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## **DELEGATED PEACEKEEPING: THE CASE OF OPERATION ALBA**

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Paper prepared for the seminar on  
"Alla ricerca di un sistema europeo di gestione dei conflitti:  
il caso della crisi albanese del 1997"  
Scuola superiore S. Anna  
Pisa, March 6-7, 1998

IAI9801

**ISTITUTO AFFARI INTERNAZIONALI**

# DELEGATED PEACEKEEPING: THE CASE OF OPERATION ALBA<sup>1</sup>

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## 1. Introduction

The Multinational Protection Force (MPF) in Albania, authorized by the UN Security Council in Resolution 1101 of 28 March 1997, provides a notable example of the trend in the mid-1990 toward Council devolution of peace-keeping responsibilities to regional actors. More specifically, the operation, code-named "Alba", was conducted by a "coalition of the willing" composed only of European countries led by Italy, a neighboring country with considerable historical involvement and current interests in Albania.

The *ad hoc* "coalition of the willing" solution became the only option after all relevant Euro-Atlantic institutions (NATO, the Western European Union, and the OSCE) decided not to undertake or otherwise directly involve themselves in a military operation in Albania; a direct UN operational role was never even considered. However, in order to ensure close interaction both among the contributing countries on the one hand and between them and the international organizations on the other hand, specific mechanisms were established that proved quite successful and set potential precedents for the Council's delegation of future operations.

Alba operation also presents many features that characterized several other so-called 'second-generation' international interventions, as opposed to traditional UN peace-keeping operations.

First, the purpose of Operation Alba, as defined in the UN Security Council's mandate, was primarily to guarantee security for the activities of the international missions which provided humanitarian assistance. However, similar to other 'humanitarian operations', Alba had various political implications which had to be carefully evaluated and addressed.

Second, the crisis was basically generated by internal factors, and the main actors involved were also internal. In this regard, the operation was an example of the growing importance of international involvement in what are essentially intra-state conflicts. In Albania, the intervention took place after the country had slipped into anarchy with practically no functioning institutions or legitimate authority in place. This required that military action be coupled with peace-making initiatives aimed at fostering national consensus-building and reconciliation among various conflicting groups.

Third, when authorizing the establishment of the MPF, the UN Security Council acted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which allows for enforcement action. Recourse to Chapter VII has also become a regular practice when humanitarian interventions in failed states are launched. As in the case of the Implementation Force (IFOR) and the Stabilization Force (SFOR) missions, the MPF in Albania combined a relatively restricted mandate with robust rules of engagement. Also here Operation Alba represents an interesting test case of how such combination works in practice.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a slightly revised version of part of a wider study on UN delegated peacekeeping prepared by the author for the UN Association of the United States.

Fourth, the operation in Albania took place in the context of a wider international action involving a number of civilian programmes of technical and economic assistance. The MPF had to interact closely with several intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, which highlighted the need to set up a coordinating framework and to activate the appropriate instruments to ensure civil-military cooperation.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. The unfolding of the crisis

In 1996 two major indicators began to convince analysts that the internal situation in Albania was deteriorating, putting the stability of Europe's poorest country at risk.

First, it became evident that the Albanian government was following an increasingly authoritarian policy. Infringements of human rights and basic political freedoms multiplied. Most international observers denounced the unfairness of the parliamentary elections that took place in the country on 26 May and 2 June 1996. In its report on the elections, the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights enumerated several serious irregularities committed by the Albanian authorities both during the pre-election period and on the election days, including violations of the electoral law, arbitrary territorial delimitation of the new constituencies, inaccuracy of the voter rolls, and police intimidation at opposition rallies.<sup>3</sup> In reaction, the opposition parties withdrew their candidates before the completion of the electoral process. The resulting electoral outcome gave the ruling Democratic Party of President Sali Berisha an overwhelming majority of the seats in the Parliament. This led to a dramatic reversal of the democratization process of the country.

