establish trade links with Italy and Greece, and entrepreneurial skills were developed, whereas highlanders did not and could not appreciate the benefits of trade or migration. They felt more secure adhering to the established autonomous forms of organising their life, representing a conservative community resistant to change.

The distinction '*urban - rural*' also blurs the above divisions. The disintegration of peasant communities, in which the individual's life was determined from birth to death, was a very slow process all over Albanian territories. The poor peasant, with no information, or not challenged enough by the few job opportunities created in the towns, was reluctant to leave his village and meet the unknown. His world began and ended with his small plot of land. In general, affected by certain factors such as the absence of investment in economic sectors, the absence of infrastructure in general, the absence of long-term political programme on the part of the political leading class, that lacked stability itself, the urbanisation process proceeded at a very slow pace, not posing a great challenge to the peasant communities and people's mentalities[11].

Of relevance in the discussion on nation-state formation, as part of the modernisation process, is the consideration of the complex relation between kinship institution and the state model. The question is: Under what conditions do or can traditional kinship institution persistently coexist within the modern frame of the state? Are these organisational forms exclusive?

First, the appropriation of the nation-state model depends on the transparency of its image. Emotional motivation for affinity, distortion or mystification counts.

Second, it depends on the immediate benefits individuals or groups derive from conforming to the nation-state model. This directly influences the extent to which the model is adopted. It was mentioned that the degree of coherence among Albanians was low.

And, third, it depends on the model's place of origin. Modernisation was a model transferred from the West, not imposed by any invader. Its liberatory aspect was of great significance for the Albanians. In this case, ideas of the nation, community and liberty reinforced each other.

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[11] The big landlords, the rising bourgeoisie who hailed or protested the Italian invasion in 1939, the hungry workers of the first enterprises with foreign capital, the highlander youth born with coded 'vendetta', women defined as 'sack to hold' in the traditional Kanun, veiled dreaming girls in awakening towns and daring intellectuals stood in one reality. The meaning of the modern and pre-modern kept changing, their fields were mixed and not fixed.

Smith (ibid: 11) speaks of a '*non-Western*' model as well, which, according to him, has "'*an ethnic*' *conception of the nation*", its distinguishing feature being its emphasis on '*community of birth and native culture*'. Thus, culture is a central element in the '*non - Western*' nation-state integration. If we accept his argument, the Albanian case would apparently represent an effort to hybridise the two models, characterised by the persistence of kinship institutions, as element of culture. Though greatly contested, kinship stood as an internal determinant that affected the political directions that Albania was to take.

Concluding, modernisation and the creation of new state institutions contested the power of the big landlords. Still, centralisation cohabited with the Ottoman way of governance. What Albanians experienced was a state of anarchy and instability (1912-1920) or authoritarian and later monarchic regime supported by external powers (1924-1939).

The combination of the external conditionality of the Second World War with the internal contradictions of the new Albanian state produced the Albanian communism. The 'primordial' dilemma of the Albanians, trapped between East or West, often appeared as one of 'to be oneself' or 'try to find what one should be', was performed within the setting stage of the socialist state. The following section will deal with the opposite paradigm of capitalist modernisation, the Albanian communism.

2.3. The Socialist Pram

2.3.1. The implications of the creative implementation of Marxist theory

In Marxism, we are dealing with a sociological theory which has many of the characteristics of *a priori* judgement and with a high level of generality. As Engels noted: "*The development of the materialist conception in regard to a single historical example was a scientific work, which would have taken years of study*" (Engels, 1941:73). Still Marxist 'scientific communism', 'enriched' by Lenin, Stalin and Hoxha was the blueprint for the communist transformations of 1944-1990.

Marx stated "*Philosophers have so far only changed their interpretation of the world; the point is however to change the world.*" (Marks & Engels 1976). For Marxism, change is the essence of all things and the real driving force is located in the economic foundations of society. The level of productive forces of a given society is said to determine the general level of culture, of knowledge and of ideology. In modern industrial society the vehicle of social change is the class struggle and force is the arbiter between the social classes. The communist leaders considered this analysis proper for the Albanian reality, whereas in reality the Albanian socialism represented a hybrid between feudal-capitalist Albanian society and revolutionary theory[12]. Clear enough, Albanians are paying the bill for by-passing the stages of capitalist development.

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[12] The capitalist class was not a dominant, developed class. Workers' movement hardly existed; collective forms of organizations, and human rights issues were not familiar or commonly raised issues. Albania experienced only an initial stage of capitalism.

The Albanian Communist party was founded and complied to the interest of the Yugoslav Communist leaders. The main opponents of the Communists were the Nationalists, who in the name of an ethnic Albania fatally sided with the fascist armies. The Communist Party took the leading role in the struggle for national and social liberation, and the construction of a would-be better society: the socialist one. In 1944 it represented the most credible force within the country. Related to that, it is important to note that during and after World War II, Albania remained peripheral to the interests of Big Powers. As a result of the Yalta Agreement (1943) Albania was considered part of the Eastern Bloc, under the hegemony of the Soviet Union. It can be also argued that Albanian socialism presented a different kind of dependency, primarily political, but which thoroughly affected the socio-economic structures.

2.3.2. Albanian Communism

The following paragraphs will try to give some answer to questions like: What kind of socialism was the Albanian one; under what conditions, did the Albanian socialism develop; why, in the name of creative implementation of Marxism-Leninism, did Albania become an experimental laboratory, for nearly half a century.

It is worth noting that a lot of speculation exists about the concept of socialism, and most of its analysis is structural, without highlighting the historical context[13]. Albanians were considered '*latecomers*' to modernity and, as Hettne notes in his definition of the real-existing socialism, "*socialism became more less a transition ideology for the 'latecomers*'" (Hettne B. 1994:40). Latecomers in the capitalist paradigm of modernity project, which was incomplete in itself, Albanians then opted for the counter-culture paradigm. "*Like all counter-cultures, modern socialism belonged to one historical formation with the society it opposed...That togetherness showed itself also in the virtually complete reliance of socialism on the programme set by modernity*" (Bauman Z. 1991:263). Mestrovic (1994) comments that both doctrines, capitalism and socialism, are modernist products of late civilisation, but not culture.

The specificity of Albanian communism was its exemplary violence in social relations and its extreme isolation. The fundamental assumed contradiction that arbitrated the relations between social classes was the class struggle. The communist leaders ruled with an iron hand. By a constant policy of massive movement, including large-scale transfer of families regarded as politically undesirable, they could impose their rule even on the isolated, 'traditional' areas of North-East. '*Either with us or against us*' - this was the communist argument; a middle way did not exist. By practising a form of extreme socialist egalitarianism, the previous land-owning class and the few rich in the cities were obliterated. To arrive at this point, class differences came to be as significant as biological differences, while new differences were created between the working class, peasantry, intelligentsia, and, of course, between the mass of the people and the communist elite. The class struggle, as the driving force, was the mechanism to control social relations and extinguish political opponents. The persecution followed the family line, for an exclusive and not integrative approach to the potential opponents was systematically applied. The dictatorship of the proletariat, against internal enemies

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[13] In 1924 Griffiths noted that there existed as many as 260 definitions of socialism.

and bourgeois manifestations, in practise was the dictatorship of the communist leaders.

Attacking religion, providing survival in jail experience for the Catholic, Orthodox and Moslem leaders, paved the way to proclaiming Albania, in the 1976 Constitution, an atheist state. The physical extinguishment of the Catholic clergy, and the persecution of any free ideas intended to obliterate the colourful intellectual heritage of the Albanians and to create a uniform socialist-realist art[14].

Whereas, in the past, in the conditions of Ottoman invasion, isolation and peripheralization were imposed on Albania, the communist leaders themselves opted to experiment on new paths and to creatively implement communist doctrine, isolated from the rest of the world. Albanians soon found themselves entrapped within the system they built in isolation, for the system began to manifest all the evils at their best. Since the break with China in 1978, extreme isolationist policies, relying on self-sufficiency, starved the economy of investment, distorted the pattern of development, impoverishing the urban working class, the intelligentsia, and the landless peasantry. This voluntary delinking resulted in a "creative destruction" process. As Harvey (1992) observes aiming at re-establishing perpetually new balances by the creation of myths and negative energies that would be denied in the name of constructing other balances. Paraphrasing Goethe, the destruction of the peasant's plot was the real catastrophe, compared to which the death of the homeland is an empty phrase. Albanians became equals in poverty. What followed was less freedom.

Noncommunication produced phobia and, later, inferiority at home, in a figurative way a *bunker mentality*, whereas the absence of information, filled in with communist propaganda, created false images of the real conditions in which communists ruled, of stable system and rule through popular consensus. One more time, the world was indifferent to the destiny of the Albanians, while anti-Communist propaganda alienated the Albanian people as well. The paradox of this situation was the pretentious self-appointment of the communist Party-state, possessor of the absolute truth, as the agency charged with the mission of enlightening the liberatory movements in the world.

2.3.3. What does the 'strong' Albanian state of 1994-1990 represent?

The Communist Party-state assumed responsibility for the control and direction of the whole social life, ideally including the life and fate of each individual. Hyper-centralisation of duties and countryside collectivisation had severe consequences. The society was shackled to the roots, for no autonomous form of organisation was permitted. The communist discipline was the soldiers' camp discipline. Having no say in politics meant that Albanians could not change the parameters of their existence. The internalisation of fear and discipline made that, despite the fact that Albanians knew whom to blame, they were violently discouraged from acting. Even when democratisation processes were irreversibly underway in most of Eastern Europe,

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[14] Of some 1600 mosques in existence before 1945, only 6 were left, only 12 elderly priests survived from the 355 clergy before the persecution, and in Shkodra city the first Atheist Museum was opened.

Albanians in the late 1980s did not believe that the communist system could topple from within.

Universal free education, a strong unifying element, was used to bolster Albanian nationalism and harnessed to the communists' ends. In the name of unity, a strong 'hand', the Party-state was indispensable to steer the country. To this end, it served the continuous reconstruction of the image of the foe, internally threatening the undisputed binomial, Party-Homeland, and externally sabotaging the achievements, and pressurising for deviation from the Marxist-Leninist way.

The massive resettlement of people, the creation of many small industrial sites all over the country, brought about a certain degree of mixing between North, South and the central areas of the country. However, surviving the regime, rather than placing '*the general interest above the personal one*' brought together all sections of the Albanian people. Unity and solidarity were imposed from above and, there was no pact either between the people themselves, or the people and their regime. The imposition of the public interest above the private one, discouraged any private initiatives to interact in the economic or social plane. The homogenisation process in the name of an ideology and economic system violated the fundamental rights of the individual. Albanians did not considered the state as 'theirs', state and its laws did not promote co-habitance; its repressive methods and laws based on exclusive principles produced hostility and frustration. These policies could not lay the basis for stable community development further than kith and kin close circles, they could not develop individual responsibility towards the community and state; on the contrary, as recent events evidentate, they produced counter effects.

Even during communist regime, the link between the Albanian state and the Albanian nation could not be as strong, for half of the population lived outside the Albanian state borders. As the communist leaders sealed Albania from the rest of the world, the Albanians in Kosova and Macedonia followed a different path of development, thus developing characteristics different from those of the Albanians inside. Resisting the assimilative policies of the other dominant groups, like Serbs or Macedonians, they developed a strong ethnic identity, often with a religious overtone.

