

## Economic Development and Population Distribution in Albania

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**Summary:** This article analyses the relationship between internal migration patterns and regional economic development in present-day Albania. Using demographic data migration figures were calculated for the period 1965-1971. These figures indicate that there is a strong tendency for migration from the peripheral areas to the industrial triangle of Durrës-Tirana-Elbasan, and to the fertile farming area of the coastal lowlands which used to be malarial swamps. Present government policy however is directing growth away from the largest centres towards both the smaller centres and rural areas. Recent aims have been to achieve as even a spread of population and economic activity as possible.

### Introduction

For more than one reason Albania occupies a special position in contemporary south-eastern Europe. Although it is still the least developed country of Europe, there have been remarkable changes during the past twenty-five years, which have radically altered the geographical structure of this small Balkan country (28,748 km<sup>2</sup> or 11,230 square miles). Whereas, in 1945, Albania was an agricultural country, almost entirely lacking in extractive industry and manufacturing, at the present time nearly half of the production is derived from industry. As a result of foreign support, from the Soviet Union until 1961, and thereafter from China, a rapid industrialisation has taken place. There have also been important changes in the field of agriculture. The area under cultivation has been doubled since WWII by draining the swampy coastal plain and the improvement of rough pastures in the interior. While only 10% of the arable area was irrigated in 1945, more than 50% is irrigated nowadays.

The population of Albania has shown a remarkable growth. The country now has nearly 2.4 million inhabitants, as against 1.2 million in 1950. Marked changes have occurred in the distribution of the population, with an increasing proportion being concentrated on the coastal plain and in the central part of the interior. The proportion of the population in the peripheral regions fell from 40% in 1958 to 34% in 1971. The industrialisation in Albania has been accompanied by rapid urbanisation, which was reflected until 1960 mainly in the growth of the large towns and continued afterwards at a slower rate with population growth mainly in the smaller towns. With 34% of the population classified as urban, Albania is the least urbanised country

of East Central and South East Europe (HOFFMAN, 1971, p. 492). Urbanisation has been retarded particularly since 1965, undoubtedly partly as a result of the attempts of the government to reduce the differences in economic growth by means of a greater dispersal of industry and mining and a greater stimulation of agriculture in the peripheral regions.

The aim of this article is to provide an account of the changes in the distribution of population against the background of the economic developments. In addition to the author's own observations, use has been made of official data published in the Statistical Yearbook of Albania (Vjetari Statistikor i R.P.SH.). The nature of the data and the manner in which they are presented unfortunately hamper scientific analysis. Repeatedly trends are expressed exclusively in index-numbers, preferably taking 1938 as the starting point. The regional breakdown of the statistics follows the administrative division of Albania into 26 *rrheti*. For each of these areas some demographic data are available, such as the total population (annual average) and the number of births and deaths. Statistics of internal migration are not published, but on the assumption that external migration is negligible, the internal migration pattern can be approximated from such figures as are available. The Albanian statistics distinguish between urban and rural population, including in the first category all towns with more than 5,000 inhabitants, but also a number of smaller towns, among them some with less than 1,000 inhabitants. Although this division is not satisfactory in all respects, the available material does permit an analysis to be made of regional differences in population growth and economic development.

### Population Growth

After 1950 Albania has experienced a period of

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exceptionally rapid population increase, particularly between 1955 and 1960, when a peak in birth-rate combined with a death-rate of about 10 per thousand gave an average annual population growth of 32.0 per thousand (Table 1). Before 1950 the annual population increase was 17.0 per thousand and was only 6.0 per thousand during the troubled years of WWII when 28,000 Albanians lost their lives. Before the war not only was the birth-rate lower, but the death-rate was higher because of poor medical facilities and the occurrence of such diseases as malaria. In addition to this, it is reported that, during the 1920s 20% of the annual death rate was caused by blood feuds (WOLFF, 1956, p. 29). After the war the death-rate gradually declined because of the improvement of medical facilities, although infant and child mortality remained considerable in 1950, when 52% of deaths were of children younger than five years.

Population growth has slowed down since 1960. Although the death-rate fell still further, to reach a minimum of 7.5 per thousand in 1969, the birth-rate has also gradually declined, particularly in the towns, to 32.5 per thousand in 1970 and 33.3 per thousand in 1971. In consequence, the annual natural increase has fallen in recent years to about 25.0 per thousand. This decline must have been rather unexpected as is evidenced by the fact that from the population projection published in 1970 (SHERI, 1970, p. 89) even the minimum forecast has already proved to be too high.