Second, some basic weaknesses and inadequacies of Albania's economic growth came to light, most importantly its dependence on unregulated financial activities and its links to criminal activities such as cross-border arms smuggling.<sup>4</sup> The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) issued repeated warnings against the risks associated with the "pyramid" investment schemes offering abnormally high interest rates and denounced the failure of the government to reform the bank system and to prevent money laundering. Despite these alarms, no major international preventive action was undertaken to avert a social collapse and conflict.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of Albania before the crisis see Miranda Vickers, James Pettifer, *Albania: From Anarchy to a Balkan Identity* (London: Hurst & Company, 1996). See also Fabian Schmidt, "Albania's Democrats Consolidate Power", *Transition*, Vol. 3, No. 2, pp. 47-48; the special issue of *Financial Times*, 19 February 1997; the special issue of *Limes*, "Albania, emergenza italiana", No. 1, 1997. Two books devoted to an analysis of the Albanian crisis were published in Italian more recently: Roberto Morozzo della Rocca, *Albania: Le radici della crisi* (Milano: Guerini e Associati, 1997); Emanuela del Re, *Albania punto a capo* (Roma: Seam, 1997). On the international action in Albania see Hugh Mall, "The OSCE role in Albania: A success for conflict prevention?", *Helsinki Monitor*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1997, pp. 74-85; Stefano Silvestri, "The Albanian Test Case", *The International Spectator*, Vol. 32, No. 3-4, July-December 1997, pp. 87-98; Frank Debie, "La Grèce, l'Italie et l'Europe face au problème albanais. Gestion de crise et représentation géopolitique", *Relations internationales et stratégiques*, No. 28, Winter 1997, pp. 96-108.

<sup>3</sup> The report of the ODIHR can be found in *Helsinki Monitor*, Vol. 7, No. 3, 1996, pp. 127-134.

<sup>4</sup> On the latter aspect see James Pettifer, "The Rise of Kleptocracy," *The World Today*, January 1997, pp. 13-15.

<sup>5</sup> For a criticism of Western policy towards in Albania before the eruption of the crisis see Fatos T. Lubonja, "Pyramids of Slime," *Transitions*, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 65-71; Fabian Schmidt, "Albania's Fledgling Democracy Runs Aground," *ibidem*. Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 62-65.

It was the simultaneous collapse of a number of "pyramid" investment schemes in January 1997 that finally triggered a dramatic internal crisis.<sup>6</sup> Investors in the suddenly crumbling pyramids, helplessly seeing their life savings disappear overnight, took to the streets, in mass protest demonstrations against President Berisha and his government which were accused of having close relationship with the pyramid companies and of having benefitted from their support during the election campaign of the previous year.

Police and defense forces proved incapable of stopping the uprising and by mid-February many areas of the country, especially in the south, fell under the control of rebel groups or of local criminal gangs. Several military bases and police stations were attacked and hundreds of thousands of weapons were looted, to be used for the insurgents defense or simply for criminal purposes. The resulting situation of widespread chaos and anarchy was characterized by a dramatic rise in criminal activities, destruction of public and private properties, and shortages of food and basic goods. On 3 March the government imposed the state of emergency, but still proved unable to improve the security situation. A mass exodus of Albanians to neighboring countries followed, particularly to Greece and Italy. The flow of people seeking asylum abroad reached its peak in March when about 13,000 Albanians landed on the Italian coast.

For some time, the political context of the uprising remained unclear. Only overtime did it become evident that, contrary to President Berisha's assertion that the opposition parties - particularly the Socialist Party - had instigated the uprising, they did not exercise real control over the rebels. The rebellion involved quite different groups of people having disparate goals: political opponents, local gangsters, police and army officers who had been fired or discriminated in recent years. The actions of the insurgents, including the raids on military bases and armories, were generally uncoordinated. Certainly they were not taken in accordance with any central plan. While some informal and rather weak leaderships emerged at the local level - the so-called "salvation committees" - the rebellion was leaderless at the national one. The main purpose of the committees was to prevent the forces loyal to the government from retaking control of the areas from which they had been driven out. The fear that the rebels might organize a march towards Tirana proved to have little substance. The groups involved in armed clashes were mostly, if not exclusively, criminal gangs. Most of those who lost their lives during the uprising were victims of personal revenge, criminality, fighting among local gangs or shots into the air.