Concluding on this chapter analysis, I would say that as a permanent frontier between antagonistic political, cultural and religious entities, the Albanian land has always been marginal, but yet conflictive battleground for the dominant international powers.

Second, the proclamation of the Albanian state means the emergence of the unsolved national question, which remains one of the underlying problems of the Balkans.

Third, the establishment of the communist regime strengthened the isolation pattern of the previous centuries under Ottoman invasion. Forth, the voluntary delinking and the extreme violence in social relations produced rigid compulsory state structures; no intermediaries, an huge gap between the individual and the state, no civil society. The integrative process within the Albanian society was slow, and it affected negatively the identification process with the Albanians outside the borders. The assumption of control and responsibility over the life of each individual by the party-state did partially disintegrate the peasant communities, but did not dislodge the inner mentality, rather it

operated on that. Individuals held to the kinship structures in view of their uncertainty, powerlessness and questioning of the hegemonic values and norms.

Finally, Albanian communism represents a clear failure of the socialist paradigm of modernity. The Albanians were promised the skies, but communism could not free them from the constraints of scarcity. In the name of progress, they had to sacrifice their present for the future. The agonies of creative modernisation were many and, bitterly nowadays people joke that socialism proved to be *'the longest way to capitalism'*. Albanians describe their present situation as "*not only 100 years behind, but also 50 years aside*".

The next chapter will focus on the characteristics of the social change in the post-communist Albania, and will deal with the problematique and relationship of concepts such as civil society, market, democracy.

3. SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE 1990s, THE POST-COMMUNIST TRANSITION

The unimposing prefix 'post' ... is the keyword for our age. Everything is 'post'... In the exceptional darkness of the post-Enlightenment ... 'post' is the code for a helplessness that gets tangled up in fashionability. It suggests an above-and-beyond which cannot name, and remains with the very content which it names and denies, by the paralysis of the known. Past plus 'post' - that is the basic concept with which we, in our eloquent, dense-headed ignorance, confront a reality which appears to have fallen apart" (Beck 1986:12)

The previous chapter posed some fundamental questions regarding the historical process of the development of the Albanian nation, state and society and provided some answers highlighting the extent in which the historical setting assists us to situate the present and to foresee the future. The past assists to explain the present, and to a certain extent puts limits on change, but in general, the historical treatment begs more questions, for which simple answers can not be given. There exist no integrative theory on transitions; there is so much social scientists do not know. In this chapter the assumptions relate to realities that are being constructed on a daily basis, an ongoing change, a redefinition process that underpins the theory.

In view of the recent crisis in Albania the period 1992-1997 has been analysed in a separate chapter in which some relevant data gathered during summer 1996 are interpreted supporting and testing the analysis and highlighting the factors of the crisis. The periodization 1991, 1992, 1996, 1997 for both chapters is based on elections, considered to be the 'barometers of social change'.

3.1. 'No More Communism'

3.1.1. Albania - 'neither East, nor West'

In April 1985, Enver Hoxha, the communist leader, who ruled the country with an iron hand, for nearly half a century, died. The death of the charismatic leader may mark the beginning of a new period within the communist rule, in the sense that his death, questioned in the minds of many the endurance of totalitarianism.

It was a moment that many Albanians hoped that the system could stop producing systematically 'anti-history'. Though aware that this was not an overnight change, hope renewed. It counterweighted the absence of vision on the part of 'shadowed' members of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party. Apparently nothing changed. Albania continued to be ruled and led 'in the road of Enver', by his hand-picked successor, Ramiz Alia. It was not an original solution, for other communist leaders had bequeathed the crown in the same way. The communist dictatorships were ruled in a dynastic way.

The orthodoxy of the Party members in general, and the fear of loosing support by the population, 65% of which lived in the rural areas, gave no choice to Alia, but to be loyal to his predecessor. He himself defined the 'post-Hoxha' period, as the 'epoch of continuity'. Michael Glenny points out that Alia was faced with the same dilemma that Khrushchev encountered when he decided to confront the criminal legacy of Stalin (in Tarifa F. 1995:138).

During 1985-1990, Albanians beared the economic fruits of the rigid isolation policies decreed in the self-reliant principle of 1976 Constitution. The obsessive implementation of the principle reinforced Albania's backwardness in relation to its neighbours, and Europe in general. The situation was deteriorating daily, food deprivation was not any longer the others' story, 'proles' living under capitalism, and propaganda could not feed either.

Important elements of the crisis were:

i) the inefficiency of the isolated Albanian economy, that heavily relied on foreign raw materials. The economic policies implemented during Hoxha's regime were autarchic, state controlled and anti-economic production without considering the costs became anachronistically inhibiting for any development;

ii) the lack of creativity of the large bureaucratic state apparatus to lead and administer the economic situation;

iii) the pressure of the West on Albania to open up the country, to consider human rights issues, to put an end to political persecution, a pressure which sensitively enough for all Albanians, also got an economic character.

Alia began slowly experimenting 'new paths', but with very small steps, trying to move from the rigid authoritarian way of his predecessor. In principle, Albania was still following the same autarkic line of economic development, for socialism was to be saved, at all costs. Gradually the country was seized in a total economic and political crisis.

In face of questioning the performance of the communist cadre elite and lack of motivation on the part of the people, Alia decided to do some minor political adjustments. He declared himself for the ideological continuity, the hegemony of marxism-leninism, but in practise started to support an economic policy that would undermine the regime. These steps towards reform did not come neither from political convictions nor from his vision, but from the pragmatic indispensability to maintain power. The adjustments would give the impression that Albania was changing and the badly needed international support would come.

Internally the propagandistic operations could not soothe the discontent. Albanians wanted to live differently. Living differently for them meant an end to scarcity and end to the sacrifices in the name of the future. It meant a relaxation of the extreme isolation, freedom of movement, of expression, of belief, an end to political persecution and peaceful assembly.

Other factors that pointed at the need for a radical change were:

i) The impossibility to reconciliate the hegemony of ideology with perestroika-style 'new economic mechanisms'. Pathetic *perestroika* without *glasnost*?

At a certain moment, neither ideology 'the cement', to use Gramscian expression, nor fear could hold the system together any longer. In my opinion, to understand what happened, the changing ability of the communist leaders to keep things under control is the key variable. As Pareto (1991) notes, it is the decreasing efficiency of the communist elites to represent themselves as "*the strongest, the most energetic and the most capable - for good as well as evil*". There was not enough ruthlessness, not enough conviction, and no vision for the future. By 1990, the Communists were unable to persuade the people, for they did not believe in their own speech any longer. What they were losing was the great monopoly on truth and power.

ii) Tarifa, points out another factor to explain the radical nature of the change: '*the underestimation on the part of the communist leaders of the iron rule of the reform, that one change leads to another*' (ibid:141). What began as an attempt to reform (rather than transform) the system, subsequently led to unintended changes.

iii) The decisive effects that external events have in the internal processes of a small country like Albania, once the isolation curtain is torn apart. In the process of breaking through the most absurd isolation, Albanian were very sensitive to the external factor, in particular to the events in countries of Eastern Europe. The fall of the Berlin Wall, the 'Romanian story', the disintegration of ex-Yugoslavia, the reappearance of the unsolved national question, and RAI (Italian television) images of the 'Western paradise', profoundly effected, and directed people towards reform.

The grasp of the momentum marks the turning point when Albanians believed that the situation could be changed both from within and from outside.

Alia, having no vision for the future to provide, fearful of the radical change, and pressurised by the conservative wing within the Party, adopted a time-saving and self-serving formulae: '*it was not socialism that had failed but revisionism*'. He used the pseudo-argument that since the 60s Albania did no longer belong to the revisionist camp, thus making a last effort to save the Albanian Stalinist socialism. Not capable of realising the degree of popular frustration and discontent, due to regime repressiveness and the devaluation of the propaganda, he designed the political slogan: '*Albania is neither West, nor East*'.

Given the speed of the process, Waller (1994) notes that, as regards Eastern Europe in general, the impression is that the transfer of power (from communist rule to democratic) had taken place without there having been a revolutionary period as such at all. In the case of Albania, the crumbling of the old communist regime was even more abrupt. The following will be an analysis of those aspects of the Albanian transition that mediated the transfer, in the sense both of preparing the way for it, and of providing discrete staging-posts in the creation of a new political order. To that extent, it is delusive to consider the change of regime in simple before-and-after terms.

3.1.2. 'The last domino'

Albania has historically been part of the East, whereas Albanians' aspirations as regards nation-state building have been have been Western oriented. The question is how Albanians would respond to the opening up process, to the transformations in the system, to the pace of the reform?

Discontent and unrestlessness converted rapidly into action, changing in a very short time the nature of demands and interests from 'no transformative' to 'system-transformative' imperatives. In admiration and in search of recreating the democratic Western states and value system, the protesters started by questioning specific forms of domination, embodies in the Marxist-Leninist one-party system. As Hollander (1992), researcher of Eastern Europe notes, 'the modern state' was a far too undifferentiated abstraction. The binomial Party - Enver and party-state was questioned.

Events such as the invasion of the embassies July 1990 and December students' strike brought to the surface the questioning of communist leaders' authority, the awareness that security for many had become a meaningless word, and speeded up the distancing of the reformative intellectuals[15] from the conservative wing within the Communist Party.

The Communists desperately tried to keep control of the situation, but the end of the regime was clear in the people's minds. The 1990 turmoil transformed into a broad front, with students and workers in the core and intellectuals and ex-persecuted[16] as leaders. They asserted the need for: i)multi-party system, ii)depoliticization of the army, iii) release of all political prisoners and iv)removal of the leading role of the Labour Party from the Constitution. Alia avoided confrontation.

On 13 December, Alia announced that 'independent political parties' - i.e. political parties other than the Communist Party - were to be allowed '*in accordance with the laws in force*'. By signing this act, Alia aimed and hoped that legal adjustments in accordance with the time standards would make a controlled democratisation process possible, pluralism being the facade rather than the real account. Could a hybridisation of democracy and dictatorship be possible? Could the old leaders control the situation? Could change be accommodated without the communist ceding power?

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[15] Throughout the Communist rule, exceptional emphasis was put on the anticipated loyalty of future cadres. Thus, people with less confidence, or fewer remarkable skills, or mediocres were preferred to the professional intellectuals, who were distrusted for their potential political autonomy. The 'counterselection' process meant better chances for the less qualified in occupying decision-making positions. This was one of the criteria in the traditional selection of the Political Bureau members, who were given the chance be near the dictator. Konrad and Szelenyi in relation to the role of the intellectuals raise the question: '...are intellectuals only troublemakers who are good enough to undermine systems of authority but are unable to create their own? Can they serve only as intermediaries who will pave the way to the other new dominant class? Is this post-Communist period indeed an entire historic epoch, or a brief interval... or a transition to a bourgeois class rule? (Konrad & Szelenyi, 1991: 355)

[16] During the Communist rule, nearly 400.000 people were politically persecuted: imprisoned, maltreated, discriminated or sent to forced labour camps. The degree of repressiveness and isolation in Albania was such that anti-Communist efforts could not be channeled, organized into an articulated movement. In that respect, Albanian experience differs from most of East European socialist countries.

