

The Great Political Rotation in Albania (March 1992)

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Abstract

From all former communist countries, Albania was less prepared for the transition from dictatorship to pluralistic democracies and trade economy. The historical heritage of authoritarian and centralized rules and of weak economy development, was a major obstacle to a quick and easy rotation of Albania society. Political instability in Albania in early 1990s had led to the change of four governments within a period of one year (march 1991-1992). This aggravated situation among the political forces paralyzed normal state activity, showing negative effects in all directions including economy direction. Consequently, at this time, the overall economic situation was characterized by a number of negative parametres. Albania had already dropped not only in a difficult economic but even political, moral and spiritual crisis, where a good part of the people had lost hope in the future of the country. The members of the Albanian right were without the proper experience of a democratic politics. Faced with this difficult situation, the country was moving towards early elections of March 22, 1992. These elections were held under a new electoral law which were adopted on February 4, 1992. The political parties agreed on a mixed election system, reflecting criticism of the electoral procedures pursued up to that time. With all of the major historical, political and socio-economic obstacles, the elections developed smoothly and according to international observers they were regular. The result of these elections marked the absolute victory of the Democratic Party. Socialist Party became the second main force, but with a drastic contraction of the electorate. These elections marked the political rotation in Albania and the coming of a democratic government in power, after nearly 50 years of the communist regime. The greatest victory of the Democratic Party created Albania the best opportunity to strive for the creation of a true democracy, a stable economy and a social and legal justice to respond to the demands of its citizens. Thus, Albania under the leadership of the Democrats embarked on the long and troublesome path of the country's multifaceted transformations. On the path of a long and difficult transition to the establishment and consolidation of a sustainable democratic system.

Keywords: Election, Politics, Rotation, Democracy

1. Introduction

If the Labor Party will want to continue to be one of the countries main political actors, it needed to be fully reformed and cut off from its Stalinist past. For this reason, prior to her leadership, she become a major party reformer. In the bosom of the Labor Party, there were two currents of conservatives and that of reformers, where the reformers triumphed. In the post of party leader, who was left behind/empty, after Ramiz Alise's resignation, after being elected president, was elected former Prime Minister Fatos Nano, who was known as one of the main reformers representatives. The Central Committee was merged and in its place a new steering committee was established. Members of the Political Bureau were either expelled from the party or resigned. The PPSH was renamed and renamed the Albanian Socialist Party.

Changes were also made even in its program. She got distanced from the communist past and the Marxist-Leninist ideology and embraced the principles of European social democracy. She also declared herself a progressive and modern party that would fight for democracy, social justice and economic reforms that would enable the implementation of a market economy. But despite these, the Albanians still did not believe that the Socialist Party was a very young party in comparison to the PPSH, so the support given to it continued to fall. The developments within the PPSH have also marked the fall of importance of Ramiz Alise. The leadership of the PPSH, which sought to avoid identifying with its predecessors, tried to cut off more and more with the communist leader.

Now Ramiz Alia had no previous force in either party or state affairs, as the law "on the main constitutional provisions" had limited his powers.

Political instability had led to the change of four governments within one year (March 1991-1992). This aggravated situation among the political forces paralyzed normal state activity, showing negative effects in any economic and economic direction. As the researcher Muco states, "political instability is definitely a strong determinant of the economic transition path".

Even in the case of Albania, this correlation is obviously linked to the lack of a clear political strategy and stability, which further aggravated the situation.

Consequently, at this time, the overall economic situation was characterized by a number of negative parameters. Budget deficit reached alarming figures. Inflation has turned into a worrying phenomenon. The data showed a very pronounced reduction in industrial output. Meanwhile, entire branches of the industry were completely paralyzed. In the agricultural sector, production had experienced a significant decline. This decline was a consequence of the degradation of the state supply system for raw materials and trade in agricultural products. This decline was also affected by the collapse of state-owned cooperatives. As a result of paralysis of manufacturing sectors, in 1991, unemployment grew alarmingly.

2. The Great Political Rotation in Albania (March 1992)

The fragile political, economic and institutional situation created negative predispositions for the emergence of a number of illegal activities and various negative phenomena, among which we can mention unemployment, clandestine migration, trafficking, rape and theft of state property.

Faced with this difficult situation, the country was heading towards early elections. During the electoral campaign of March 22, 1992, a united opposition anti-communist group was formed, which was part of the Republican Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Independent Union, under the leadership of the Democratic Party.