Apart from the request that the government and President Berisha resign, the various rebel groups were not able to elaborate a common political platform. It also became gradually clear that the different attitude of the population in the northern and in the southern areas - the former generally loyal to President Berisha, the latter supportive of the rebellion - was not an incipient threat to the Albanian nation's unity. The immediate causes of the crisis were socio-economic rather than political, and the greater unrest in the South was mainly due to the higher concentration of pyramid schemes there.

In sum, the crisis in Albania did not have any of the distinctive features of a civil war. It was precipitated by the sudden collapse of one of the pillars of the economy of a state - the financial system - which gave rise to a spontaneous uprising with no clear political patronage. The local groups of the rebels were essentially united only in their aversion to the ruling authorities. The latter, in turn, lost very early the capacity to engage in a military

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<sup>6</sup> On the general background of the collapse of the pyramid schemes see: François Lazare, "Les Albanais refaits par l'usure", *Le Monde*, 2 January 1997; "Albanians enraged at collapse of pyramid schemes", *Financial Times*, 27 January 1997; "Curse of the pyramids", *Financial Times*, 4 March 1997; François Lazare, "L'effondrement des 'pyramids' ou la confiance trahie", *Le Monde*, 5 March 1997.

campaign against the rebels. Their power dissolved as a result of the general collapse of the state structures.

However, if the rebellion had continued, there was the concrete risk that the armed groups might become politicized or that political parties might establish organic links with them. At that point what was essentially a state of anarchy could eventually transform itself into a civil war, posing additional and far more serious threats to the interests of neighbouring states and to regional security.

### **3. The international response and the establishment of the Mpf**

The international community responded to the crisis with uncertainty and slowness. In part, this reflected the difficulty of arriving at a straightforward, and commonly shared, understanding of the situation, which actually remained very confused for some time, as underlined above.

The elaboration of a common approach was also complicated by the fact that the exposure of the Western countries to the effects of the crisis varied greatly. The Italian and Greek governments felt urgency to act out of the fear that an escalation of the crisis could unleash new waves of Albanians seeking asylum in their countries. Both in Italy and in Greece the press and the other mass media voiced out, and partly contributed to amplify, this fear throughout the unfolding of the crisis. On the contrary, the Northern and Central European countries regarded the Albanian crisis as peripheral to their immediate interests. Furthermore, as we will see, there were different views among the Western countries on whether to allow involvement of Euro-Atlantic institutions.

The evaporation of any functioning state authority in Albania gave rise to a widespread and instinctive fear in many European and North American countries that intervention would bog them down in a Somalia-type situation. However, the eventual impact of an external intervention on the evolution of the crisis was assessed differently. Some countries - especially Greece and Italy - argued that the escalation of the crisis, which might result in a real civil war, could be stopped only through a prompt dispatch of a military force, provided that it was given a well-defined and credible mandate. Others, such as Germany and the United Kingdom, made no secret of their skepticism about the effectiveness of any military involvement and expressed the fear that foreign peacekeeping troops could become hostage to the domestic political struggle and hence contribute to exacerbate it rather than facilitate national reconciliation.