The population is now three times what it was in 1923. The then 800,000 inhabitants lived unevenly distributed over the country. The rugged mountains of the Albanian Alps in the north and the mountain chains in the south, in particular, afforded an existence to only a few people. The coastal plain, which had fulfilled an important agricultural function in antiquity, had been abandoned because of the perpetual battles of the Albanian people against invaders and deteriorated into a malarial swamp. It is reported that, by the early 1940s, only 9% of the total area of the country was under cultivation (SKENDI, 1956, p. 31). During the reign of King Zog I, the Italians began reclaiming the coastal swamplands and, after their occupation of the country in 1939, they planned to continue the work by reclaiming 200,000 hectares (KOLLEGGER, 1942, p. 101). These works were largely destroyed again, however, by the ravages of war. The fight against malaria, which had begun in 1920 and had made considerable progress before WWII, also suffered a serious reverse. In 1946, some 60-70% of the population was affected, as compared with 16.5% before the outbreak of war.

As is demonstrated by Fig. 1 substantial shifts in

• Table 1

Annual rate of population change (%)

1923-1938	1.7
1938-1945	0.6
1945-1950	1.7
1950-1955	2.7
1955-1960	3.2
1960-1965	2.8
1965-1971	2.7

Source: SHERI 1970, p.10; Vjetari Statistikor.

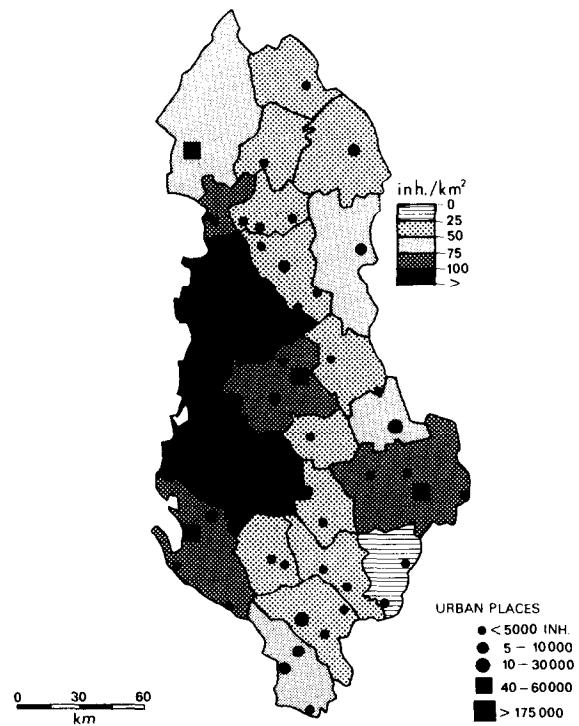
• Table 2

Demographic variables of population growth 1965-1971 by zones of migration (compare Fig. 5) in per cent

Zone	A1	A2	B	C
Total births	29.9	21.0	23.1	26.1
Total deaths	7.8	5.0	4.8	6.3
Natural increase	22.1	16.0	18.3	19.8
Net migration	-4.4	-3.6	+1.0	+4.9
Population growth	17.7	12.4	19.3	24.7

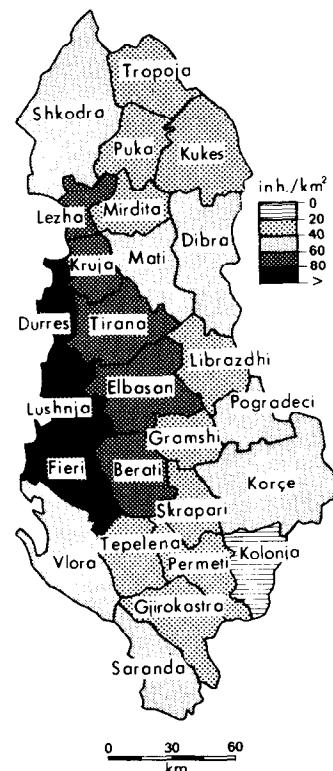
• Fig. 1

Density of population 1971

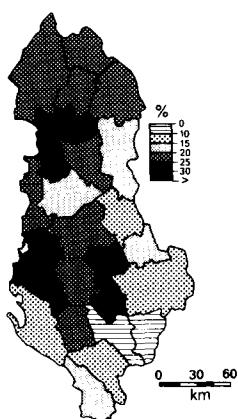


population distribution must have taken place since the war, the coastal areas nowadays having the highest population densities. That this is not due exclusively to a concentration of the major cities in the coastal plain appears from Fig. 2, which shows the density of the rural population. The highest densities are reached in three adjoining *rreheti* in the coastal plain, i.e. Durres, Lushnja and Fieri.

