

# How albania changed from a communism to democracy essay sample

[Politics](#), [Democracy](#)



Communism is a theory or system of social organization based on the holding of all property in common, actual ownership being ascribed to the community as a whole or to the state (4). In the communist system, all individuals are equal. No matter how much one works, everyone gets equal pay; therefore, this decreases personal motivation to work hard. The government also takes away all property rights, which prevents people from having the ability to make their own wealth (1). All of the property in the country is taken into the hands of the government and they equally distribute it to the population. The citizens that break the law have to face severe punishments, depending on what those countries' laws are.

Everything is regulated in a communism; the government in a sense is aiming to create a perfect community, where everyone gets the same amount of money. This leads to no people suffering from lack of food or unemployment (1). In theory all people are equal, and there are no social classes present in communist countries (4).

All people are equally rewarded; this might seem fair, but actually it is not because some workers are more devoted than others and they get paid the same amount of money. However, everyone has a job, and there is no competition present among citizens. No one is competing to have the better company or to be the most successful because they are not rewarded as a person but as a country (1). If one person or a group of people disagree with the government there is not much that they can do; the laws are the laws and they have to be followed (1). Every aspect of people's lives is completely controlled by the dictator of the country. On the contrary, a democracy is a political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and

fair elections (2). People are active participators as citizens, in politics and civic life (2). There is a law passed in democratic states, and this law is applied equal to all of the state's citizens (2). In a democracy the people are free, as long as they obey the laws that are passed by the government.

People have the ability to choose who represents them in the government, through elections and fair vote. The citizens of a democratic country have basic rights that they have to abide by, but they are also obligated to exercise them in peace (2). Laws are used to maintain order in a country, and every citizen in a democratic country has to obey the laws that are passed. The laws are enforced for every citizen, no matter who they are. In a democratic government people definitely have their freedom. They have more of an ability to make their own choices on how they want to lead their lives, as long as no laws are broken.

There is a lot of competition between people within communities; there are limited jobs available and many people who need them. This results in social classes being formed; in most democratic states you can find low, middle and higher classes. Everyone is in it for themselves and each person works in order to create a better future for them. Property does not have as much regulation by the state; people can buy and sell their properties according to their will, always following the laws that have been passed. (2) The people who the citizens vote for are not appointed for life. If they are unhappy with someone that was previously voted into the government, they simply do not vote for them next time (2). After describing these two political systems, it is possible to better convey how they impacted Albania.

## Background

Enver Hoxha was the first leader of the Albanian communist party. At age sixteen, Hoxha studied at a French Secondary School in Korçe (Albania); he got his first ideas of Communism while he was at this school (6). After graduating from high school, he was given a scholarship to study abroad at a French University. He said that he got his first glimpse of Communism while in France; he would read the French communist newspaper daily (6). He also became an active attender of the communist meetings that France was having during the early 1930's. Upon his return to Korçe (Albania), he was a middle school teacher (6). While teaching in Korçe (Albania), Hoxha was always attending meetings that had to do with Communism; and many times leading them (10). On November 8th 1941 the Communist party of Albania was created, and Hoxha was chosen to represent Korça in this party. On March of 1943, Hoxha was elected as the first secretary of the Communist party of Albania (6). After the Second World War, the Albanian government was captured by the soon to be Dictator Enver Hoxha (5). Enver Hoxha was about to become the dictator that would rule the Albanian people for the next forty years. Hoxha was exposed to the ideas of Communism while he was studying abroad in France for a few years (6).

He stated " I would buy Humanite the gazette of the French communist party daily, and I would also buy a communist brochure" (6). Hoxha's eyes were opened by looking at what other people thought of Communism, all of his ideas built up to create what he thought was the ideal government for the Albanian people: a communist one. At first, the Albanian people thought that

communist rule was the best for their country and for them. Hoxha lead them to believe that other countries were all suffering, and that the Albanian people along with a few other countries were the only people that actually had food to eat. People did not have the ability to watch the other countries news and therefore could not see for themselves what was happening in other places. The citizens did not have a right to express their thoughts on any matter in any way. Any dispute with the laws that Hoxha passed, lead to severe punishments. Every citizen had to do exactly what they were told to do; otherwise, they faced trouble with the Albanian government.