Moreover, the implications of Albania's state failure for Balkan regional security and for the implementation of the Dayton agreement were also unclear. A spillover of the crisis to neighboring Balkan countries was considered possible by some observers, but quite remote by others. The main danger was the spread of the crisis to Kosovo and Western Macedonia, two areas bordering on Albania where the tensions between the ethnic Albanians, who represented the large majority of the population, and the ruling governments of Belgrade and Skopje respectively had increased in the last few months. The ability of the radical Albanian factions in Kosovo and Western Macedonia to exploit the crisis in Albania politically was doubtful, although the risk that the weapons looted by the rebels in Albania could eventually fall - through the porous borders - in their hands was hardly negligible. By the same token, there was little evidence that any party in Albania proper could be interested in or capable of undertaking common action with the Albanians across the border. Here, again, it was above all the Italian and Greek governments that emphasized the potential of

the Albanian crisis for disrupting the stability of the Balkan region. Other Western countries, including the United States, declared themselves less concerned about a possible spillover effect.<sup>7</sup>

Finally, although there was consensus on the need to set in motion a national reconciliation process as a basic prerequisite to bringing the crisis to an end, different views emerged with regard to the best strategy to achieve this objective. Particularly contested was the question of whether the resignation of President Berisha was essential for a resolution of the crisis (Indeed, on 3 March, as the crisis deepened, the Democratic Party-controlled Parliament defiantly re-elected Sali Berisha for another presidential term.) Several Western countries were inclined to think that the Albanian President should step down, seeing him as one of the major obstacles to national reconciliation. This view was expressed, in particular, by representatives of the Greek, German and the US governments.<sup>8</sup> Italy, in contrast, maintained that, while there was an urgent need for a new government, the replacement of the President could take place at a later stage. Italy's approach, which eventually prevailed, was motivated by the conviction that the political change should be realized in such a way as not to antagonize the Democratic Party which controlled the Parliament and was likely to remain a major political force in the country.

A long sequence of diplomatic shuttles and meetings within the various Euro-Atlantic institutions took place before the decision to send a military operation was taken. For the reasons mentioned above, the first initiatives undertaken by the OSCE and the European Union, were characterized by half-hearted and remarkably cautious commitments. On 12 February the Danish Foreign Minister, Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE, issued a statement on Albania that asked all sides to abstain from the use of violence. On 24 February the EU Council urged the Albanian authorities to respect the principles of democracy and the country's international commitments and underlined that the Community's technical assistance was conditional on the adoption of a series of economic measures by the Albanian governments.<sup>9</sup> On 3 March, following the imposition of Berisha's state of emergency, Greece and Italy - the two EU countries that felt most threatened by the escalation of the Albanian crisis - called for urgent consultations within the E.U. concerning the latest developments.<sup>10</sup> These were discussed by the European Commission (5 March) and by the EU Political Committee (6 March).<sup>11</sup> The major decision taken was to initiate a diplomatic action aimed at paving the way to a political compromise between the government and the opposition parties. To this end, the President of the EU Council, Hans van Mierlo, paid a visit to Tirana on 7 March.

This action was coupled with that of the OSCE. On 4 March the OSCE Chairman-in-Office appointed a prestigious figure of European politics, former Austrian Chancellor Franz Vranitzky, as his personal representative for Albania. He also engaged in intense diplomatic activities to find a political solution to the crisis. On 8 March he met in Tirana with President Berisha, representatives of opposition parties, nongovernmental

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<sup>7</sup> At a press conference in Skopje on 12 April 1997 the assistant Secretary of State for European and Canadian affairs, John Kornblum said: "We do not see at this moment any danger of damaging spillover into other areas".

<sup>8</sup> See the declarations by the US representative to the OSCE, the German Foreign Minister, and the Greek Minister for European Affairs, quoted in "Plusieurs pays occidentaux estiment que le Président albanais doit démissionner", *Le Monde*, 18 March 1997.

<sup>9</sup> *Europe*, No. 6922, 26 February 1997, p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> *Europe*, No. 6926, 3-4 March 1997, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup> *Europe*, No. 6929, 7 March 1997, p. 4.

organizations, and the media.<sup>12</sup> However, the Albanian government prevented the OSCE from sending a fact-finding mission to the country.<sup>13</sup> After OSCE's denunciation of vote-rigging during the last general elections, its relationship with the Albanian authorities had remained tense. In the meantime, both the Greek and the Italian governments undertook a series of diplomatic contacts with the Albanian government and with the opposition parties, including the dispatch of high-level visits to Tirana. Thus, crisis management involved not only various institutions -at first without any clear task-sharing - but it was also shaped, to a substantial degree, by the initiatives of individual countries, notably Greece and Italy.