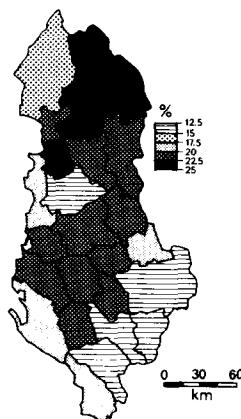
An analysis of the population increase over the period 1965-1971 (Fig. 3) shows that the densely populated areas are still experiencing a relatively high increase, although the highest growth rates have now shifted somewhat farther inland. Even the thinly populated mountain areas of the North Albanian Alps have shown a population increase of 20-25% during this period. In this respect they differ greatly from the poor mountain districts in the south, where the increase has been limited to a few per cent. These differences are to be explained by the differing demographic and socio-economic structure of the two regions. The north is the traditional home of the Gegs, whose remote and inaccessible territory enabled them to cling the longest to their traditions and to be the least affected by the centuries of Turkish occupation (1431-1912). The northern half of Albania has considerably higher birth-rates than the southern half. In some mountain districts they attain values in excess of 40 per thousand. Religious differences are probably partly responsible. Before the abolition of religion in mid-1967, 10% of the population consisted of Roman Catholics, 20% of Orthodox Christians and 70% of Moslems. The Catholics were concentrated in the north, particularly in Mirdita, where the birth-rate of the



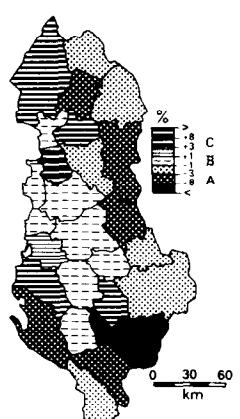
● **Fig. 2.**  
Density of rural population 1971



● Fig. 3  
Population growth  
1965-1971



● Fig. 4  
Natural increase of population 1965-1971



● Fig. 5  
Net migration 1965-1971

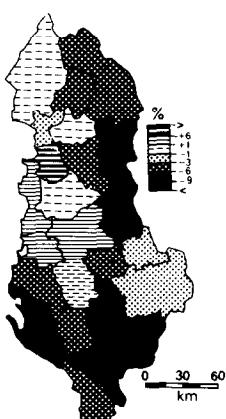


Fig. 6  
Net migration 1965-1971  
(rural population only)

rural population reaches a maximum of 48.0 per thousand. Although death-rates are also higher in the northern half of Albania than in the southern half, the variations in the birth-rate are responsible for the differences in natural increase, which fluctuated around 23 per thousand in the north during the period under review, but averaged about 15 per thousand in the mountainous areas of the south (Fig. 4). The differences in population trends between the northern and southern mountain districts, therefore, arise in the first place from their differing natural increase.

Apart from differing levels of natural increase, differences in population trends must be explained from variations in the volume and direction of internal migration. By subtracting the net natural increase from the total population growth for each *rrheti* for the years 1965

up to and including 1971 the net internal migration 1965-1971 was calculated. From Fig. 5 it appears that all peripheral districts show a net migration loss, which even reaches an average of 10% in Kolonja and Permeti in the south. On the basis of differences in natural increase, this peripheral expulsion zone can be divided into a northern part (zone A1) extending as far as Librazdhi, and a southern part (zone A2). Although the out-migration during the period concerned was approximately 4% in both parts (A1:4.4%, A2:3.6%), the two subzones exhibit essentially different demographic characteristics (Table 2). Another contrast emerges from a study of the rural population alone. Figure 6 shows that the flight from the land reaches extremely high values in the south. Although the area of arable land per head in the south is greater than in the north (SIVIGNON, 1970, p. 73), this region possesses less capacity to absorb an increase in