Enver Hoxha's dictatorship over Albania was very similar to the way that other rulers dictated their countries, since Hoxha got his ideas from other countries while traveling and taking part in Communist assemblies (6). In fact, China, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union were all countries that provided Hoxha with support to help establish a communist government in Albania (6). China specifically had a very strong influence on the Albanian communist government, being a big country itself that was ruling many people under communist rule; Hoxha constantly reached to them for help. Soon the only ally that China had in Eastern Europe was Albania (8). The Chinese and Albanian relationship stayed strong until 1977 when Hoxha broke the alliance that the two countries had (8). The Chinese communist Mao, wanted to create a united China; he aimed for the Chinese people to not worry about personal achievement anymore, but be more committed to the achievement of the country as a whole and everyone together (7). Mao had many attempts into having a pure communist state in China, and millions of people

were killed during his dictatorship (7). After being elected as the first secretary of the Communist party, Hoxha played a crucial role in the Albanian government and among the society.

During his period of rule, Hoxha improved both the schooling system and health care (10). Eventually took control of the whole communist party and became the supreme dictator of Albania. He isolated Albania completely, by not allowing any of the citizens to have contact with the outside and by not allowing any imports or exports (10). If any of the citizens asked for more rights, he would put them in “ agjitazon” e “ propaganda” and the person would get 20 to 25 years of jail (17). He had convinced the country that Albanians were the people who lived in the best conditions (17). The submitted individuals would simply accept that as a reality because they just ignored the external surrounding. Individuals were completely deprived of their rights and freedom. They were not allowed to express their opinion and to speak up for themselves. This condition suppressed their minds and their hope for a better future; they were just puppets under Hoxha’s control. Also, what was offered in the country was not satisfactory enough to please the content of the population and to allow them to live in a serene life style (15).

This is why people started to try to escape to other country; they were looking for improvement, for opportunities, and for freedom. They would flee the country to go to other European countries; however, many people were killed, some at the borders and some drowned while trying to swim over (10). No citizen had the right to question Hoxha’s laws or rules. However, when looking at communist rule over Albania and by not looking too deep

into what Hoxha did it is seen that he did not only do bad for this country. During his rule Hoxha raised the standard of living in Albania: making large improvements in health, education, and also human rights (15). When Hoxha started dictating Albania in 1944, it was a very poor country in great need of improvement and development. Hoxha made huge advancements in the public school systems of this time, everyone was required to attend school and the schools were in great condition for the students to learn to their full capacity (15). But his good deeds did not compensate for the cruelty he spread over the country.

#### Hoxha's Death:

Hoxha's sudden death due to a heart attack in 1985 started the fall of the Albanian Communism (10). After, Hoxha's death Ramiz Alia took power and tried to perform everything that Hoxha had planned for the country. He, however, was not able to successfully keep the communist party in order. The citizens continued to live in a poor state with no communication with other countries, but people were getting rider of this situation (17). The first protests were started by college students who were looking for better benefits in school (16). Soon this movement became widespread, and other Albanian citizens backed the students' protests. Everyone was unhappy with Hoxha's system, which Alia was trying to continue. The students were no longer protesting just for economic rights, but also to have more say in what happened within the government that ruled over them (11). They wanted more parties to be present in the Albanian government and therefore, they created " Levizja e Studenteve te Dhjetorit" (The Students Movement of

December) (11). In order to try and maintain power Alia changed some policies around, for example he allowed religious freedom and adopted market reforms (12).