The Democratic Party, proclaimed only three days after Alia's decree on political pluralism, united like in an umbrella organisation reformed Communists, anti-Communists, intellectuals, students, workers, former political persecuted and even people who had never before shown any interest in politics. They actively campaigned against totalitarianism and the legacy of Hoxha's communist regime. In those days, both uncertainty and hopes for a better future prevailed in the urban population, who opted for radical change, whereas in the rural areas, people perceived the changes with doubt and fear.[17]

The Communists did not negotiate with the new opposition Party on the way the first pluralist elections should be organised. The new opposition did not look for compromise either, instead it launched on a violent campaign, mainly against Hoxha, the symbol of the communist past, employing the anger of the people. Neither the Communists nor the Democrats were in control of the situation. People had to direct, and adjust themselves amid this confusion. The country was sliding gradually to total chaos. As an abrupt finale, 'the last domino' fall could not be but dramatic.

Albania was going through a anti-systemic revolution. As Bauman (1992) notes the anti-systemic revolutions not only dismantle the old system, but they also face the task of constructing a new system to replace the old. In the frantic search for freedom, progress, enrichment, how much were Albanians responsible to face this task? Were there going to be confrontations?

In these circumstances and to his credit, Ramiz Alia avoided bloodshed, and his attitude was a factor of equilibrium between the two camps. His thesis on complicity, so that due to 50 years of communist rule, all Albanians were both '*co-sufferers and co-culprits*', though not grounded on reality, temporary soothed down the discontent.

Tarifa argues that in the first months of 1991, the electoral campaign was compromised by the anachronistic forms of political protest akin to those of the Luddites in early nineteenth century England (ibid). The recent events clearly show that there is still no profound insight to the degree of discontent the communist system had generated for decades[18]. The paralysis of the economy had started several years ago; during 1989-1990 workers were massively paid 80 per cent of their salaries, without working. Inspired by the democrat leaders' who propagated that in the 'new epoch' the economy should start from the 'zero quota', they revolted against this catastrophic condition.

Abhorrence of Hoxha's dictatorship and socialism led to the destruction of what had been state or collectively owned, and the rule of the day became everyone for himself.

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[17] Estimated to comprise two-thirds of Albania's population, the rural population is mainly located in small settlements in mountainous regions with minimal communication. About 43 per cent of the villages in Albania have fewer than 500 inhabitants. Very poor road (or no roads at all) and underdeveloped public transport and telecommunications (over 1,000 villages have no access to telephones) made the rural population virtually unreachable for the newly-formed opposition parties during the election campaign (Tarifa F.1995:150).

[18] As Hollander (1992) notes among the distinctive attributes of communist systems was the capability to generate intense and durable discontent due to the widespread experience and awareness of the gulf between theory and practice, propaganda and reality, political promise and material fulfillment.

What once belonged to the community was regarded as an object of private attempts to acquire property. The equation of democracy with anarchy was serving the communists as well, who in many cases instigated conflict[19].

3.2. Democracy, Market, Europe

Social change of the 1990s is a special kind of social change; of particular importance is the fluid nature of the reality under consideration. Apart from the instabilities of the contemporary situation, the categories of analysis are themselves fluid and subject to change.

Being subject to fundamental concepts of developmentalism in general, social change in the 1990s can be interpreted by an integrative method utilising both social change and development concepts.

In the first place, this interpretation departs from an awareness on the problematic use of traditional terminology. Example of this is the questioning of terms 'post-communist' and 'transition'.

The term 'post-communist' is quite controversial. What did Albania experience? The real communism, the 'real-existing socialism', the 'crude communism' or what? What collapsed? Can it be socialism without democracy? How can it enter a 'post-communist' stage? The term 'post-communist' can stand in as much as to describe the conditions of a society, whose social-political, and economic transformative experiment of 1945-1990, was exclusively based on the scientific communism of Marx, excessively emphasising one aspect, the collectivistic one: (i) the feasibility of implementing public ownership of productive resources through centralised command; ii) the very project of basing a society on disinterested co-operation and making it egalitarian by suppressing diversity. It is to be feared that the historical lesson is more radical that if may seem, thus leaving us with no collective alternative as Bauman would have it. So the term 'post', can express that we better know what we are leaving behind, than what it lies ahead.

In the realm of both politics and economics, attempts were exclusively to break with the past; from totalitarianism to democracy, from state-centralized economy to a reliance on the market, processes described as 'transitions'. They are radical and interdependent. But, in these processes, only the starting point is known, for there are several roads that the Albanians can follow: their own, that of Southern Europe (the optimistic scenario of Spain is overcited, though no analogy between the two countries exist), or that of Latin America and other capitalist countries of the South? Which of these roads is most likely? So transition to what?

3.2.1. Liberalisation, democratisation or *'demodictatorship'*?

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[19] On the eve of the first free elections, more than 25.000 people vowed to get out of Albania at all costs invaded the boats at the Durres harbor and escaped to Brindisi in Italy... Opposition countered that the Communist Government was only too happy to wave farewell to thousands of prospective anti-Communist voters three weeks before the general elections, speaking of the exodus as 'a safety valve' (Tarifa ibid).

How much were the theories on totalitarianism helpful in predicting the change of the system? The answer is: very little. What about other approaches shaped by liberal, non-Marxist economic determinism? As Hollander (1992) notes many observers and students of Soviet type societies confidently predicted that change and democratisation of these systems will someday occur as a by product of improved economic efficiency and productivity, and the associated higher living standards. The growth of political pluralism and free expression was supposed to rest on greater material wealth, on overcoming "backwardness". Contrary to that, it was the chronic malfunctioning of the system, the unproductivity of the economic system, the dissatisfaction of the population that imposed change, that led communist leaders renounce the Party's monopoly on power and ideology.

So the question posed are: Under what conditions can democracy come to existence? Under what conditions can it be consolidated? What makes democratisation different from liberalisation and when can it be comprised?

'Democracy is a system in which parties lose elections' (Przeworski A., 1991:10). Obviously not all democracies are the same; yet beneath all the institutional diversity, one elementary feature – contestation open to participation (Dahl 1971) – is sufficient to identify a political system as democratic. Democracy is as, Linz (1984) puts it, *government pro tempore*. Contestation makes all the system open to change, and multiple political forces compete inside an institutional framework.

Democracy is a system of processing conflicts in which outcomes depend on what participants do, but no single force controls what occurs. Democracy generates the appearance of uncertainty because it is a system of decentralised strategic action in which knowledge is inescapably local. But uncertainty does not equate democracy with anarchy or chaos.

The crucial moment in any transition from authoritarian to democratic rule is the crossing of the threshold beyond which no one can intervene to reverse the outcomes of the formal political process. How is that possible? There are several interpretations and theories that try to explain the rationality of democratic choice, the rational of compliance, the issue of deliberation and convergence, among which Wood (1969), Coleman (1989), Riker (1982), Buchanan and Tullock (1962), Arrow (1961), Manin (1988), Schmitt (1988), Habermas and Cohen (1989).

These ideas range from i)the democratic theory of the eighteenth century, whose central assumption is that social interests are harmonious, and rational discussion can resolve all conflicts to disagreements, to ii)Schmitt (1923), who argues that ultimately conflicts can be resolved only by recourse to physical force.

In the case of post-communist transition, democracy is the desirable outcome, is the goal, is the Western model to follow. How to 'enforce' it? As already analysed in the first section, this first big step, the transfer of power from the delegitimated communist leaders to the democratic leaders of the anti-Communist front was made possible only by the design and functioning of certain institutions (declaration of pluralism, multi-

system elections and depoliticization of the military[20]). Przeworski argues that the solution to the problems of democratisation consists of institutions (Przeworski, ibid). If we accept this argument then compliance to the election's results would come as an agreement between the 'old' and 'new' political actors on the framework, in which they are operating. So transition to democracy comes by negotiations. Even the 'new' actors, who will compete against each other at a latter phase, optimally should be united in opposition to the authoritarian forces, the 'hard-liners', and in alliance with the liberalisers. There is a temporary balance between the two camps, that should be followed by a negotiated transfer of power to the opposition, because of pressure from above and below. These events can take place in an already liberalised context. The less military is involved, the less this process is undermined, and the better the newly designed institutions can function. The question is why should the hard-liners, the liberalizers and the military comply? As pointed out in the previous section, the first reason is that their legitimacy is already questioned, and second is the requisite that the new institutional framework will permit them to compete also in the future.

At this phase, the fundamental issue is the possibility of compromising democracy on the part of the winners. It can be avoided by an continuous accomplishment to recognise the temporal nature of any democratic institutions. The new political leaders, who for the sake of unity, and avoiding fundamental conflicts, have invested a lot in the actual badly needed institutional design may become reluctant to understand their temporality. Fear of the unknown, the idea of living with uncertainty, and permanent contestation may easily throw them back to and associate them with the way the *ancien regime* functioned. Authoritarianism remains a temptation.

'*To eat and to talk*' - to be free from hunger and from repression. In the above paragraphs the second requisite was analysed; not accidentally, there is 'preference' to start with the second, it's in line with the communist rationale that politics comes first; it commands the economic development of the country. It was in party congresses that economic plans were approved. Albania's hypercentralization economy was intact till year 1990 and therefore it can not be compared to the economic liberalisation that Hungary or Poland experienced. Foreign investment was forbidden by Constitution, foreign trade was exclusively state monopoly, and the basis of the economy remained a hyper-collectivised agriculture. A hypothetical question, that comes from an analogy with China, Albania's big brother for nearly two decades, can be raised: Could Albania have had economic development in the conditions of the hegemony of the communist ideology? A possible answer is 'No'. The ideological hegemony, and the monopoly on power was based precisely on two elements suppression of interests, and egalitarianism under extreme poverty. How to reconcile these ends is to doubted.

Democracy is not an easily defined objective. The Albanians' conception of democracy appears to shift from the immediate prospect '*no more communism*', and democracy, in which ever conception, certainly means more than just the absence of dictatorship, to '**to eat and to be free**' and '*to return to Europe*', often largely synonymous with

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[20] The change in the political discussion was indeed dramatic. Virtually overnight multi-party system, parliamentary democracy became the hegemonic way to speak about the future. Konrad and Szelenyi argue that the most fundamental change in the transition to post-communism is discursive. (Konrad & Szelenyi, 1991:351). From a Faucaultian perspective, the transition discourse not only reflects the underlying situation, crisis, but it also creates it.

material wealth rather than being identified with political values or any system of political institutions. What happened is that by the end of 1990 the search for democracy and market economy emerged as an interdependent process. To be free from hunger, to put an end to scarcity and sacrifice in the name of the future was the rationale of transformation. Liberal democracy, social democracy or market socialism? Paul Lewis (1993) observes that modern democracy has been one of the outcomes of capitalist development, formed by the conflicts it throws up, rather than an accompaniment of its growth. In this line, democracy certainly does not provide a basis for capitalist development - which is the programme foreseen for ex-communist regime.

There exist a fundamental ontological problem as regards the Western democracy. On one hand, the Western democratic theory puts a high value on individual freedom of choice, not only as between political parties, but also as between different uses of one's income, of one's capital, and of one's skill and energy. Western democracy is a market society, through and through. On the other, there is a recognition of the 'need' to be morally right, to assert a higher set of values than those of the market, meaning an equal right of every individual to take the most of himself, to infinitely develop his human attributes. How can the egalitarian complement be combined with the market logic? What is incompatible with the concept of man as exerter, enjoyer, and developer of his powers is not the concept of man as infinite desirer of utilities, but the concept of man as infinite appropriator.