	First Plan 1961-55	Second Plan 1956-60	Third Plan 1961-65	Fourth Plan 1966-70	Fifth Plan 1971-75
<b>Industrial production</b>					
— planned increase (%)	239	92/124*	52	50-54	61-66
— actual increase (%)	222	118	39	83	
<b>Agricultural production</b>					
— planned increase (%)	71	76	72	41-46	65-69
— actual increase (%)	37	5	36	33	
<b>Cultivated area (1000 ha)</b>					
— improved	30	48	25	32	
— reclaimed	3	17	5	7	
— irrigated	44	52	70	78	
<b>Population growth (%)</b>					
— total	14.1	16.9	14.7	14.5	
— rural	53.2	31.1	23.4	16.1	
	4.0	11.5	10.8	13.7	

\* Original goal was revised 1957

● Table 3

Some data for quinquennial planning periods

Size classes*	1946-55	1956-60	1961-65	1966-70	Population 1970 (x 1000)
< 5 000 inh.	46.9	54.7	68.0	65.9	90.3
5-10 000 inh.	43.3	35.6	32.3	25.0	79.3
10-30 000 inh.	22.9	29.8	23.1	12.6	127.5
40-60 000 inh.	23.5	31.1	17.4	9.1	248.1
Tirana	40.2	26.0	18.4	8.3	174.8
Total urban population	30.2	31.1	23.3	16.1	720.0
Rural population	7.1	11.5	10.8	13.7	1 415.6
Total population	12.0	16.9	14.7	14.5	2 135.6

Table 4

● Population increase by size class of urban places, 1946-1970 (quinquennial increase in per cent)

\* Size classes as indicated in Fig. 1.

the rural population. In contrast to the other mountain regions, the southern mountains have been largely deforested or the forests have become degraded (GEÇO, 1973b, p. 6). Although attempts are being made to counter erosion of the slopes by terracing, arable farming is mainly restricted to the valleys. Expansion of the arable area would be possible only through the construction of terraces on a larger scale. This is done indeed, but obviously not sufficiently to absorb the natural population increase. The fact that the great exodus from the land in the south does not show up in the total emigration as depicted in Fig. 5, indicates that the few towns in the south are able to absorb a high proportion of the people leaving the land.

While the peripherial regions form a zone of pronounced out-migration, they surround a central zone (zone B) where the migration flows are roughly in balance\*. Although some of the areas of zone B exhibit an out-migration for the rural population (Tempelena, Skrapari, Gramshi and Lezha), there are others where there is a migration gain in both town and country, as for example Durres and Elbasan, where important agricultural developments are in progress.

Lastly, the districts where there has been a marked in-migration (zone C) are situated along or close to the coast. Although, in all these *rrheti*, it is particularly the towns which show a migration gain, also the rural areas had a net in-migration (with the exception of Fieri and Mirdital). These are the areas above all where there have been important economic developments, both in industry and in agriculture. The relatively large in-migration in Kruja, for example, is due to the expansion of the chemicals complex near Laç. Of the total population increase in zone C during the period 1965-1971, 20% was accounted for by the internal migration. That this zone is particularly attractive to the younger age groups could be deduced from the high birth-rate. In the *rrheti* with the highest in-migration the 1971 birth-rate was 37.6 per thousand.

Our analysis of population movements since 1965 shows that there has been an exodus from the rural areas in the peripheral regions, particularly in the south, with, at the same time, a concentration of the population in the central part of the country and, particularly, in that part lying along the coast. A closer examination of the economic development of Albania since WW II provides the background of these population movements.

\* Skapari, with a net in-migration, was nevertheless included in zone B, as the in-migration resulted exclusively from urban growth in this district.

## Economic Development

When Albania became independent in 1912 its economy was characterised by primitive self-sufficient agriculture and stock-raising. Although the Italians did make some valuable contributions between 1925 and 1943 in the area of public works (1200 km of new roads, several hundred bridges and the improvement of the harbour of Durres), their activities in the economic field were limited to those sectors of the Albanian economy which contributed to their own economic and military strength. Italy was especially anxious to increase the output of Albanian oil, chrome, copper and iron ore. In agriculture the main emphasis was placed on bringing more land under cultivation by reclaiming the swamp and marshlands along the coastal plain. The Italians made little effort, however, to build up Albanian industry (PANO, 1968, p.12). There were fewer than 80 firms with ten or more employees (MURY, 1973, p.23), while industrial output accounted for only 4.4% of national income. Of the working population 87% was employed in agriculture, which had a very one-sided character. 96.5% of the arable land was devoted to food grains (mainly maize) and only 1.3% to cash crops, such as cotton and tobacco.