These combined efforts were instrumental in convincing the Albanian government and the major opposition parties to sign a political agreement on 9 March that led to the formation of a caretaker government headed by Bashkim Fino, one of the leaders of the opposition Socialist Party. This event marked the beginning of the national reconciliation process, whose consolidation was widely seen as a fundamental prerequisite for both the provision of economic assistance and the deployment of an international mission in the country. The new government became the only Albanian institutional body formally recognized by the international institutions as their interlocutor. This amounted to a de facto further de-legitimation of the role of President Berisha. The Fino government was composed of representatives of all the major parties and, at least on paper, had the support of the whole Parliament. In reality, the formation of the new government did not put an end to the political struggle between President Berisha and the Democratic Party on the one hand and the Socialist Party and its allies on the other. However, it not only contributed remarkably to prevent this struggle from turning into a destructive conflict but also paved the way for the following political agreements that would allow for the holding of new general elections. Furthermore, only the new government was considered legitimate enough to provide the needed consent to a possible international intervention in the country.

On 13 March the UN Security Council approved a presidential statement on the situation in Albania, that declared the Council's support for the diplomatic efforts undertaken by the OSCE and the E.U.<sup>14</sup> During a visit to Albania in mid-March Vranitzky openly advocated the establishment of a limited military operation based on a "coalition of the willing."<sup>15</sup> The idea of a military operation was also discussed in the Council of the Western European Union (WEU) on 14 March and during an informal meeting held by the E.U. Foreign Ministers in Apeldoorn on 17 March.<sup>16</sup> A clear division emerged between some countries - Greece, France, and Italy - which favored a direct military intervention by the WEU under an E.U. mandate, and others - Germany and the United Kingdom - that opposed it<sup>17</sup>

Both French President Jacques Chirac and the French government advocated a direct EU/WEU military engagement, supporting the Italian and Greek request.<sup>18</sup> Two main motivations appeared to be behind France's interventionist stance. First, it reflected the broad consensus that had developed in French public opinion that humanitarian intervention

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<sup>12</sup> The report submitted by Vranitzky following the visit can be found in *Helsinki Monitor*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1997, pp. 73-76.

<sup>13</sup> See Arie Bloed, "The OSCE response to conflicts in the region," *Helsinki Monitor*, Vol. 8, No. 2, 1997, p. 52.

<sup>14</sup> S/PRST/1997/14.

<sup>15</sup> Arie Bloed, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> *Europe*, No. 6935, 15 March 1997, p. 3 and No. 6936, 17/18 March 1997, pp. 5-6.

<sup>17</sup> Previously the Defense Committee of the WEU Parliamentary Assembly had requested the activation of the WEU Planning Cell in order to prepare the organization for a possible intervention in Albania.

<sup>18</sup> See *International Herald Tribune*, 16 and 17 March 1997.

in internal crises must be regarded as a duty of the international community, even if risky. Second, and more important, Paris wanted to reaffirm, even on that occasion, its support for a greater EU/WEU role in the maintenance of security and stability in Europe.

German leaders, in contrast, repeatedly emphasized that the Albanian crisis was mostly an internal problem - seemingly implying, among other things, that there was no evident implication for regional stability - and declared themselves highly skeptical of the usefulness of an outside intervention. They questioned, in particular, whether it was possible to define a credible mandate. "To put it quite bluntly - said the German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl - if you say we should send troops, then you have to tell the soldiers what they would do there. And if I put this question to you, which I can't answer, then you can see my response".<sup>19</sup> One of the main motivations for this attitude was clearly the wish to avoid the scarring experience of the troubled international interventions of the preceding years.<sup>20</sup> Bonn also feared that an intervention in Albania would result in support for President Berisha, with the risk of antagonizing opposition forces and delaying the needed political change. Similar worries were expressed by London, by other European capitals as well as by Washington. In explaining its rejection of the proposal for a common European intervention, the British government also reiterated its traditional opposition to any defense role of the EU that it feared might undermine NATO and the transatlantic link.<sup>21</sup> Undoubtedly the persistent contrasts among the Western allies over the implementation of the combined joint task forces (CJTF) concept and over the new structure of the NATO commands was a further factor that inhibited the establishment of a military operation under the EU/WEU aegis.<sup>22</sup>