By common agreement, the passage from the state-administered to market economy based on business initiative requires the accumulation of private capital, as much as the presence of business motivations. Bauman (1992) points out greed and pursuit of profits have little to do with capitalism; Weber insisted that unless restrained by rational calculation, they can hardly lead to the capitalist transformation. It was this-worldly asceticism, which first of all means delayed gratification that made capitalist accumulation possible. What Albanians encounter today is a post-modern world, with few puritans left. In fact, what enraged the rebels against communism "*was not the envious comparison with the productive successes of the capitalist neighbours, but the exciting and alluring spectacle of lavish consumption enjoyed under capitalist auspices*" (Bauman, ibid). The post modern Western man appears as a infinite consumer or an infinite appropriator and the present market ideology is the creation of artificial desires for consumption. As they are the Western democratic theories are weak, thus problematic to be adopted without hesitation.

3.2.2. Civil Society

The uncertain project of democracy is also linked with the problematic development of the civil society, a concept, which may not stand travel. In the accelerated history of the 1990s, Albanians use civil society more like a slogan than an analytical concept. During communism, Albanians could not create their space of social activity free from the interference of state. Power was generally identified with the state; very few persons in society had any experience of political participation, of organisational and interest-promotional activities required for civil society. Civil society as a capacity to organise on consent, as power centre that balances the strong state domination, is considered to be a fundamental requisite for democratisation. Held observes that for

democracy to flourish it has to be reconceived as a double-sided phenomenon: concerned on one hand, with the re-form of the state power and, on the other hand, with the restructuring of civil society (Held and Keane 1984). What differs, in the post-communist stage, is the task that civil society is given; it is the constitutive, and preservative role it should play, its the commitment to be engaged in the construction of a liberal-democratic system and free economy.

What is the natural basis for a civil society? Miller observes that '*communism effectively wiped out the traditional middle class... and the psychological legacy of egalitarianism and state dependency has made its re-generation extremely difficult.*' (Miller R.,1992:143). This social *lacuna* is wider in Albania, because for decades tolerance and self-organisation were suppressed to the extreme; the consequence of the latter is the absence of a real social responsibility on the part of the individuals. Far from attempting to find a 'natural' basis for the concept, I want to conclude that only a continuous sense of efficacy, meaning a pressure to the state authorities, with a reasonable chance of success can confirm to the Albanians the advantages of dealing with the concept. The concept will be retaken in the next chapter which deals with the recent crisis in Albania.

The following section provides a concrete analysis of the changing realities in between multi-party elections of 1991, 1992 and 1996 contentualizing the theoretical issues developed so far.

3.3.   Albania's Transition: Gradual Change or Shock Therapy

3.3.1. Embarking on the capitalist paradigm

Albania's first free parliamentary elections after 45 years of communist dictate were held on 31 march 1991. The Labour Party won a majority of 68%, taking 169 seats in the 250-member single chamber parliament, which enabled it to hold on to power. This power was challenged in the working-class regions, where the democratic party had significant achievements. The results of the first multi-party elections can not be estimated as unexpected. The Albanian society, which used to be very controlled and monitored by the state, was trying to find a 'new' internal equilibrium. The rural population was posed with questions such as: how the land issue was going to be solved; what the position of the expropriated big landowners would be; were collective farms or 1946 Agrarian Reform options to be taken; how convincing was the agrarian programme of the anti-Communist opposition, etc. In the turmoil of these questions, the Albanian peasantry reacted sceptically, though temporarily, massively voting for the Labour Party.

The opposition was determined to come into power as quickly as possible. Strongly supported by the newly created independent trade unions, it destabilised the situation, giving no chance to the new Government, led by Fatos Nano[21], to carry out the

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[21] Fatos Nano became leader of the Socialist Party after the 10th Congress of Labour Party, June 1991, in which the party's name was changed and the process of renovation was legitimized. From 1994 to March 1997 Nano was imprisoned, charged with office abuse, (foreign aid misappropriation), for the time he held Prime minister post in the last Communist Government.

gradual economic reform. Nano was forced to resign within two months of taking office. New parties were created, siding with the opposition, and trying to gain credibility. The new Government of Stability, formed by five major parties, aimed at steering the country through the difficult period until the preliminary national elections. This compromise is the first compromise in the post-communist transition imposed by the situation in which no single force could rule alone the country [22].

The most important event of this period was the abrogation by the Parliament of the 1976 Constitution, and the adoption of the 'Law on Major Constitutional Provisions' remaining in force until now, for a new Constitution is not yet approved.

The atmosphere remained tense throughout 1991 year. Tired of the past, uncertain of any improvements, and unwilling to accept the consequences of the reform, a new wave of refugees escaped to Italy and Greece. Emigration, a characteristic of this period, became the typical pattern of Albanian transition, for no other country of Eastern Europe is effected by it in such proportions. For thousand Albanian families became a way of living. It revealed the severe poverty; the eagerness to touch the Western paradise, the absence of a clear vision within the country; the fear of a drastic communist restitution, and that the Albanians, in as much as they needed to be fed, wanted to feel free.

3.3.2. *"We govern, the world helps us":* 1992 elections

The Socialist Party was in a defensive position from the start, for it had been defeated in its first contested attempt to govern the country. There was no enthusiasm, no challenge, no legitimacy to take power. Demoralisation prevailed in rural areas too. The preliminary elections of March 1992 were expected to resolve the situation, to bring an end to the loss of order and law, an depart from the catastrophic levels the economy reached during the winter 1991-1992. The Democratic Party campaign was mainly based on the anti legacy of communist dictatorship and the huge support and the foreign investment the country would get if the democrats would rule[23].

In the general elections of 22 March 1992, the Democrats won 62% to 26% of the Socialists. The coming into power of the democratic front meant that the Albanian society wanted an inclusive break with the communist past, with the old political regime and its marxist-leninist ideology. The coming to power of the opposition meant opening up new prospects for democracy in Albania. The Democratic Party represented itself as the most successful opposition in all Eastern Europe.

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[22] Once the democrats shared power, they have to face divergences among themselves. Berisha, the leader of Democratic Party, decided to walk out of the ruling coalition; the coalition Government was forced to resign in December 1991 and the general elections were moved forward to March 1992.

[23] The slogan 'We govern, the World helps us' became the refrain in the electoral propaganda of the democrats. Pashko, one of the most popular politicians of the Democratic party, had declared during the campaign that the US State Department had promised 'blank cheque' in humanitarian aid of the anti-Communist opposition won (Tarifa F.1995:156).

3.3.3. The transitional package: 1992-1996

Easy cures for complex problems: "the magic of the market!"

In the aftermath of the elections, optimism in Albania was running high. The democrats, who successfully accomplished their getting into power, now were faced with the challenge of keeping it successfully in a situation where the broad masses, who supported them had great hopes, and as Bauman has it "*were breathing down their necks and watching their hands*". (Bauman, 1992:162) The first disappointment came as a result of the unfulfillment of the extravagant promises for massive amounts of aid and investment from abroad, especially the United States. Soon it became clear to the people, that no foreign capital investment was going to enter the country, unless the country was politically stable, and unless a legal framework to protect the investment and a proper infrastructure existed.

Only four months after this victory, the democrats had a considerable loss of support with their electorate, the socialist winning in the local elections with a significant number of mayorships and seats in town and village councils. In all, socialists received over 54% of the votes. Trying to explain why this happened one should consider factors like: i) the continuation of the deterioration of the economic situation, the country remaining critically dependent on foreign aid, humanitarian assistance, and private remittances from abroad[24]; and ii) an intuitive popular demand, creating a balance, in order to prevent a possible revenge of extreme anti-Communist forces. The democrats insisted that they would not work with socialist local authorities; indeed centralisation policies led to a partisan division of central and local power; at both levels, there was a lack of professionalism, clear vision and strategies to carry out the reform. Decentralisation remained a rhetoric.

The economic transformations in Eastern Europe are often compared to the transitions of the Latin American economies. The economic transformation of Latin America, though to a certain extent different, is radical. What I argue here is that East European transformations are not and does not imply 'structural adjustment' only. They are systemic transformation, and economic reform is only part of it. Particularly in the case of Albania, the transition was from a hyper-centralised economy through shock therapy to free market. The reform started in line with the structural adjustment policies recommended by World Bank and International Monetary Fund; it was supported by a "stand-by" agreement of IMF aiming at: **i)** macroeconomic stabilisation, **ii)** restructuration of the state sector, and **iii)** privatisation of the economy. Probably the legacy of the central planning with its disastrous consequences during socialism can explain new leaders' hesitation to come out with any original solutions and long-term strategies in the economic field. Soon the economic reform proved to be socially costly and politically risky. The Albanian transition is a transition under poor conditions.

The breaking through the isolation iron curtain, the emergence of new loyalties and identifications, as well as new sources of wealth and power has created a restless

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[24] The economic collapse of 1991-92 was reflected in the explosion of inflation during 1991-92, drastic fall of nearly 50% of GDP during 1990-92, a tremendous growth of unemployment during 1993, and the general disintegration of the export/trade balance since 1990.

situation of opportunities, frustrations, paradoxes and improvisations on the part of the individual, collective groups, and the state in the struggle for 'projection in time'.

The following chapter will analyse the economic, political and social change, drawing attention to the distorted democratisation and economic reform process, the factors of the recent crisis and provide an interpretation of the data gathered during summer 1996. A special place is given to the transformation of mentalities and identities as an essential component of the social aspect of the research.

4. THE ALBANIAN CRISIS: RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Over the last months the TV screens around the world were inundated with images of violence and dispair. In these reports the Albanian chaos has been portrayed exclusively as an internal problem, perplexing the audience with the capacity of the 'uncivilised' region, to produce conflict and overshadowing the importance of global and regional factors in the Albanian crisis. The recent events in Albania question the magic of the free hand of the market, the democracy project, the smooth transition process from a totalitarian system into a democratic state and society.

4.1. Triple Modernization: The Problematique of 'Kiosk Capitalism'

4.1.1. The Albanian 'Taiwan': SAP or 'the cow to be milked'?

In the institutional and legislative plane, the reform aimed at building up the legal framework for the economic, social and political system[25].

The old legislation was delegitimised, and the new legislation, in compliance with and imitating Western tradition was drafted hastily and executed, by the same people, in a partisan way. The introduction of the democratic institutions and the setting up of frames, such as the legal framework, was no guarantee as to how they would be given substance. Elections are preconditions, but no guarantee of the democratization process, because democratization remains a procedural issue.

The reform also intended to establish a depoliticised administrative sector. In reality, political affiliates of the democratic party replaced intellectuals and professionals and the application of this criteria gave political power to a group of population previously excluded by the communist elite. The only trustworthy structures for the new politicians were their families and relatives, and no pact, no co-operation went beyond them. The highlanders, the rural people, carried with them a fragmented provincial mentality, in which an official post was considered 'a cow to be milked'. The minister, the local administrator, the chief of personnel ruled like feudal lords in their own territory. Lack of professionalism became a characteristic of the post-Communist office.

The politicisation of the life of the individual to absurdity during the socialist regime created either a nausea, particularly within the Albanian youth, or a false belief that individuals decide independently for their own lives. During the early 1990s, being involved in politics was considered more an anti-Communist engagement, indeed a painful process for it implied a denial of family, relatives and even oneself. This involvement followed mainly the old established pattern, 'either with us, or against us'. The old technocracy was powerless, but the communist technocrat mentality was strong and always conducive of politics over economics.

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[25] In 45 months, 400 laws were passed by the Parliament, and the new main codes entered into force.