Reconstruction of the economy started in 1945 and 1946 with the nationalisation of industrial, commercial and financial enterprises. Under the Agrarian Reform Act of 1945 all forests and pasture lands and 60% of the cultivated area were confiscated. During the following year the first State farms were established and a start was made on the collectivisation of agriculture, although this was retarded by strong peasant resistance until 1955 and not completed before 1967.

The present period of five-year plans (see Table 3) was preceded by two short-term plans: The *Nine Month Plan* for 1947 and the *Two Year Plan* for 1949-1950. In these plans particular attention was paid to the infrastructure (the railway from Durres to Peqin) and to industry, which accounted for 50% of expenditure. A start was made on the Stalin textile combine in Tirana and on a 5 000 kW hydro-electric power plant.

The *First Five Year Plan* which was launched in 1951 also paid much attention to industrial development. In the sphere of agriculture serious difficulties arose. The programme of rapid and forced collectivisation of April 1951 was abandoned in May 1951 in favour of land reclamation and mechanisation. By 1953 the agricultural sector was lagging seriously behind and this led the Central Committee to curtail the industrial

construction programme in order to stimulate agricultural production. By the end of the First Five Year Plan in 1955 agricultural production had increased by 37% instead of the hoped-for 71%. In the industrial sector the plan was more successful.

Some major industries were established or completed such as the oil refinery at Cërrik, the extension to the cement works at Vlora, the textile works in Tirana, a sugar refinery at Maliq and other food-processing industries. The railway system was extended with the line from Durrës to Tirana and the link from Peqin to Elbasan.

As with the First Five Year Plan, the *Second Five Year Plan* (1956-60) placed the emphasis on the development of mining, hydro-electricity and food-processing industries. The initial goal of raising total industrial output by 92% was revised in 1957 to 124%. During the second plan period a start was made on a 25,000 kW hydro-electric power plant on the Mati River, a second oil refinery was built at Qytet-Stalin, a copper refining plant at Kurbnesh and several mining enterprises were started. The period of the second plan saw the speeding-up of the collectivisation of agriculture. By 1960, 79% of the arable land had been collectivised. Nevertheless, agricultural production stagnated and increased by only 5.4% instead of the 76% envisaged in the plan.

The *Third Five Year Plan* (1961-65) was also strongly geared to rapid industrialisation in order to make the country as self-supporting as possible. The emphasis was now placed more on the processing of available raw materials into semi-manufactures, both for home use and for export. Because of the breach with Moscow in November 1961, the support necessary for the implementation of the plan was suddenly removed, but China took the place of the Soviet Union and undertook to provide 90% of the amount that had been promised by the USSR and Eastern European countries (PANO, 1968, p.147). Within two months this promise had been partly fulfilled, enabling various large projects to be completed during this period, although the increase in industrial production did not meet the norm that had been laid down.

Altogether 210 projects were completed during this period (KLOSI, 1969, p.17), of which the most important were the hydro-electric power plants on the Mati and Bistrica, each with a capacity of nearly 25,000 kW, copper refining plants at Kukës and Rubik, electric wire plant at Shkodra, metallurgical plant at Elbasan, Mao Tse Tung textile plant at Berat and the chemical industries at Fieri (nitrate fertiliser), Laç (superphosphate) and Vlora (soda). The growth of Agriculture also did not achieve the planned norm during this period.

For the *Fourth Five Year Plan* (1966-70) a more modest percentage growth target was set for agriculture, which was somewhat lower than the target for manufacturing industry. The plan proclaimed that the country should be self-sufficient in cereals by 1970 and that imports should be reduced to a minimum. A concentrated effort was made to extend the cultivated area and to introduce irrigation. After the cultural revolution of 1967 students, factory workers, civil servants etc. were set to work on a large scale to carry out projects in the countryside. In the industrial field various new enterprises were set up with Chinese assistance. At the end of 1968 an agreement was signed in respect of 30 important industries, mainly concerned with the processing of minerals and to be established during the ensuing six years.

BARTKE (1970, pp.257-60) drew up a list of enterprises that were to be established with Chinese help. From the fourth plan period the following are worthy of mention: the third oil refinery at Fieri, a coal treatment plant at Memaliaj, a copper plant at Spac in Mirdita, a chromium plant at Bulqiza, a 250,000 kW hydro-electric plant at Vau Denjës on the Drini river etc.