Moreover, there was some mistrust about the actual goals Italy and Greece were respectively pursuing in Albania. The former was widely seen as responsible for having continued to support Sali Berisha too long, thus hindering a timely prevention of the crisis. In particular, in 1996 the Italian Embassy in Tirana had been accused of having pressed the OSCE observers to turn a blind eye to electoral frauds. The links between the Albanian organized crime and the Italian one added to the doubts on Italy's ability to take the lead of an international mission in Albania. The credibility of Greece as an impartial intervenor was also not beyond suspicion. Its Balkan policy had on several occasions drawn criticism from the other EU countries. In the case of Albania, the Greek initiatives were seen as driven, first and foremost, by the desire to protect quite specific interests: those of the Greek Orthodox minority living in the South of the country (300,000 people according to Athens, 55,000 according to Tirana). The contacts that Greek government established with the leaders of the rebellion in Southern Albania, trying to act as the main mediator between them and the international community, made some suspect that it aimed to carve out a zone of influence in that area (which Greek nationalists are fond of calling Northern Epyrus).<sup>23</sup> The Turkish government, in particular, warned against the risk of a "partition" of Albania.<sup>24</sup> The actual capacity of Italy and Greece to cooperate effectively

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<sup>19</sup> Quoted in *Financial Times*, 15-16 March 1997.

<sup>20</sup> In response to the Dutch Foreign Minister, Hans van Mierlo, who held the EU Presidency and favoured a European intervention, the German Foreign Minister, Klaus Kinkel, reportedly said: "You know the best what happens, when you send soldiers without a clear mandate" (Quoted in *International Herald Tribune*, 16 March 1997).

<sup>21</sup> See the declarations by the British Foreign Minister, Malcom Rifkind, quoted *inibidem*.

<sup>22</sup> On this point see S. Silvestri, *op. cit.*

<sup>23</sup> On this aspect see F. Debie, *op. cit.*

<sup>24</sup> See the declaration by the Turkish Defense Minister Turhan Tayan quoted in "Un piano di spartizione dell'Albania", *La Stampa*, 20 March 1997. The Turkish Foreign Minister Tansu Ciller also launched a warning: "Ankara will not tolerate interference of foreign states in the domestic affairs of Albania".



was also widely doubted. Rome and Athens had had major foreign policy disagreements in the recent past that occasioned some tensions between the two countries. Italy had been one of the first and most ardent advocates of the international recognition of Macedonia, which Greece instead had long opposed. Furthermore, the Italian government had insisted on the need for the EU to enhance its cooperation with Turkey and to pay more attention to the Turkish point of view on the Cyprus question, provoking, in both cases, sharp reactions in Athens. In the light of these precedents, there was the concern that an intervention could sooner or later be damaged by renewed divisions between Rome and Athens. In any case, ensuring the unity of command of a force including major contributions from Italy, Greece and Turkey appeared a demanding task.