Under the circumstances of (i) a take-off from a very poor base, (ii) a big aperture into a consumerist West and (iii) a legislative vacuum, corruption was endemic. Corruption at all levels filled the vacuum of law playing a role in the creation of private capital and polarisation of society[26].

The democratic opposition that took power represented more of a broad front, very different from the traditional right wing - split into different groupings with no differences in programs, approaches or strategies. A common characteristic of all the parties was their undefined political, economic and social programmes.

The introduction of only one alternative in both the political and economic domains gradually increased the chances of transgression between extremes.

Economically, shock therapy effects were mitigated by the breaking of sanctions against ex-Yugoslavia (arms and petrol trafficking), the thriving of a criminal sector (drugs, prostitution and clandestine migration), and an informal sector mainly relying on emigrant remittances from abroad. The free initiative was translated as free operations in an unknown terrain, by-passing and improvising rules and laws.

It is worth pointing at one particular moment in between 1992-1996 elections, the referendum on the draft Constitution, voted down by the majority of the population. In the conditions when Albania is defined as Parliamentary Republic, the draft Constitution provided broad competencies for the President, exactly in 44 of its articles. The analysis of the refusal of the draft Constitution shows that i) Albanians, conscious of their mission, knew how to administer their vote, ii) having experienced totalitarianism they wanted to prevent the clear authoritarian tendencies and iii) they were warning the Democratic Government on its performance.

4.1.2. What was the platform for people's mobilization?

In principle, freedom, the principle upon which democracies are based, is not ideologically, but morally and legally definable. What happens in reality; how do Albanians fill the vacuum of pure ideology?

Unlike to most other post-communist societies, in which nationalism replaced the communist ideology, Albania embraced neo-liberalism.

The old schema of threat from an external enemy no longer held, although in order to gain exclusive and eternal power, the democrats still operated and played with the image of the internal foe: this time, not one of class but instead of anti-democracy. Furthermore, the platform of national reconciliation was brought forth for

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[26] "Corruption is a direct product of the rise of the new groups with new resources and the efforts of these groups to make themselves effective within the political sphere"(Hungtington, 1970:493). Undoubtly the difficult economic situation in the country gives more scope and likehood to officials to be involved in corruption. Job scarcity, serious shortage of goods and housing, unreasonable low salaries increase the corruption tendency. These factors compel them to be corrupt to reach a kind of wage equilibrium. It is cynical to talk about service ethics in the administration, the prevailing inherited philosophy being 'what can be done *with* the job, rather than *in* the job'.

consideration by the socialist opposition, a maneuver in the negotiation for power and decision-making; the Democrats were decided to govern alone for long.

In his analysis of the Albanian post-communist transition, Miall H. notes that insecurity and powerlessness can fuel a popular appetite for simple solutions and strong leaders. (Miall H. 1995). The nation provides a clear rallying point in societies where so many other bases of group identity have been undermined. The Albanian political 'entrepreneurs', showed a lot of dilettantism[27] trying to handle the nationalistic discourse[28]. The discourse in itself implies a sensitivity (or vulnerability) to the external events (see Mcgrew A. 1992); getting strength from its revocation as an internal imperative, also giving more sense to the retaken project of modernisation. Its political weakness was internally and externally conditioned for the democrats were not prepared to be contested in relation to power, and the Albanian state could not afford to accommodate a nationalist policy.

4.1.3. The get-quick-rich schemes versus asceticism

The embracement of the neo-liberal rationale translated as a need to be integrated into, as opposed to excluded by, the West, as well as a need to adopt a rationale through which the people sought to enrich themselves in the shortest time possible.

This led the basis for the infamous pyramid schemes, which seemed to pose a solution to the social-economic and political costs of the implementation of the economic reform designed by World Bank and International Monetary Fund. Important elements or conditions in the distorted process include:

(i) The mal-administration of the national economy, reaching the 'zero' quota during 1990-91. The new leaders did not provide any original economic solutions. By massive destruction and misappropriation of the national economy, the way was cleared for the implementation of shock therapy.

(ii) The absence of a legal framework, together with regional instability and the bureaucratic procedures of the corrupted-administration, meant no investments were made in the country. The pyramid companies provided high rates of interests competing with and paralyzing the development of the banking system, drawing in and blocking, the profits of the new business sector.

(iii) The liberalization of the state's administration resulted in flourishing corruption that flaunted fiscal and custom regulations.

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[27] In its foreign policy Albania is oriented towards the West. Often this orientation is affected by political dilettantism and short-term interests. A lot of reaction by opposition and the press, got Albanian's membership into the Organization of Islamic Countries, 1993. The same goes for the conflictive situation created with Greece and Italy (1993-1994).

[28] Allowing choice and voice gives rise to questions concerning loyalty. Waller notes that until acculturation to the new society ... has been achieved, and until citizens situate their roles and aspirations in the framework of the articulation of sectional interests, a 'habit' of loyalty to affectively determined objects crates the risk of the political exploitation to this habit (Waller M., 1994:147)

(iv) In the absence of a private banking system and without a legal frame for investment, the remittances of emigrants were deposited in the pyramid companies. Other sources of income were the profits made by misappropriation of the large amounts of aid that Albania received during 1991-93, the high profits in some business sectors such as construction, and profits from illegal activities such as money laundering, drug and arms trafficking and clandestine migration.

(v) Unemployment, according to non-official data, never dropped below 36%. But it was temporarily smoothed by investment in the pyramid companies, through which poor families could maintain a certain standard of living. Peasants sold their livestock and citizens their newly privatized houses.

(vi) The pattern of the Albanian transition was that of both external and internal migration, gradually changing the population structure[29]. The break of the isolationist policies, the withdrawal of state provided new conditions for individuals and groups to relate to each other, to state, to property. Internal migration from the rural areas into the main city centres is unorganised, uncontrolled thus encouraged by the state for urbanisation is considered as a requisite of development. Often this process brings social confrontation, in relation to property, housing, and absence of a civil culture to respect the law, and different ways of living. It also influences the criminality growth. The social psychology is strenuously being reshaped

It is considered that more that half a million Albanians live abroad: 300.000 in Greece, 150.000 in Italy, 50.000 in Germany, then France, Switzerland, etc. Emigration has ever been the 'safety valve' of the transition. Both internal and external migration have soothed the internal tensions of high unemployment and covered the unproductivity of the Albanian economy. It also contributed to state revenues, consequently getting state recognition. Remittances from abroad have also generated few investment in trade and light industry[30].

(vii) The fundamental element of the reform was the privatization of national economy. The land privatization was a slow and problematic process. Albania has got few arable land, and dynamic growth of its population[31]. The destruction of state farms and co-operatives left peasants without income, not followed by clear prospects. It was based on the much disputed law on land, called the communist "law on land", (approved by Parliament in 1991), which distributed land per family members. Its implementation met with the resistance of the villagers, especially in North, and North-East regions, who in the chaotic circumstances of 1991-1992 had practically redistributed the land

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[29] According to pre-1990 data, 65% of the population lived in the rural areas, 35% in the towns. (Statistical Report of RPSSH). Non-offical data indicate that in 1997, 50-52% of the population are rural inhabitants, 35-38% are inhabiting the urban areas, and 10-13% are emigrants.

[30] I cannot stop myself from recounting an Albanian joke that encapsulates the significance of emigration for the Albanians. A teacher asked her pupils about their future professions. The first child responded that he wanted to become a doctor, the second a driver, and the third a refugee! (the first Albanians, who invaded the embassies in 1990, asked for political refugee status. Since then the term 'refugee' rather than 'emmigrant' is used by the people).

[31] The annual birth rate of the 90s is estimated to be approximate 70 - 100.000 (Precise offical reports are not available, so reference is made to media).

themselves. Once the legitimacy of the state was questioned, all the families of the North recognised the legitimacy of the ·pre-1945 boundaries. They turned to the traditional code, the *Kanun*, as a fairer basis for distribution of land, than the national law, which they considered arbitrary and unfair. Land privatisation was characterised by social tensions, and this counts for the uninterrupted flow of migration.

The privatization of the small and medium firms was done on the basis of Government's and not Parliament's decision, and was based on political affiliation. After a period of absurd hyper-centralisation and egalitarianist policies, it aggravated social relations, and rose the insecurity of certain segments of population like unemployed, pensioners and ex-persecuted under communist regime. They perceived that often Democratic Party militants were enriching on their expense. The socialist opposition considered these acts as illegal, and during the election campaign of 1996 used this card, pointing out that it is most of the DP militants, who now possess and control what once used to be national property. The frustration against the speedy stratification culminates in the recent crisis.

(viii) The installation of the free market economy has been distinguished by the absence of production and the flourishing of trade and of a relatively extensive service network. Albanians consume more than they produce. Production has not yet reached the 1989 GDP quota, the last year of the communist rule. Tirana, the capitol, is known for the highest number per capita of cafes, bars and bingos of any European capitols. People preferred to make a commodious life with the profits made in the first years of transition, whilst political leaders hoped that consumption growth and entertainment would substitute political consciousness and active engagement.

Social relations were characterized by a massive carelessness, stimulated by a tendency to liberalize working or family relations, and a distinct spirit of passivity cultivated by the absence of a clear perspective. Instead of a willingness to face the hard road ahead, what was noticed was an adventurous spirit and tendency to take risk for high profits, arbitrarily not recognizing or respecting the rule of law.

(ix) A determinant factor in the distorted process of transition is the stance of the Government.

The following section will analyse a key moment of the transition, May 1996 elections, which clearly mark the beginning of the institutional crisis.

4.1.4. May 1996 elections: *'The worst communists of all are the anti-Communist communists'.* (Havel.V.)

The transition process in most of Eastern European countries, has brought into power either ex-communist parties or the left. There exist no profound analysis on the causes of the ex-communist restitution, nevertheless the voting down of the draft Constitution made the Democrats take a more realistic view on what the future elections might bring. The first lesson they got both from internal and Eastern European processes was that they should not allow the rotation of power. Led by this imperative, the democrats used every means to keep power.

In the name of stability in the region and as an anti-Communist, neo-liberal triumph, during 1991-1996 the European Union and the United States fully supported the Democratic Party and president Berisha as the only democratic force in the country. They turned a blind eye to the distortion of political and economic development. Compared to other Eastern European countries, Albania was regarded by IMF officials as *the most obedient student* in applying IMF economic policies. Between 1993 and December 1995, it had the fastest rate of economic growth in Europe, at an annual average rate of 11% of the GDP, as measured against the 1990 production.

It is interesting to note that according to Eurobarometer polls, Albanians were ranked in the first place compared to other Eastern Europeans regarding optimism for the reform and expected improvement of the standard of living (HDR, 1995:16). Nevertheless, the voting down of the drafted Constitution in November 1994 was a clear sign of the popular sensitivity to the authoritarian tendencies of the democrat leaders.

The campaign of the democrats was led by President Berisha himself, whose open positions and competencies against the opposition in general became a factor of tension rather than of moderation or understanding. The democrats claimed that they have realised the contract with the electorate for the process of reform was irreversibly underway and success was measured in terms of: i) economic growth; ii) installation of legal state, division of powers, establishment of order and security, and iii) democratization of life in general. In this course of action, Albania had the general recognition and support of international bodies such as WB/IMF, EU, Council of Europe.

Related to i)economic growth, the ruling democrats in the last five years have supported the existence of renting instead productive capital, particularly related to the decline of interest in the work.