The *Fifth Five Year Plan* is even more ambitious than its predecessors. A 65% increase is planned for industry and approximately 67% for agriculture. Some major works will be completed, such as the metallurgical plant at Elbasan, which will process about 800,000 tons of iron-nickel and produce 250,000 tons of steel per annum (planned to start in 1975 with 8000 workers). A considerable increase in capacity is planned for a number of metal processing industries.

The summary just given shows that a large part of the economic activity is concentrated in the west of the country. Oil occurs in the area between Lushnjë, Qytet Stalin (formerly Kuçovë) and Berat, forming the basis of the important chemical industry at Vlora and Fieri. The chemical industry is also found in Laç and in the coastal plain. Engineering and light industries are likewise highly concentrated in the western and central areas of the country. The other raw materials are more dispersed, with a concentration in the north-east and on the Durrës-Tirana-Elbasan-Pogradeci-Korça axis. The region south of this axis is conspicuously poor in minerals. Minerals are processed here and there in the north-east, but mainly in the more central part of Albania, where Elbasan is emerging as the centre of gravity.

The population trends described previously correspond closely to the regional variations in economic development. As it failed to keep pace with the national expansion of industrial output of 102.0% during the period 1965-1971, the already poorly equipped

peripheral expulsion zone (zone A of Fig. 5) lagged farther behind. The northern part (subzone A1) showed a growth in industrial production of only 56.3%, which reduced the share of the six northeastern *rrheti* to a low 6%. The value of industrial output in the southern part of the peripheral zone of out-migration (subzone A2) did only slightly better with an increase of 78.4%, thereby reducing its share to 20.9%.

The eight central-western *rrheti* of Zone B, which during the period 1965-1971 had only insignificant net-migration figures of less than one per cent, together account for half of Albania's industrial output. With a 100.4% increase the industrial growth of zone B approximated the average national growth rate.

Finally, the five *rrheti* of zone C (Fieri and Lushnja in the southwestern coastal area and Shkodra, Mirdita and Kruja in the northwest) which all had a population influx during the period concerned, give a clear indication of the basis of this in-migration, since their industrial growth rate was one and a half times as large as the national increase. In consequence their share in the industrial output rose from one fifth to one fourth.

Apart from the internal migration pattern interesting observations can be made in respect to the recent character of urbanisation which accompanied the rapid transformation of Albania from a traditional agricultural society to a socialist state with accelerated industrial development.

## Urbanisation

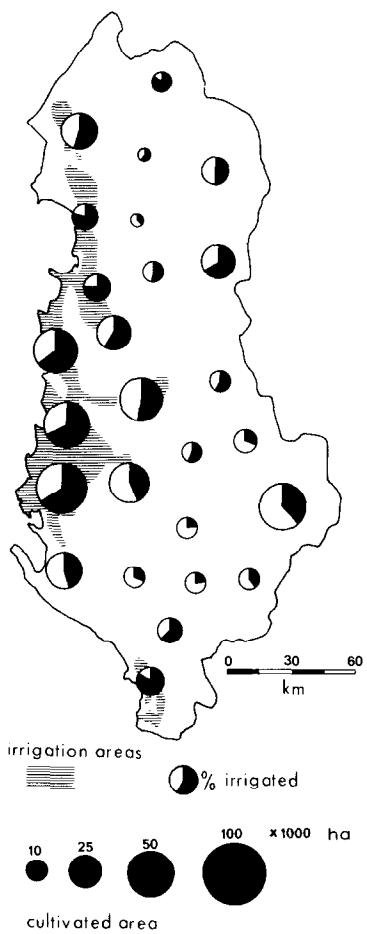
At the present time, 34% of the population of Albania is classified as urban. The fastest growth of urban population took place during the first phase of industrialisation, from 1951 to 1955, when the urban population increased by more than 50%, while the rural population grew by only 4%. The rapid urbanization of this period contrasted sharply with the preceding five-year period, when the urban population grew with less than 5%. The unprecedented average annual growth rate of the urban population of 8.8% during the First Plan Period diminished already during the Second Plan Period (1956-1960) and especially after 1959. Obviously the rural-urban migration started to create serious problems in the rural areas, as is indicated by the extremely poor agricultural performance during the Second Plan Period. The actual increase in agricultural output of 5% contrasted sharply with the 79% envisaged. Several measures were taken by the Party

