

OFFICIAL NAME: Republic of Albania

CAPITAL: Tirane

SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT: Unitary Multiparty Republic

AREA: 28,748 Sq Km (11,100 Sq Mi (

ESTIMATED 2000 POPULATION 3,875,200

Albania is one of the smallest nations in Europe. It is bound by the Adriatic Sea to the west, Serbia and Montenegro to the north and northeast, Macedonia to the east and Greece to the south and southeast. Just over 20% of the land area is coastal or flat plains which are poorly drained while the major cities are located on the coastal plains or in the upland valleys. The remainder of the country is mountainous and hilly covered by scrub forest while there are many lagoon lakes in the lowlands as well as small glacial lakes in the uplands. The principal river is the Buene River. Major Cities (pop. est.); Tirane 243,000, Durres 85,000, Elbasan 83,000, Shkoder 82,000, Vlore 74,000 (1990). Land Use; forested 37%, pastures 15%, agricultural-cultivated 24%, other 24% (1993.(

CLIMATE: Albania has a Mediterranean climate with the coastal plains experiencing hot and dry summers, and frequent thunderstorms. Winters are mild as well as wet and can be quite severe in the mountains with snow cover lasting for long periods of time. Average annual precipitation in the mountain areas can exceed 1,000 mm (39 inches). The average temperature ranges in Tirane are from 17 to 31 degrees Celsius (63 to 88 degrees Fahrenheit) in July to 2 to 21 degrees Celsius (36 to 54 degrees Fahrenheit) in January.

PEOPLE: The principal ethnic majority are the Albanians who account for around 98% of the population and are divided into two groups (1.) the Gëgs (Ghegs) to the north of the Shkumbin River and (2.) the Tosks to the south. Other ethnic minorities include Greeks, Macedonians, Vlachs, Bulgarians, Gypsies and Serbs.

DEMOGRAPHIC/VITAL STATISTICS: Density; 115 persons per sq km (298 persons per sq mi) (1991). Urban-Rural; 35.8% urban, 64.2% rural (1989). Sex Distribution; 51.5% male, 48.5% female (1989). Life Expectancy at Birth; 69.6 years male, 75.5 years female (1989). Age Breakdown; 33% under 15, 29% 15 to 29, 19% 30 to 44, 12% 45 to 59, 6% 60 to 74, 2% 75 and over (1990). Birth Rate; 24.7 per 1,000 (1989). Death Rate; 5.7 per 1,000 (1989). Increase Rate; 19.0 per 1,000 (1989). Infant Mortality Rate; 28.2 per 1,000 live births (1987).

RELIGIONS: Mostly Muslims which account for around 21% of the population, while some Christians both Orthodox and Roman Catholics account for 5.4% and the remainder are atheist. Prior to 1944's communist takeover approximately 70% of the population were Muslims, 20% were Orthodox Christians and 10% were Roman Catholic.

LANGUAGES: The official language is Albanian with two dialects (1.) Geg (Gheg) to the north of the Shkumbin river and (2.) Tosk to the south.

EDUCATION: Aged 25 or over and having attained: primary education 74.7%, secondary 20.9%, higher 4.4% (1979). Literacy; literate population aged 15 or over virtually 100% (1989).

MODERN HISTORY - WWII TO 1993: Albania was proclaimed a republic on Jan. 11, 1946. In 1948 the Friendship Treaty between Albania and Yugoslavia was canceled due to serious conflict in Soviet dominated Communist Information Bureau. During the 1950's Yugoslav-Albanian diplomatic relations were broken off, although they were later resumed in 1953. In 1955 Albania was admitted to the UN as part of a general agreement between the East and West. Soviet influence was replaced by a strong political alliance with China which led to several billion dollars in financial aid, although China cut off the aid in 1978. From 1985 to 1990 diplomatic relations with most European nations as well as the former USSR and the US were resumed. In 1990 the government announced plans for gradual democratization with the lifting of religious restrictions and the freedom to travel abroad. By the close of 1990 the regime agreed to free multiparty elections to take place in Mar. 1991. Within days after the elections, protests and general industrial strikes forced the communist cabinet to resign and share power with the Democratic Party which pledged to introduce a free market economy and raise the standard of living. In Jan. 1991 some 15,000 refugees fled to Greece while in March some 24,000 boat people left for Italy. In Aug. 1991 another exodus of 18,000 people for Italy resulted in their subsequent forced repatriation and in a step up in Italian governmental aid for Albania. In Dec. 1991 after continuing food riots resulted in a number of deaths a nonpartisan, Vilson Ahmeti was named to head a new government. On Mar. 22, 1992 landslide elections were won by Democratic Party over the Socialist Party. On April 9, 1992 Sali Berisha became the first democratically elected President in 70 years. In July 1992 local elections were held in which the Socialist Party made gains and held local administrative control over the countryside while the Democrats continued to hold control over most of the large cities. In Nov. 1992 the a rift developed within the Democrats with the spilt resulting in the formation of a new party, the Democratic Alliance. Also during 1992, the massive humanitarian aid program by the Italian government continued. During 1993, former Communist leader Ramiz Alia, the Socialist Party leader Fatos Nano and most of the former Politburo members were under arrest awaiting trial on charges of abusing their office. Economically, the government had actively pursued its program of stabilizing the economy, although it would still have to rely heavily on foreign aid to ensure the program's

successful completion. In Apr. 1993 Pope John Paul II made a historic visit, the first since visit since the last pontiff died en route in 1464.

CURRENCY: The official currency is the Lek (plural; Leke) divided into 100 Quindars.

ECONOMY: Gross National Product; USD \$1,163,000,000 (1993). Public Debt; USD \$861,000,000 (1993). Imports; USD \$601,000,000 (1994). Exports; USD \$ 141,000,000 (1994). Tourism Receipts; N/A. Balance of Trade; Lek -460,000,000 (1994). Economically Active Population; 1,540,000 or 49.4% of total population (1993). Unemployed; 17.5% (1993).

MAIN TRADING PARTNERS: Its main trading partners are Serbia and Montenegro, Czech Fed. Rep., Slovakia, Romania, Italy, Poland, Germany, Greece and France .

MAIN PRIMARY PRODUCTS: Asphalt, Bitumen, Cereals, Chrome, Copper, Cotton, Grapes, Olives, Potatoes, Petroleum and Natural Gas, Timber, Tobacco .

MAJOR INDUSTRIES: Agriculture, Cement, Food Processing, Fertilizers, Mining, Petroleum, Refining, Textiles, Tobacco .

MAIN EXPORTS: Asphalt and Bitumen, Clothing, Food, Fruit and Vegetables, Non-Ferrous Metal Ores, Petroleum and Petroleum Products, Tobacco.

TRANSPORT: Railroads; route length 684 km (425 mi) (1989), passenger-km 752,000,000 (467,000,000 passenger-mi) (1989), cargo ton-km 674,000,000 (462,000,000 short ton-mi) (1989). Roads; length 16,700 km, (10,377 mi) (1989). Vehicles; cars 3,500 (1970), trucks and buses 11,200 (1970). Merchant Marine; vessels 19 (1990), deadweight tonnage 74,648 (1990). Air Transport; N/A.

COMMUNICATIONS: Daily Newspapers; total of 2 with a total circulation of 165,000 (1992). Radio; receivers 550,000 (1994). Television; receivers 324,900 (1990). Telephones; 49,000 (1993)

MILITARY: 73,000 (1995) total active duty personnel with 82.2% army, 3.4% navy and 13.7% air force while military expenditure accounts for 8.2% (1993) of the Gross National Product (GNP)