The Government did not legalize but allowed migration, illegal activities and allegedly supported the pyramid companies, defined by the President Berisha 'the swallows of capitalism'. These companies fueled the electoral campaign of the democrats. The Albanian people were encouraged to invest savings and there was a close identification of the some of the deposit-taking companies with the Democratic Party, both at national and local level. The appropriate legislation that could regulate and define the activity of these firms was missing. Meanwhile, their activity was facilitated by Government decisions.

The main slogan of the democrats in the May 1996 elections was *"With us everybody wins"*. This mentality of governing was especially destructive. It destroyed the competitive spirit, since the vote assured for being no losers, but only winners.

As regards the establishment of legal order and security of the person was practically 'resolved' by the creation of 15 different police departments, in which even incriminated persons hold posts, and organized crime, illegal migration and prostitution thrive.

In relation to democratization of life, hyper-politicization is a significant feature of the Albanian transition. True, the politics in which most of the Albanians are eager to be involved in, remains the main route to power, which in turn is the main route to wealth. Little is achieved out of the dominant state realm. Exclusive, as opposed to integrative policies were applied, not filling the gap between the state and its citizens. Democratization from below, non-governmental organizations or other type of associations are slowly but steadily expanding, the range of interests to organize is widening, but the process does not represent a challenge to the state authority, and does not effectively influence Government's performance or decision-making. The harassment of the opposition and the revanschist spirit that dominated Albanian politics allowed no possibility for a liberal culture or a new liberal political class.

As previously mentioned the Albanian political spectrum, superficially colourful, has got no substantial diversity as regards political programmes. This can be explained by the fact that the stratification of the Albanian society is still underway, and after 50 years of communist experience the membership into a party is considered more an anti-Communist political engagement. All the political parties, have in their agenda the national question, its resolution varying from a recognition of Albanians' rights in Kosova to an Albanian ethnic nation-state, that would include all Albanians in the Balkans. As regards the economic and social components in their programmes, political parties do not have major differences.

The characteristics of the pre-elections period were: a bipolarization of the political spectrum in which only two political forces were distinguished, other parties being the decor of pluralism; a clan spirit dominating over pluralistic one, and the simple schema of anti and ex-communist generally determinant in defining the pattern and the depth of the democratisation process. Media, the only state radio television was much under the control of the DP, and it offensively propagated against the opposition.

The simulation of the democratic process culminated in the manipulation of the national elections of May 1996, boycotted by the opposition and criticised by the international community. Stubbornly the democrats did not recognise the need for power sharing; they worked in the same direction, against contestation, in the local elections of October 1996. The regime was labelled a *demodictatorship*. This moment highlights significantly the loss of legitimacy of new democratic elite to maintain power, the contradictions in the system, the fragile balances of the transition and the crystallisation of the crisis.

4.2.   An Interpretation of the Recent Crisis - June 1997 Elections

4.2.1. The 'death' and the 'revival' of the Albanian state

Though it has been never confirmed publicly, the Albanian Government was obliged to take measures and suspend the activity of the pyramid agencies, under pressures from the IMF and WB, which as supporters of economic reform could not allow the existence of companies that were drawing in most of the funds of Albanians into non-productive investments.

Little information, but much advertisement, was created by the media on the activity of these companies. Even the opposition press did not address the situation in proper terms. The reformed communists did not produce original or alternative solutions for the development of the country. In fact, it appears in retrospect that they did not how to tackle the social and economic complexity of transition.

1996 was considered a 'difficult economic year' by IMF, for all macro-economic indicators had wavered or fallen considerably. This crisis was camouflaged by advertisements of the only state-controlled TV of the 'Albanian miracle', 'Albanian Taiwan', the country with the highest economic growth in Europe[32]. Despite the fact that it was three times higher than the previous year, Albanian officials declared that inflation was at 'acceptable rate' given the circumstances. The agricultural production of 1996 was estimated to be 31% higher that the year 1989, while 40% of the import goods were alimentary. It could not have gone unnoticed that exports covered only 18% of the imports, nor that the declared budget deficit was estimated to be 260 million USD.

In the name of survival and under pressure to compete, the companies took steps that made their immediate collapse inevitable. During the summer of 1996, interest rates were raised to 50% per month.

Rapidly, the Government tried to distance itself from the pyramid finance schemes, arguing that the legal framework related to their functions was missing. This did not relieve it of responsibility, and instead verified, once again, the close ties between them. Furthermore, it threw light on the companies' illegal sponsorship of high government activities and electoral campaign of the Democratic Party. The suspension of the companies' funds on the part of the Government and the distribution of 50-60% of the deposited investments, early 1997, was interpreted as a second fraudulence and not a solution to the issue. The thief could not play the judge.

These companies posted looses of 2.2. thousand million USD (Financial Times quote), which the foreign press has termed "*the fraudulence of the century*".

In short, the institutional impasse created by the non-recognition of the elections results by the opposition, secondly, the withdrawal of the political and economic support on the part of the US/EU and reactions from the WB and the IMF (particularly the suspension of the new agreement IMF/Albanian Government and evacuation of staff) and thirdly, the extreme political polarisation of Albanian society, made it impossible for the DP to rule.

The discontent of the people was exploited by the opposition for political purposes, that fully supported and led the massive revolt of the Albanians. But the polemics and thriving for power stood above the national interest and the vital interests of a

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[32] Moreover, the simulation of the democratic process culminated in the manipulation of the national elections of May 1996 and local election of October 1996, boycotted by the opposition and criticised by the international community. Stubbornly the democrats did not recognise the need for power sharing; they worked in the same direction against contestation in the local elections of October 1996. The regime was labelled a '*demodictatorship*'.

population in revolt. The escalation of violence and destructive acts rapidly acquired threatening proportions. The generalised discontent and frustration, as well as the action of the criminal elements, could no longer be controlled by a single actor. The political rhetoric of both camps augmented tension and the massive violent destruction of the public institutions such as the local government offices, police stations, DP offices, military units and army barracks, and properties of the fraudulent companies, clearly showed that the aim of the rebellion was the violent overthrow of the existing power.

The crisis of the pyramidal companies was not the beginning of the economic crisis, but it was its result; it was the result of the mal-functioning of the Albanian economy, the bad governing of the Democratic Party and the misguided advice of both IMF and World Bank consultants.

4.2.2. 29 June 1997: elections or plebiscite!

It was the fourth time in six years that Albanians went to the ballot box. Under the pressure of the Western diplomacy, an 'acceptable' climate was created for election to take place. Nearly two thousand people lost their lives during the last months. The gun ruling the country shows that Albanians are learning the hard way to use their vote.

The question raised after elections is whether they can be considered elections or plebiscite decision on the part of the people? The overwhelming victory of the socialists, supports the second assessment. Once again, the future Albanian parliament will be dominated by one single party; the 'socialist' coalition holds 101 places out of 127; roles are being reversed. The dramatic shift of the electorate in 1997 elections demonstrates popular discontent against the bad governance of the Democrats and mainly against president Sali Berisha, who is considered to be the main responsible for the occurrence of pyramid schemes collapse and the anarchy in the country.

Being a hasty and emotional vote of "settling accounts, "pouring out anger", and "getting rid of" rather than a pro-vote, leaves a lot of uncertainty about the trust that people have in the new leaders. Elections campaign took place under a state of emergency, under conditions of anarchy, in which the rebels committees of the Southern towns outlawed the local government and did not recognise the central one. No economic or political programmes/alternatives were displayed, except certainties that the West wanted Berisha to step down and a Marshal Plan was under consideration in order to restore the Albanian economy.

The Socialists were not prepared for such an overwhelming victory. As previously mentioned, the rebellion gave them advantages never possible before. Their abandonment of the old sectarian policies, their participation in coalitions that two or three years ago were inconceivable, such as the coalition with the Social Democrats and Democratic Alliance, or its participation in the "Forum for Democracy", that early this year brought together left-wing and right-wing parties as well as distinguishable intellectuals, created a new image and broke their identification with the old Communist Labour Party.

The Democratic Party, once the most successful party among the anti-Communist parties of Eastern Europe, had a dramatic loss. Its rise and fall relates closely to that of its leader Sali Berisha. His remarkable vitality and vigour made him one of the most popular leaders of the new Eastern democracies. What left Berisha without international support were i)the grave manipulations and the persecution of the opposition in the May 1996 elections, and ii) the precarious policy that he followed in region in particular after Dayton agreement. His 'unrealistic' and unpredictable support to nationalist parties in Kosova and Macedonia were criticised and condemned by the West. However, even the most far-sighted political analysts could not predict the proportions that the violent rebellion would take in the country after the collapse of the pyramid schemes. Actually, the political scene is dominated by a coalition in which the socialists rule. This coalition faces an enormous challenge to restore order and law in the country, and revive the economy. On the other hand, the reformation of the unconcerted opposition and franctioned democrats is a prerequisite for Albania's democratisation. The Albanian state and its institutions are still in crisis. The civil society proved to be impotent to perform. Unless trust in the Government policies and among people themselves is established, contrary to the extreme politicisation of community's life and culture, Albanian state and civil society existence is under threat.

What follows is an interpretation of research findings vis-à-vis the recent crisis in relation to: i) the social consciousness of the Albanians as actors and recipients of change; and ii) the impact of the change on their mentalities, their loyalties, future orientations, personal and collective belongings.

4.3. An Interpretation of Primary Data Vis-à-vis the Recent Crisis: Summer 1996

4.3.1. Objectives, justification and methodology:

The aim of the survey to be presented in the following pages was to trace the characteristics of the post-communist transition, by focusing on particular aspects of the transformation of the social fabric and the construction of personal and collective identities. The interpretation of primary data collected during fieldwork carried out in Albania between July and August 1996 allows a more profound understanding of the roots of the present conflict.

I consider the process of identity-building as a fundamental factor to be considered in order to understand social change. As Nederveen Pieterse (1991) notes, 'identity' implies a relationship to what is different and thus a statement of boundaries. During the past years, Albanians have been engaged in a process of redefinition of themselves in a new environment of symbols and meanings. While testing their fundamental values, they question ideologies, confronting the real world existing beyond the television screens. The appropriation of space and time on the part of both the individual and community is not only a matter of negotiation; the recent events have shown the possibilities and the results of transgression.

There is a set of dialectical relationships coexisting within the conceptualization of identity: stability and change, subjective, objective and intersubjective elements, which

are also individual and social, cognitive and affective, socio-cultural and behavioral, conscious and unconscious; continuous development and transformation versus discontinuous rupture and crisis; autonomy, fragmentation and articulation with other identities.

Going through the historical construction of the "natural" concept of identity one becomes aware of the incorporation of this term by hegemonic discourses. As aforementioned, during communist rule identity politics was a state concern. Even "the underground" was state controlled, since the Party-state was in possession of the unitary truth. The main change in relation to the politics of identity in post-communist transition is the explosion of difference. Old solidarities are being destroyed and new groups boundaries are being re-defined. The patterns of exclusion/inclusion are no longer determined from above. New boundaries have to be established. In that sense, the politics of identity becomes the focus of the more general political struggle.

4.3.2. Research hypothesis, findings and their interpretation:

The research was fulfilled through a combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques. 500 hundred persons were surveyed in three Albanian regions: Tirana and its suburbs, the Shllak commune in the North, and the Fier district in the South-West.