to cut down this rural-urban migration, as for example by stimulating women to take up occupations in industry and building formerly practised by male labourers. In the meantime mechanisation in the newly established industrial firms was given priority. Nevertheless, this policy only gradually led to the desired result. During the Second Plan Period about 80% of the urban population increase was caused by immigration from the rural areas (GECO, 1970, p.170). After 1960 the contribution of the immigration lost its leading position in the urban population increase (GECO, 1973a, p.65) to reach about 30% in 1971, whereas the share of the natural growth increased to 70%. It should be kept in mind that the birth-rate in the Urban areas has been considerably lower than in the rural areas, although the difference has diminished. In 1971 the birth-rate in the towns was 24.2 per thousand against 37.9 in the rural areas. The death-rates were 5.6 and 9.4 per thousand, respectively, so the natural growth in the rural areas was one and a half times as large as in the urban areas.

It has been a declared purpose of Albania's regional policy since 1959 to restrict urban growth. As a matter of fact in recent years the urban population has grown only a little faster than the rural. While, initially, the growth of urban population occurred in towns of all size classes, since 1960 the growth of the largest towns (40,000-60,000 inhabitants) and, since 1965, that of the medium sized towns (10,000-30,000 inhabitants) have lagged behind the average for urban growth (Table 4). The population growth in the smallest towns, however, continued unabated.

The urban centre of gravity in Albania lies within the zone bounded by Durres, Tirana, Elbasan, Berat and Vlora. Tirana, which had half as many inhabitants as Korça and Shkodra in 1923, became during the 1930s the largest town (175,000 inhabitants in 1971) and the principal industrial centre. Durres and Vlora have grown considerably because of their port activities and related industries. Oytet Stalin is a new industrial town, while Lushnjë and Fieri have grown both in response to the development of industry and the bringing into cultivation of large parts of the coastal plain.

The fact that a balance is now beginning to appear between urban and rural population growth might easily lead to the conclusion that suburbanisation is occurring in Albania, but this is not the case. The available passenger transport would not be able to carry large numbers of people between home and



• Fig. 7

Irrigation 1971

workplace. There are only a few railways (the line from Durres to Elbasan via Peqin has recently been continued to Prenjasi west of Lake Ohrid) and bus transport is still inadequate. The private ownership of cars is forbidden and much passenger transport is still performed by lorry. The recent greater increase in rural population, therefore, is a consequence of a deliberate policy for a greater dispersal of employment, in which agriculture still occupies a very important position. The latter sector employs approximately 60% of the working population. From the mid-1960s measures were taken by the government to build up agriculture and restrict urban growth' (KEEFE *et al.*, 1971, p.50).

### Rural Development

At the outbreak of WWII Albania had a cultivated area of 300,000 hectares (10% of the total area of the country). Rough grazing land covered an area about three times as large. In 1971, the cultivated area totalled 600,000 hectares and rough grazing had been reduced to about the same area as this.

Immediately after the war, a start was made on a number of irrigation works, including those near Berat (2500 ha), Vlora (1500 ha) and Elbasan (3000 ha), and the reclamation scheme of the Maliq marshes near Korca, which has since become a well-known sugar-beet growing district. As a result, the irrigated area increased during the period 1946-1950 from 10,000 to 39,000 hectares. More extensive projects followed later, such as the 55 km long Vijosa-Levan-Fieri canal (15,000 ha) and the Peqin-Kavaja canal (7000 ha). During the Second Five Year Plan 16,000 hectares of the Myzeqe plain between Lushnjë and Fieri were reclaimed and a further 23,000 hectares were improved. This whole area is irrigated from the Devoll river. Subsequently, the remainder of the coastal plain was also largely brought into cultivation and irrigated (Fig. 7).

A declared purpose of the Fourth Plan (1966-1970) was "to develop the hill and mountainsides and make them as fertile as the lowlands" (KLOSI, 1969, p. 37). During this period 40% of the budget for land improvement was allocated to the mountain regions, compared with 10% during the Third Plan. By 1973, 56% of the cultivated area was irrigated. To improve yields, great stress has been laid on the improvement of farm techniques, mechanisation and diversification.