Given these fundamental divergences and the lack of mutual trust among the EU countries it is hardly surprising that at the meeting of 24 March the EU Council of Ministers ruled out any major EU engagement and agreed only to send an advisory mission to Albania.<sup>25</sup> To prepare the ground for the work of this mission, it was decided that an EU "Advance Team" with the participation of representatives of the OSCE and the Council of Europe would visit Albania from 26 March to 2 April. The failure of the EU foreign ministers to go beyond this ultracautious move was ill-received in the countries favouring a common military action with harsh criticism expressed, in particular, by the French press.<sup>26</sup> The EU policy towards the Albanian crisis drew criticism from many Italian leaders as well. The Italian Foreign Minister, Lamberto Dini, defined the way in which the EU had faced the Albanian crisis "totally inadequate".<sup>27</sup> In a resolution adopted on 10 April, the European Parliament also voiced its strong dissatisfaction with the decision of the EU Council to rule out a more robust common EU action.<sup>28</sup>

The possibility of a NATO intervention generated even less support. The Albanian crisis was discussed in several meetings of the alliance. NATO involvement was requested by the new Albanian government.<sup>29</sup> At the 14 March meeting of the NATO Council, held at the ambassadorial level, only Italy, the Netherlands and Greece reportedly argued in favour of a major NATO role in the crisis, while all the other allies were, more or less strongly, against.<sup>30</sup>

The United States, in particular, was unwilling to participate in any military action. This attitude had several motivations. In general, the Clinton administration seemed to share the doubts described above on the effectiveness of an outside intervention. Furthermore, as already noted, it did not see an impending risk of spillover. It was also far from certain that Congress would give its approval for US participation in another mission on European soil shortly after having consented, amid substantial controversy, to the renewal of the US military presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Finally, Washington had long arrived at the conclusion that Sali Berisha should step down and it feared that an international intervention could be exploited by him to remain in power. It must be added that the US administration

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<sup>25</sup> *Europe*, No. 6941, 24/25 March 1997, p. 3.

<sup>26</sup> See, for instance, the following three very critical articles which appeared in newspapers with quite different political orientations: "Europe: le fiasco albanais", *Le Figaro*, 13 March 1997; Daniel Vernet, "La coutouse inertie de l'Europe en Albanie", *Le Monde*, 18 March 1997; Laurent Joffrin, "Les Européens contre l'Europe", *Liberation*, 20 March 1997.

<sup>27</sup> Ministero Affari Esteri, Segreteria Generale, Discorso di Lamberto Dini alla Commissione Affari Istituzionali nel Parlamento Europeo, Bruxelles, 21 May 1997, p. 6.

<sup>28</sup> *Europe*, No. 6952, 11 April 1997, p. 3.

<sup>29</sup> "Albania urges NATO to help end anarchy", *Financial Times*, 14 March 1997.

<sup>30</sup> See *Financial Times*, 15-16 March 1997.

did not show much confidence in the ability of the 'willing' states to conduct the operation successfully.

Theoretically, an operation directed by the OSCE or the U.N. could also have been considered as well. However, the OSCE peacekeeping mandate, as set out in the Helsinki II document, excludes interventions involving enforcement action, which would have prevented the adoption of credible rules of engagement. Moreover, the possibility of establishing rapidly an *ad hoc* OSCE chain of command was practically non-existent. A UN-directed intervention would also have implied a time-consuming process, as the UN Secretary-General himself underlined,<sup>31</sup> while the situation clearly required rapid deployment of the international force. In addition, the disillusionment with UNPROFOR in Bosnia-Herzegovina led to a widely shared skepticism about the effectiveness of UN peace operations. In practice, neither of the two options was ever discussed.

The failure of the EU countries to agree on a WEU operation left advocates of intervention only one option - "a coalition of the willing".

The Italian government announced officially its initiative to promote the creation of a "multinational protection force" in Albania in a statement of 26 March to the OSCE Chairman-in-Office<sup>32</sup> and in a letter of 27 March to the UN Secretary-General.<sup>33</sup> In the latter, it also declared its willingness to take the lead in the organization and the command of the operation. The stakes for Italy in the prospective mission were quite high. It represented a crucial test of the country's capacity to exercise effective leadership in both the diplomatic and military field in an area - the Balkans - whose stabilization Rome considered as one of its top foreign policy priorities. By taking the lead of the international efforts to bring the Albanian crisis to an end, Italy aimed at enhancing its international prestige at a time when it was conducting a difficult political struggle within the United Nations for a favourable reform of the Security Council and it was striving to be accepted in the first group of EU countries that would participate in the next stage of the European Monetary Union.