The people of Albania however were still not happy, they were aware that eastern European countries were going through changes and transiting into democracy and they wanted to do the same (16). The party “Levizja e Studenteve te Dhjetorit” (The Students Movement of December) lead by the students was later changed to the Democratic Party lead by Sali Berisha (15). Sali Berisha was originally part of the communist party of Albania playing a prominent role in it. He was Hoxha’s first personal doctor and he worked for many years with many communist rulers(10). He closely worked with Enver Hoxha and this allowed him to examine the techniques, rules, and theories applied by Hoxha (10). The fact that Berisha knew what was behind the scene of the dictatorship allowed him to have an advantage in destroying it. In 1989 many eastern European countries were going through a revolution. Many political changes had to occur because of the growing economic distress. The countries in Eastern Europe all decided it was time to move forward and that it was necessary for internal reformation (16).

In 1988 and 1999 Bulgaria, Hungary, Poland, and Eastern Germany all removed their communist leaders from state (16). After the removal of the communist governments in these European states, Albanians were also looking and asking for more from their government (15). In fact, after being led by a communist party for almost 50 years, the Albanian population wanted to change the way that the country was run. They believed that the



communist party kept them away from the rest of the world and they voted for what they believed would be a better way for them: a democratic government (15). The citizens no longer wanted a communist party and voted for Berisha and the new Democratic Party to take over Albania.

The people had a choice: they could continue to live in the way that they had been under Hoxha's rule or they could hope for something better (9). The population was just hoping for a change in Albania because they could no longer bear to live under the communist rule (9). In April of 1991 the country's name was changed from The People's Republic of Albania to The Republic of Albania. The elections of March 1992, resulted in the Democratic Party winning the most seats; and the assembly directed Sali Berisha as the president of Albania. Berisha became the first elected president of Albania (12). Berisha chose Aleksander Meksi as his prime minister, Meksi was another democratic ruler (12). The Albanian citizens demanded that Communist leaders be arrested and tried for all of their wrong doings during Communism regime. Berisha ordered that many communist leaders be arrested and tried. Many think he used this to his advantage in order to eliminate some of his rivals, because these trials were unfair and very harsh (12). Albanians had to build a system of democratic government from scratch, because they had no base in which they were starting from (16). The Albanian government began to change; it did so very slowly, chaotically, and violently (17).

### Berisha Taking Over

With the victory of the Democratic Party and Berisha becoming president,

the Albanian government started to change. Albanian citizens thought that with the win of the Democratic Party everything would suddenly just get better; however, it did not occur this way (9). After winning in 1992, the Democratic Party lost many elections since people were not happy with this party because they were expecting more changes from them (15). There were many problems with the Democratic Party after its win and people continued to suffer. One of these problems was the fact that the leaders were all originally supporters of communism; and it was nearly impossible for them to change to Democratic ordeals. In order to completely remove Communist rule Berisha would order all the Communist leaders that failed to support him to be put in jail. The economic situation of Albania did not improve and people continued to flee out of the country (15). By 1996 many Albanians had fled out of the country; as soon as they were allowed to move abroad they did so, in most cases illegally. Also the Albanian government had very tense relations with the former Yugoslavia.

Albania supported Kosovo in becoming independent and Yugoslavia did not want this. In 1996 there were elections, the Democratic Party won however Berisha was accused of fraud because the people thought that he was hungry for power (12). During the mid-1996's many people had put their money forward and had invested in pyramid schemes (13). People did this thinking that they would be able to make more money than what they had originally invested, however these pyramids collapsed and many people lost their money (13). The citizens of Albania were angry about the reelection of Berisha and because of their lost investments, this lead them to riot (12).

There were major rebellions in all of Albania, many cities especially those in the south had no government at all ruling them (12). Berisha had to act fast in order to prevent a civil war from breaking out.

Berisha's solution to this country crisis was to appoint Bashkim Fino, a socialist, to lead an internal government of national reconciliation (12). Due to high riot rates, and unhappy citizens Berisha agreed to hold election in June; he also pledged that he would resign if the democrats did not win these elections. The socialist party won these elections, and therefore Berisha resigned (12). The Albanian democracy was not going as well as the citizens had hoped. All of these issues added up and resulted in large political problems within the Albanian government. Beginning in 1997 and on, the Albanian government was led by a series of socialists holding power for a little time. During this period the fragile democracy of Albania began to strengthen bit by bit (13). Additional parties were formed in the country, media expanded a lot, and non-governmental organizations were developed (13). In 1998 Albania ratified the constitution, guaranteeing rule by law, protection of basic human rights, and freedom of religion to be practiced by the Albanian people (13).