Collectivisation did not assume major proportions until 1955. It gave rise to the least difficulties in the south, where the majority of the peasants had little or no land. As late as the 1930s, two thirds of the rich lands in the southern and central parts of the country belonged to the large landowners. The Muslim aristocracy and the landowning *beys* and *pashas* had established themselves as semi-feudal patrons, oppressing the Tosk peasantry. In the north, however, the tribal society of the Geg highlanders, with their *bajraktars* (chieftains), succeeded in retaining their spirit of individuality and independence, even during the Turkish regime. In fact, their tribal and clan system survived into the mid-20th century (KEEFE *et al.*, 1971, p. 70). Consequently, collectivisation in the mountains of the north proceeded at a much slower rate. As recently as 1965, the privately held area of farmland between the Mati and Drin rivers amounted to between 50 and 90% of the total (SIVIGNON, 1970, p. 74), but after the fifth congress of the Labour Party in November

1966, collectivisation was pushed through at a rapid rate in these areas too. (Reponses . . . , 1969, p. 301) and, within three months, 500 new co-operative farms had been established.

The system shows great similarities to that of the Soviet Union. Besides sovchozes (state farms), which account for 17% of the total area, there are kolchozes (collective farms). Both types of farm make use of the machinery of the approximately 30 Machine and Tractor Stations (MTS), which previously also existed in the Soviet system (PAPAJORGJ, 1970, p. 83).

The number of sovchozes increased from 13 in 1947 to 32 in 1968, with an average area of 4000 ha, including 2700 ha of arable land. The number of kolchozes, on the other hand, decreased from 1208 in 1967 to 643 in 1970. Their average area in the latter year was 736 ha, of which 600 ha was classified as arable land. There is, however, a great size range among the collective farms. Those in the mountain regions measure 300 ha at the maximum, whereas the kolchozes of the coastal plain may have as much as 1000 ha (GEÇO, 1973b, p. 37).

Most co-operative farms were started on a village basis, but later several villages were combined to form bigger units. Because the productivity of the kolchozes was lagging behind that of the sovchozes, the socialisation of agriculture has recently been intensified. Through a system of direct financial participation by the state, the existing kolchozes are being transformed into "agricultural enterprises of a higher type" (SKARÇO, 1974, p. 21), which might be called albchozes. Evidently, the government is trying in this way to gain a firmer grip on production techniques and farm management in order to raise the general level of performance and ensure an adequate domestic supply of food products. For the same reason, private holdings were reduced in 1967 to 1500 m<sup>2</sup> per person. Obviously, the farmers were putting too much energy into their private plots, as it was observed in 1964 that the latter, which occupied only 6% of the cultivated area, accounted for 23% of the total farm output (KEEFE et al., 1971, p. 159). In view of the rising population density, an increase in productivity is essential. Moreover there will have to be an extension of the area of arable land outside the already intensively cultivated coastal plain. Further shifts in the population distribution, possibly even a reversal of the recent migration patterns, could therefore be anticipated.

### Concluding Remarks

Backward Albania has witnessed in the early 1950s an unprecedented industrialisation, which was supported by

massive foreign help from the Soviet Union and East European countries. This led to rapid urbanisation, a rather unknown phenomenon in a society that had been, until that time, traditionally agrarian. There are indications that the government was taken aback by this rapid urbanisation, since it could easily disrupt the peasant society, and created a serious obstacle for the realization of agricultural production targets. Already before the political break with the Soviet Union measures were taken to set bounds to the impending disequilibrium between urban areas and the countryside. The Sino-Albanian alliance, which completely isolated the small country from the rest of Europe, necessitated an extreme self-sufficiency as far as agricultural production was concerned. Ideologically, the rural-urban migration was condemned as being a process typical for capitalist countries suffering from antagonistic relationships between town and country, with farmers, impoverished by the system of capitalist production, escaping from the rural areas, and thereby causing an inadmissible expansion of the towns and intensifying the problems of urban housing and unemployment (GEÇO, 1970, p. 179). In socialist Albania, on the other hand, the extension of agriculture created additional jobs in the rural areas to such an extent, that the agricultural progress would be seriously frustrated by rural-urban migration (IBID, p. 180). Therefore, regional policy aimed at a limited urban growth and a more even distribution of the population over the country.

Consequently, the politically-determined wish to be as self-supporting as possible left its marks on the distribution of population and the geographical configuration of the country.

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