During this election campaign, unlike what had happened a year ago, Sali Berisha did not only focus on the city but also paid attention to the village where most of the population lived and where the Communists had had a great deal of support stable. Berisha continued to campaign through large rallies in which he promised to Albanians that the country would emerge from the crisis only if the Democratic Party came to power, as the West was ready to help Albania only if they were removed from the communist power.

On the other hand, the opposition leader promised that if the Democrats came to power, they would not retaliate against the Communists and would not commit revanchistic policies against them. In this campaign, the opposition had broad support from diplomatic representatives of Western countries, particularly the US. Also, the opposition now had more monetary and propaganda tools to carry out an effective campaign. The bureaucracy of the Interior Ministry gave it the freedom and security to conduct a normal campaign. The Socialists, who understood that they had lost the battle, were in full swing.

Democratic Party and other opposition parties had criticized the majority election system implemented on March 31, which had given the communist a great number of seats than their share in the total number of votes. Initially Democratic Party had insisted in the implementing the propotional system, but when the popular support for the opposition was increased, the Democratic Party changed its stance, now supporting the majority system. Even the Socialist Party changed attitude. As the number of their supporters was diminishing, socialist believed that the propotional system would be better for the Party. Even the smaller parties required the propotional system. Wishing the elections to be held as soon as possible, Democratic Party made compromises and as a result a mixed system emerged. The parties agreed on this new electoral law to reflect criticism of the electoral procedures pursued up to that time. The new electoral law was adopted on 4 February 1992. It envisioned a mixed electoral system, based on the German model. The Law divided the country into 100 electoral districts, from which 100 deputies will be directly elected, while 40 deputies, will be elected by the voted gathered nationwide.

The electoral zones would have almost equal number of candidates. The law envisaged that the parliament representation should reflect the percentage of votes each party would win at national level. The first 100 seats would be allocated according to the majority system in the electoral zones that would each have one place, while the other part of the seats would be divided according to a propotional representation system at national level.

In the elections zones with a single- candidates, the candidate would win at least 50 percent of the votes in the first round or majoritz in the second round. For the seats allocated by the propotional system, voters cast more ballots for the party

that for the candidates. Each party that participated in the election had a list of candidates. Party leaders were at the top of the list and thus automatically secured seats in parliament if their party were to win at least 4% of the country's vote.

The situation in Albania had undergone dramatic changes since the first plenary elections in 1991. Whatever the rights as a procedure, it was thought that the 1991 elections did not reflect the true will of the Albanian people. The Communist that were in power had not been heavily engaged in the democratic process, and election observation by international observers had been accepted with the inebriation and hope to secure international legitimacy. On the other hand, the opposition was not given the opportunity to exploit the media and campaign freely throughout the country. But in March 1992 communist were worse, as there was a lot of added pressure, both internally and externally, for pressure to reform.

Although the Socialist Party remained strong, it had suffered heavy defeats. There was no doubt that the opposition parties were in better position than the socialist, having gained significant political experience since the first multiparty elections.

The Embassy of the United States, openly helped in the process of democratization of Albania, exerting strong diplomatic pressure on the communist. US support was crucial to the conduct of electoral reform, the organization of regular elections and the placement of the political game. Two US organizations, The National Democratic Institution and International Republic Institution played an important role by providing Albanian political forces with pre-election assistance, civic education, party training, and technical support. With funds of the United States Agency for International Development, these two institutes worked closely with the government and the opposition to prepare the country for free and fair elections.

US assistance was focused on promoting and strengthening newly-established institutions and democratic culture. Its programs aimed at strengthening parliament and developing impartiality in the functioning of the political system. In the framework of the civic education work, they helped to create the Albanian Association for Free Elections and Democratic Culture, a group of independent observers who stood over political parties. The group engaged in formal and informal civic education, and on election day, played an important role in observing and verifying election results. The National Democratic Institute, chaired several pre-election missions in Albania, holding discussions with party leaders, government officials and journalists about international standards for free and fair elections.

The Republican International Institute, worked closely with the opposition parties to develop the spirit of cooperation between them and to eradicate the communist era power of the 1991 elections.

This Institute was focused on the mechanism of organizing and funding political parties and the development of effective election campaign. He taught leaders and opposition activists the methods of mobilizing the base and drafting the spread of messages of local and international significance, as well as material assistance.

With all the difficult situation, the elections of 1992 were much more regular than those of the previous year and perhaps the only truly free elections in the history of Albania. The opposition had learned lessons from the 1991 elections, had been organized much better, had more resources and had managed to secure the neutrality of the armed forces and the police. Unlike the 1991 campaign, which had been frightened by police activists and supporters of the opposition, in 1992 the police forces either remained neutral or took the opposition.