Albanian Government with Democratic Rule:

The change of the Albanian government into a democracy was caused from internal and also external reasons; the people were not ready or expecting this (15). The Albanian community could no longer bear communist rule and they wanted to change the way that they were imposed to live. Countries in Eastern Europe were all changing from a Communism to a Socialist Party:

Romania, Yugoslavia, and Bulgaria. There were so many political changes in these other countries, and they eventually impacted and influenced the Albanian government (15). The economy was all centralized within the state government; because of this all of the people were starting to lose their interest in working. Technology was very behind in comparison to other countries, and those other countries had an advantage in their exports (15). All of these unexplored opportunities lead to an extreme need of change. This change from a communist party, where everything was controlled by one central government, to a government where people had choices and could make their own decisions. This change was needed and wanted, but had to be accomplished. Albanian citizens had no more belief in this centralized system because they were seeing that other European countries had grown and were a lot more advanced than them (15).

People wanted to be able to work and earn what they worked for; instead of working and then everyone getting an equal share of what was produced. All of the changes that were occurring in Eastern Europe had their impact on the Albanian people (17). Albanians were among the last to accept this change in government; it was almost a forced changed (15). With the change of systems in Eastern European countries, Albania was the only one left that was not able to export goods with money value instead with other good value (15). The country had reached very high poverty. People were missing all primary necessities like fruits, vegetables, and milk (15). The citizens did not have the right to have a say in what they thought, they had no right to choose who they thought would run the Albanian government the best (17).

Both of these factors made it essential that the government switch from a centralized communist government to that of a democratic one. The people were enthusiastic, but also very scared not knowing what to expect (15).

Even people that were communist were eager for a change because there had been forty six years of the same government. The fact that they had not been allowed to see the outside world all of these years, made people want to emigrate out of the country as soon as possible (17). Everyone was curious to learn what was occurring outside of Albania because they had been isolated out of it for so long. So there were many party systems created; the two biggest parties were the democratic and socialist parties (12). The fact that people were finally escaping from this close box allowed the economy to improve. The changes in the economy were that Albanians were asking for more; seeing how technologically advanced other countries were, and all of the other goods they had available everyone wanted what they saw in other places (15). People begin to recognize that they had to work to receive an income, before with the Communist system they would get a minimum payment weekly because everyone in a Communist state did. Now with the change if you did not work you did not get an income (11). This “ assurance” that they had before had now disappeared.

## Conclusion

It is visible that the Albanian people went through many difficulties due to the government that was ruling them. Hoxha's reign had its positives but also its negatives on the Albanian state. The citizens were guaranteed health care, school, and a pretty sustainable life style. However, they were

neglected larger things, such as freedom of speech and the ability to prosper as an individual for your own satisfaction and not for that of the state. The Communist state had made many people angry at the Albanian government. This led to Albanians fleeing the country, many did so illegally; this later had an effect on the population and the prospering of the country. People were forced to leave Albania because they could not live with the restrictions that the government burdened on them. Those leaving the country did not necessarily mean they had a better life elsewhere; they just had to leave because they could no longer bear the Communist rule. All of these factors and also the death of Hoxha led to the slow downfall of the Communist party.

Berisha a former Communist became the first leader of the Democratic Party. All of his ideas derived from that of Communist rule because he had been an active member of the Communist party for many years. So the new Democratic government was not a pure democratic government, instead one being run on a Communist base. Limitations on this essay include that no matter how many books, films, and official documents there are about all of the government and political issues of Albania no one is completely sure about what occurred there. Reading and listening to interviews it can be realized that everyone has their own input on what occurred according to their personal beliefs and experiences with the Communist state. It can be concluded however that Albania had a very hard and rocky transition to democracy. The people suffered through a lot, and when their eyes were opened to the rest of the world they too were looking for more than what

was provided to them. There was very slow growth in the government, and the ideas of democracy were not to