The underlying hypothesis of the survey proposed an understanding of different Albanian social sectors, in terms of their mentalities, orientations and loyalties, through the exploration of basic issues related to their social and economic and political lives. Namely: economic positions and aspirations, political loyalties and ideas, nationalist and religious representations.

I) The first set of questions is related to employment and property. Before 1990, nearly ninety per cent of the respondents have been employed in state enterprises and collective farms. After the latest economic reforms, employment patterns experiences a dramatic shift. The main findings of the survey are presented below.

In summer 1996, twenty-three per cent of the respondents were unemployed, and twenty-two per cent of were under-employed. The population officially considered 'non-productive' was twelve per cent. In sum, half of the respondents perceived themselves as having none or precarious work. This perception is surely reinforced by the old mentality that 'to have a job means to get a monthly pay-bill', but the dramatic nature of the data is better understood if we consider that among the people of the generation between the ages of 25 and 45, almost one of three is a migrant abroad.

Seventeen per cent of the respondents considered themselves self-employed. Self-employment for the villagers mainly means being working as a private owner, particularly with reference to the land. For the town-based respondents, self-employment is mainly identified with small entrepreneurial activities performed as a family business in the informal economy.

At the level of people's representation, the rate of unemployment in Albania is high. During transition, the loss of employment meant a loss of security and protection formerly provided by state institutions.

Do the respondents have properties or other sources of income besides employment? How do they perceive themselves? In total, almost eighty-five percent of the respondents portray themselves as proprietors. Namely: thirty-two percent of them own property due to heritage (land property); thirty-three per cent due to the privatization process (town dwellings that were sold by the state at a symbolic price to the previous inhabitants); ten per cent due to migration; five per cent due to involvement in the business sector; and only two percent due to reparation as ex-persecuted. In sum, only fifteen per cent of the total number of the respondents do not own property.

In post-communist transition, individual's status is therefore no longer defined only by the employment indicator but, in a growing tendency, by the ownership rights. Private ownership rather than state ownership is considered the generator of material prosperity. But the capital assets are not perceived as investment capital for production and employment creation, but as (i) assets providing the security against uncertainties (i.e. the feeling of the highlanders for their parcel of land) and (ii) source of income coming from investments in financial operations, namely in the pyramidal schemes.

Related to the changing dimensions of employment and ownership, the respondents were asked to position themselves comparatively in pre and after 1990 class/status categories. Only ten per cent turned out to be workers; this number compared to pre-1990 had decreased thrice. Peasants and intellectuals numbers have also decreased. Some respondents placed themselves in the new category of free traders. Unemployment was considered a social status rather than a temporary state. This bring two issues for consideration: i) the frustration on the part of the young generation for the few present possibilities and the absence of a future perspective, frustration being reinforced by lack of past experiences which, to a certain degree, can stand as a reason; ii) the image that Albanians have of democracy and magic of the free market, characterized by lack of opportunities for social development and, on the other hand, by inputs of easy money, coming from the high interests provided by the financial investments and from remittances from abroad. Easy money which allows people to live and allows leaders to raise consensus.

Concluding on this first set of questions, I would like to point out that the image of a growing stable economy and development was temporary and disorientating, since the reality was and is dense with uncertainties and fears.

II) The second set of questions is related to national, regional and religious identities. The aim is to understand what and how is the vacuum of pure ideology substituted in terms of identification and perception of the self. Of relevance is the exploration of the change projected in the image of 'the enemy', the pillar upon which the communists constructed the repressive and autarchic system.

Fifty-five per cent of the respondents perceived themselves as Albanians in the first place, while for other twelve per cent the regional identification comes first. For twenty-seven per cent others the religious identity was the main one. A factual explosion of difference, considering that till 1990, religion was condemned by constitution and regional identification was criticized.

The fact that only half of the respondents declared as primary the national identity, as well as that the exodus flow continues unrestrained, shows that individuals are trying to redefine their positions in relation to categories such as nation-state and homeland. What is being rapidly disassociated from the glorified notion of the homeland are values such as freedom or prosperity. This process is complex and complemented by other identifications models. The fact that one forth of respondents rank the religious identity first can be first explained by questioning patriotism, and second by a need for rallying points and strong collective representations. Being a Muslim or a Christian does not have much to do with the search for mystic values. It is rather a cultural paradigm: a way of appropriating space within a community that provides security. Still, the degree of identification with region and/or religion does not provide enough ground to comprehend the recent violent process of disintegration of the state and Albanian society. In view of the recent eruption of violence and implosion of the state structures, as well as general distrust among people, one can argue that the political elite are capitalizing the differences among communities for instrumental purposes.

The following reinforces the above statements. For different, but convergent reasons the majority of the respondents (eighty per cent) perceived internal migration as problematic, stressing difference in mentality and the way of living (thirty-three per cent), the possibility for open social confrontation (thirty-one per cent), and elements related to property (nineteen per cent) as further sources of concern. The North-South division is not mentioned as a motive for concern. It is more represented as a highlander-lowlander breach, or more as rural versus urban culture. Considering that until 1990 the internal transit of people was controlled and planned by the regime, the high percentage of concern about migration shows that the encounter with what is different and unknown is a source of fears and insecurity. The path of change is perceived as being too fast, beyond the possibilities of social control from the grassroots.

The question on the identification in relation to Europe and the world retakes the point from another perspective. Eighty-five per cent of the respondents beheld to the Albanian identity, whereas the other twenty per cent first identified themselves as 'Europeans' or 'world citizens'. Once again, this points at the oscillations of the national identity and the individual autonomy in the search of an uncensored identity. The response of the eighty per cent who strongly assumed being Albanians in part stands upon a realistic confrontation with reality: the 'fortress' Europe that strengthens boundaries with discriminatory legislation for immigrants.

The three following questions tried to address the 'unsolved Albanian question', in particular related to Kosova. Seventy-six of the respondents recognized the problem, but they reacted differently when asked about concrete solutions. Fifty per cent of the respondents were in favour of the unification with Kosova, and the same percentage agreed to an active involvement in the solution of the question. Considering that the remaining half of the respondents were against the unification, whereas the other half was not only for, but even ready to fight for the unification, there is a need to explain these extreme positioning.

I think even in these answers one can note the tendency to take an extreme position to the solution of any problem. The answers show the possibility of confrontation in between these extremes themselves, for compromise and negotiations have historically a minor role in the Albanian mentality and cultural kit. As the well-known Albanian writer, Ismail Kadare has it '*the rifle became part of the spinal cord of the Albanians*'. In the Albanian culture prevails the heroic aspect, and its legends are epic narratives. This is the cultural basis on which people has finally taken weapons, and this pose a serious question to the restoration of order independently of who are the winners and who the losers.

It is of interest to inquire where do the pro-unification answers come from. A probable hypothesis would be from the North, mainly by respondents from the Shllak commune (this in view of the recent crisis, in which Albania was described 'in the brink of the civil war', a war between North and South). In fact, only a small percentage of the positive answers for unification and participation in the struggle came from 'the Northerners', who are generally identified more with the Albanians of Kosova, rather with the lowlanders of the Middle and South Albania. The 'Northerners' in Albania rank in first place their religious, Catholic identity. In this respect, Albanians in Kosova represent a Muslim community. Most of the answers pro the unification came from respondents from the capital and the South. This reinforces the point that the relations North-South is a complex and conditioned by other aspects, such as religion.

Part of this conflictive panorama is the question regarding the image of the foe. Some points can be made regarding the answers. Fifty-three per cent of the people did not identify any enemy at all, which shows that the old schema of "creating" enemies is falling apart: in summer 1996, Albania was a calm and peaceful country. Another twenty per cent tried to name the enemy: Mafia, corruption, criminality. All factors disturbing the quiet life: in summer 1996, not only Albania was a peaceful country, but the respondent were very keen in the desire that Albania remains as such.

These two categories of respondents can be counterpoised to twenty-five per cent of the general number, who named the enemy as 'opposition parties'. It is interesting the fact that this is exactly the same percentage of the people who in a later question said to be involved in politics and party members. I explain this result partly with the structure of the question, but mainly with the polarization of the political ground (which is demonstrated in the following section of questions). The political struggle, far from being perceived as an organic part of democracy, sustains a permanent conflict between winners and losers. Concluding, the fact that the majority of the respondents had not real enemy, shows that the political elites during the last months have been reconstructing on the old schema, rapidly inventing the internal enemy.

III) The third set of questions relates to the place of the individual within political frames and his/her perception of this relationship.

The first question relates to the political engagement. Twenty-five per cent of the respondents were engaged in politics, whereas seventy-five percent were not. This brings forth another question: what does political engagement means for the Albanians? The twenty-five per percent of the respondents were party members, which means that independent of the press rhetoric and efforts to politically polarise the

society, politics is perceived as a separate sphere in the dialectic development of the society. Albanians are very slowly filling the gap between the family and their clan and the state and its institutions. Therefore, both categories of the respondents did not perceived any other space for any kind of 'civil society', but for political organizations. True, there is an absence of a fully-articulated movement, institutions or discourses on liberalization, democracy, national question, on the role of the individual and/or the real-existing socialism.

Further on, these data show that politics is strongly perceived as a belonging of a particular group, not enough negotiated, comprehensible in the conditions of a young democracy. Nevertheless, this identification brings, on one hand, direct advantages at a personal level (as previously mentioned, the collapse of the government can be explained by the close identification that people made between them and the pyramid schemes owners). On the other hand, it brings a stiffening of the political debate and of the dialectic opposition that should characterize the process of democratization. The division into camps due to party membership became a factor of instability, for 'the others' ideas are not accepted.

As regards the form of the state, seventy per cent of the respondents opted for the parliamentary republic, the other were divided between preferences for the presidential republic and the monarchy. Opting for the parliamentarian form can be interpreted as a rejection of totalitarianism, but in part also as a reaction against the authoritarian tendencies of then Democratic leaders. The voting down of the Constitution in 1994 verifies this point. The other answers can be interpreted as a feeling for the need of leaders, 'strong hands' for running the country. The authority of the leaders is perceived as necessary in order to restrain office abuse on the part of the new elite/bureaucrats and, in the case of the monarchy, as a strong unifying element. In 1997 elections Albanians were given the chance to vote regarding the form of the state. The pretender of the throne, the son of King Zog, peacefully campaigned all over the country, but reacted violently when the Central Election Committee declared that the monarchy option had lost. This reaction disillusioned a lot of Albanians, desperate and mistrusting the corrupted leaders, considered the pretender for throne as a more legitimate and reliable unifying personality.

Another question relates to the confidence of the people to then parliament. Only fifty-two per cent of the respondents had confidence in the present parliament, which shows that there is a perceived gap between the desired form of state and the performance of the actual parliament. Regarding the credibility of the government, almost half of the respondents (forty-six per cent) did not trust it. These data question the 1996 national elections (during which the democratic party scored about seventy per cent). Still, one can interpret the answer in terms of: I) rapid loss of social consensus; ii)a vote that pointed at the absence of alternatives provided by the opposition, rather than confidence in the Democratic Party: and iii) a manipulation of the elections. All these reasons may well stand together. In particular, the decrease of credibility is also explained with the fact that, under communist rule, the state assumed responsibility over the whole life of the individual and, according to this mentality, people find nowadays easy to blame the Government. This is the door step when things go wrong, when they are helpless in front of the difficult situation created by the reform. The government officials are not only blamed for their incompetence and corruption, they

are also blamed when they cannot help the frustration of the people to perform in a new terrain.