Even the media attitude had changed to the opposition. The communist influence on radio and television had fallen far after the replacement of the State Broadcasting Directorate in December 1991. In this way, conditions were created for political forces to make fair use of radio and television during the election campaign. Communists had also lost control of most of the local newspapers.

The electorate had undergone major changes after the 1991 elections. The country which previously had many doubts and in general was not familiar with the opposition program, was largely blown up by the opposition. After the collapse of the agricultural cooperatives and after the peasantry independence that came as a result of this disintegration, the communists could not rely on local officials to frighten the villagers. Many intellectuals were in support of the opposition. They came up with a statement calling on voters not to repeat the mistake of 31 March 1991 and vote for the opposition, pointing out that the Socialist Party was no longer able to rule the country.

In its electoral program, the Democratic Party called for the implementation of radical political and economic reforms and for restoring order and peace. The Democratic Party pledged to establish democracy based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, welfare through freedom and social justice, and the integration of our country into the new developments in Europe. The party pledged to draft a contemporary democratic constitution and implement radical

government reforms, to break the state out of the party, and to achieve a depoliticise of the military, security, and state-controlled media. Promising genuine economic reform to create a market economy, the Democratic Party pledged to work on the full privatization.

The Democratic Party promised to review the law on land, to allow the land to be sold to Albanian citizens, to repudiate former landowners for the communist-nationalized land, and to provide tractor peasants, dry fertilizers and seedlings. In foreign policy, it ensured the country's rapid integration into European developments.

With such a comprehensive political agenda that took into account the broader interests of the society, the Democratic Party assured broad support in the nation, marking a rapid increase in its popularity, with the conviction that it would represent the interests of the whole society. The leader of the Democrats crossed the cross-country by spreading the message of national reconciliation and a new era for Albania. In his public statements, he presented the Democratic Party as the only political force that could turn the country out of the difficult situation in which it was and tried to dispel the fear of a post-election clash with the Communists, pointing out that it would not have revenge.

In this election campaign, the Democratic Party was more united and in coalition with other opposition forces, facing the demoralized and disenchanted Socialist Party. Although the Socialist Party, at the end of 1991, was reformed in an attempt to fix the image. In an important speech at the first party conference in November 1991, Fatos Nano stressed that the Socialist Party was a whole new party and not a continuation of the Labor Party. He said his party did not support Marxist-Leninist ideology and was completely distanced from the Labor Party and its policy. The Socialist Party promised to work for a true democracy, based on the rule of law and the market economy. The Socialist Party tried to convince the voters that it had cut all ties with communism and that it had pervaded a social philosophy based on democratic principles. But with all Nano's statements, the Socialists could not convince voters that their party had become democratic. During this campaign, the socialists were under the pressure of internal and external pressure, and therefore, they could not hold a strong campaign.

In total, 11 political parties participated in the elections with 516 candidates. In addition, there were 5 independent candidates. Only 5 parties: the Democratic Party, the Socialist Party, the Social Democratic Party, the Republican Party and the Agrarian Party are candidates in at least 33 electoral districts, while other parties include the Democratic Party, the Union for Human Rights, the Ecological Party, the People's Alliance, Communist Party and the Universal Party, had introduced constituencies to a limited number of electoral zones and did not lift up weight.

Election results surpassed any expectations and expectations. The Democratic Party reaped a sensational victory. Its candidates won 90 out of 100 electoral districts. The Socialist Party had a fatal outcome by winning in 6 election zones.

In these elections, PD received 92 out of 140 seats in parliament, the Socialists -38 seats, the Social Democrats -7 seats, Republican -1 seats, PDNJ -2 seats. The March 22, 1992 elections marked the political rotation and the coming of the ruling right. The victory of the Democrats was an absolute majority. Socialist Party became the second main force, but with a drastic contraction of the electorate.

The turnout was over 90%. Despite the abnormal situation in which they developed, "the 1992 elections were far more regular than the previous year and perhaps the only truly free election in Albanian history. Even according to international observers, they were quiet and regular.

The election result also affected the departure of President Alia's political scene, which resigned on 4 April 1992. The new parliament on April 9 chose President Sali Berisha.

With this act ended the almost 50 years of Communist rule. Thus, Albania under the leadership of the Democrats embarked on the long and troublesome path of the country's multifaceted transformations.

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