It is interesting to note that in summer 1996, the majority of the respondents had confidence in the present president (fifty-eight per cent). This response is not unexpected. It relates not only to the mentality that difficult transition needs a 'strong hand', but it is directly related to the personality of Sali Berisha, who was then perceived as an uncorrupted man.

IV) The last question relates to the perception and value that respondents attach to the following concepts: work, love, knowledge, social justice, money, tradition, security, freedom, family, art and homeland. Respondents were asked to rank in hierarchical order what they considered the three most important. Family was ranked in the first place, social justice in the second, and security in the third. The answer related to the family highlight the concern for what used to be the only trust-worthy nucleus for the Albanians. The concern about social justice can be interpreted as a reaction, a 'rudiment' of the egalitarian past, as well as part of the general questioning of the symbols of the communist past and the concern in relation to security is evidentated under the conditions in which the state withdraws from its role of provider. All these concepts that were 'taken for granted', have become problematic and point also to the respondents' need for firm points amid transition uncertainties. One can argue that the concern about social justice goes beyond the individual's stable life; it brings to the surface the daily breaking of an idealised image for the Western type democracy.

The research was carried in summer 1996, right after national elections which were gravely manipulated by the democrats. It was also carried in the frenzy of the pyramid schemes' ventures, which were advertised and identified as successful enterprises of capitalism. As long as the state was indirectly providing for an easy life Albanians consented and overlooked the distorted democratic process. One can also argue that self censorship was high and the respondents did not feel free to speak their mind, or that questions (rubrique IV) related to values/concepts reflect only on respondents' momentary status. The aim of the many in-depth interviews and open discussions organised with representatives of each group were to verify the questionnaires' results and assist in getting discretely to conclusions.

What people were experiencing through investing in the pyramid schemes and informal sector as well as through remittances from abroad was a fake modernisation and development. Entertainment was stimulated by the organisation of shows such as Miss.Europa (sponsored by Gjallica pyramid company); the Government was interested in replacing political activism with clientelism, a persuasion that everyone was making an easy life and justification for high-level corruption. Democratisation was slowly being sacrificed on both sides in the name of quick enrichment.

Yet this is a complex process, for as the values' hierarchy table show, people were concerned and ranked first exactly those fundamental values that were in crisis: security, social justice and family.

As previously mentioned there is no insight to the discontent that the communist regime produced; the destruction of winter 1991-1192 were channelled rather than

fuelled; they were transformed into positive energy and belief for a free and prosperous life. Initially, there appeared to be trust and hope in the transition, and vision on the part of the democrat politicians. The police state would be replaced by a co-ordinator one; isolation walls were broken. The state did not assume the role of co-ordinator, free initiative was understood as a legitimisation to misappropriate everything public, migration went uncontrolled.

There was no investment in education; the last generation is brought up almost illiterate. Education, family, social justice values were hastily replaced by quick and easy enrichment through informal sector, through clandestine migration and prostitution, through grass cropping in the backyards. It was a distorted process, with a speedy stratification based on these criteria, rather than 'on merit' and therefore the Albanians could take that easily. The egalitarian past makes the initial capital accumulation process even more socially costly. The state performance as regards reconciling on one hand the need to provide basic material security for everyone, with the market logic and individuals' craving for quick enrichment, goes beyond that of a coordinator. In this view, post-communist transition in general proves to be socially painful and politically risky.

The new system created a lot of insecurity and frustration. The family was shackled; the traditional role of the bread winner through employment was painfully replaced by the new kiosk owner, the broker, the money-dealer, the businessmen; the 'instinctive' individualism was legitimately transformed as hyper-individualism. The torturous link with 'the other': husband, wife, child, parent broke out violently. The Albanian family like the society in general was undergoing a crisis.

With the collapse of the pyramids people, desperately to orientate amid the new opportunities and paradoxes felt misguided by the corrupted state and its institutions. The collapse of the pyramids ruined trust in the institutions, and the opposition did not provide in time neither vision nor hope. Albanians rebellion was a rebellion against the paying the price of the fake development of capitalism and sacrificed democracy project.

Still as the evidence shows there was no hatred among people. There was concern related to migration, related to generally/abstract labels like: criminality and banditism, but not perceived enemy from the North or from the South. The change in less than a year time, points clearly at the role of the political elite in capitalising on the community's culture.

The North-South contradiction is actually built upon a communist rationale. It reflects the mania to invent enemies, to operate in close circles, replacing the class enemy with the regional one. The fear of being excluded from the West, finds expression in the *slogan "We are in Europe"*. The scapegoats for a distorted integrative process is the other clan, the other community, the other group. Instead, down at the grass roots level, a recognition process continues; it would lead to confrontation in as much as the 'vital' interests are not perceived depending on the exclusion of the other group. It is a process that is affected also by the individual or community ethics. The ethical norms and values were shaped under the abnormal conditions of communist dictatorship. Survival is not equal to experience. Post-communist transition creates premises for a

different ethical approach and a reconception of terms such as good, bad, freedom and society.

It is also relevant to consider the problematique of the commonalties that individuals and groups have. Albanians appear to be easily defined and perceived by the others as one group, community and nation, probably because of their common emotional investment in terms of language, common symbols, myths, stories and common cultural reflection. During the questioning process of these years, Albanians have found contradictory answers to questions like: being Albanian, what does it mean? To what extent does this identification affect the individual? When negative status derives from this identification. Both the individual and the group have the tendency to differentiate and distance themselves. The degree of differentiation or identification, in relation to the nation, region or religion, often depends on immediate benefits the individuals or groups can get. Such is the case of Orthodox Albanians (relatively better received emigrants in Greece) in comparison to Muslim ones.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND QUESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As a permanent frontier between antagonistic political, cultural and religious entities, the Albanian land has always been marginal, but yet conflictive battleground for the dominant international powers. The proclamation of the Albanian state means the emergence of the unsolved national question, which remains one of the underlying problems of the Balkans.

The establishment of the communist regime strengthened the isolation pattern of the previous centuries under Ottoman invasion. The voluntary delinking and the extreme violence in social relations produced rigid compulsory state structures, no intermediaries, a huge gap between the individual and the state, no civil society. The integrative process within the Albanian society was very slow, and the isolation negatively affected the identification process with the Albanians outside the borders. The assumption of control and responsibility over the life of each individual by the party-state did partially disintegrate the peasant communities, but did not dislodge the inner mentality, rather it operated on that. Individuals held to the kinship structures, and the traditional fragmented mentality in view of their uncertainty, powerlessness and questioning of the hegemonic values and norms.

Albanians communism represents a clear failure of the socialist paradigm of modernity; not freeing people from the constraints of scarcity, but sacrificing their present for the future.

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe triggered internal changes, an outburst of discontent for the authoritarian regime; leading to the transformations of the political institutions as well as economic and social relations. Once again Albanians were introduced only with one alternative: Western type of democracy and full reliance on the market. Democracy has no tradition in Albania; two thirds of the life of the Albanian state were under communist regime; the rest are anarchic periods subdued by strong rule, like 1928-1939 years of monarchy. The liberalisation process of 1991-1992 was 'negotiated'; political elite could channel and transform the discontent of the people into positive energy to construct a better, prosperous and free life.

The post-communist transition is abrupt and under poor conditions. It is inherently impeded by the legacies of the past, mainly isolation and violence in social relations. Related to the first, uncontrolled internal and external migration became the pattern and the safety valve of transition. Related to the social-economic and political domains, the emergence of new loyalties and identifications, as well as new sources of wealth and power created a restless situation of opportunities, frustrations, paradoxes and improvisations on the part of the individual, collective group, and the state for 'projection in time'.

In the name of stability in the region and as an anti-Communist, neo-liberal triumph, during 1991-1996 the European Union and United States fully supported the Democratic Party and President Berisha as the only democratic force in the country.

They turned a blind eye to the distortion of the political and economic development. But the coming into power of the anti-Communist opposition in 1992 represented only a formal break with the old political system, for communist mentality strongly prevailed.

In the economic realm, shock therapy effects were mitigated by the thriving of an informal and criminal sector, by-passing rules, and filling the legislative vacuum with corruption. The embracement of the capitalist mentality to enrich oneself in the shortest time possible led the basis and justified the infamous pyramid schemes that seemed to pose a solution to the cost of the economic reform. The Albanian opposition and its media did not effectively denounce the risks neither did they provide any alternative; all political parties to the present lack clear programmes addressing crucial issues such as poverty, migration, privatisation, unemployment.

Characteristics of the post-communist transition is the hyper-politicisation of social relations in 'communist' 'anti-Communist' line. The exclusive policies of the Democrats in power did not allow for a new, liberal political culture to come into being.

Neo-liberalism found more political terrain than nationalism, which was externally conditioned and which reconciliatory logic would acquire consensus and power-sharing. The state institutions instead of maintaining a co-ordinator's role were compromised. First of all, their role was questioned and distorted by state officials themselves, who worked to replace consensus and civil responsibility with clientelism, accountability and dialogue with authoritarianism.

The Albanian society is a state of crisis. Neo-liberal rationale stimulated individualism; it questioned family and old group values, but was not substantiative for raising consensus on the speedy stratification. The loss of security, the speed of the process itself, the poor base, the absence of clear orientation posts (strong rallying points like religion or nationalism) produce a lot of frustration. Moreover, the lack of investment in education, the consequences of the sacrifice of the private in the name of the public, the reluctance to look inward, to reflect on the past (no communist leader or decision-maker ever admitted in public that they regretted their wrongdoing) have created paradoxical situations in which individuals both victimise themselves in relation to the other, the world, the West, while asking violently for compensation. This can partially explain the violence of the last months, the incompetence of the political class to lead the process, the 'wait and see' policy for Western wind direction, the impotence of the civil society to perform, the split nation.

Post-communist transition in Albania is an interdependent, rapid and complex process which analysis raises further questions, that need both concrete daily answers and long-term policy making.

First, the process of change is interdependent on the role various actors (the individual, the family, the community, the state) will acquire for themselves. The further politicisation of individuals' life and communities' culture by the 'intellectuals' and political leaders will produce conflict and transgression, whereas a conscientious investment in education and a continuous reflection on 'the self' and belonging groups,

including an open discussion on differences and diversity instead of the search of 'scape goats' would heal and save the violent disintegration of the Albanian state and society.

More, the revival of the Albanian state and its institutions means a stimulation of liberal culture, a process in which strong opposition forces are seen as a requisite for democratic development. The state revival relates to the ability to generate trust and provide vision for its citizens; as well as it implies realism and pragmatism in addressing the national question, for which the role of international community is determinant.

Neither the written principles of international law, still recognised as soft law, not Western diplomacy could handle in time the region's issues and avoid war in ex-Yugoslavia. The recent events in Albania point once again to the fragility of the internal balance as well as to the regional interdependence of any long term solution.

Finally, important questions need further analysis such as:

i) What are the disintegrative and integrative effects of the continuous politicisation of cultural and 'ethnic' differences in Albania?

ii) Under what conditions can a national political culture override such effects and become the basis of political mobilisation?

iii) What is the role of grassroot organisation and what effects their development?

vi) What is the role of the international community

vii) Under what conditions could the regional North-South divide present an alternative political project?

Answers to these questions are difficult to find. In the present situation neither nationalism nor regional divide can fully replace the ideological vacuum of the past. National rhetoric and project are left aside because of external conditionality, while a regional North-South divide lacks any alternative political project, which could serve as the basis of a further pact or conflict.

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