On 28 March the Permanent Representative of Albania to the United Nations sent a letter to the President of the Security Council, welcoming the readiness of a number of countries to participate in the proposed force and stating that "Albania is looking forward to the arrival of such a force."<sup>34</sup>

On 27 March the Permanent Council of the OSCE expressed appreciation for the Italian initiative, taking note that it was undertaken at the request of the Albanian authorities. The OSCE Council also took the decision "to establish an OSCE presence in Albania in co-operation with the Albanian authorities and to provide the coordinating framework within which other international organizations can play their part in their respective areas of competence."<sup>35</sup> Vranitzky was given the task of ensuring such coordination. It was especially the US administration that insisted that the OSCE, of which it is a member state, rather than the EU assume coordination of international action. The

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<sup>31</sup> In a speech before the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Italian Chamber of Deputies the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan praised the choice, in the case of the international intervention in Albania, of the "coalition of the willing" formula, arguing that it was preferable to a blue helmet force, since the deployment of the latter would have required 3-4 months (cited in *La Repubblica*, 16 April 1997).

<sup>32</sup> PC Journal No. 108, 26 March 1997, Annex.

<sup>33</sup> S/1997/258.

<sup>34</sup> S/1997/259. On 25 March the Italian and the Albanian Foreign Ministers had signed an agreement enabling the Italian Navy to patrol and control the Albanian internal waters as well as international waters in order to contain the clandestine immigration.

<sup>35</sup> PC.DEC/160, 27 March 1997.

objective of Washington was to maintain a capacity to influence developments in the Albanian situation through the OSCE.

On 28 March the UN Security Council authorized the deployment of the operation by adopting Resolution 1101, which characterized the situation in Albania as "a threat to peace and security in the region" and thus triggered the potential application of enforcement measures under Chapter VII of the Charter.<sup>36</sup> There were 14 votes in favor of the resolution; only China opposed it, asserting that "to authorize action in a country because of strife resulting from the internal affairs of that country is inconsistent with the provisions of the United Nations Charter."<sup>37</sup> In order to prevent a possible spill-over of the Albanian crisis, twelve days later the Security Council approved Resolution 1105 postponing the withdrawal of part of the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force from Macedonia and authorizing its partial redeployment along the border between Albania and Macedonia.<sup>38</sup> Both this decision and the characterization of the Albanian crisis as a possible threat to regional security showed that the Security Council did see a real risk of a spread of the crisis to neighbouring areas.

Thus, the international intervention in Albania took shape as a complex endeavor based on three pillars: humanitarian and economic assistance, which the E.U. would provide; assistance for Albania's democratic rehabilitation and the protection of human rights, which was assigned to the OSCE; and the UN-mandated protection force, which was, as we will see below, to contribute to the solution of the country's humanitarian problems and indirectly to its security ones.

#### **4. The debate over the force's mandate**

Pursuant to Resolution 1101, the multinational protection force was mandated "to facilitate the safe and prompt delivery of humanitarian assistance and to help create a secure environment for the missions of international organizations in Albania, including those providing humanitarian assistance." The purpose of the force was therefore defined primarily as humanitarian, as repeatedly emphasized by the leaders of the troop-contributing countries. However, its action was expected to have - and actually did have - positive effects on the chaotic political and security situation of the country. It was also clear that, by helping to put an end to the security emergency, the force could contribute substantially to the success of the national reconciliation process and the peace-making effort. Furthermore, as we will see, the multinational force would play a crucial role in making possible the electoral process which led to the establishment of a new legitimate government.

The limited scope of the mandate assigned to the mission drew wide criticism. In particular, the mandate ruled out any MPF role in repressing and disarming the rebel groups or in forcing the population to retribute weapons stolen from the nation's armories. The Albanian government itself called for the widening of the force's mandate to include such further tasks as the surveillance of the ammunition depots and the control of the country's frontiers.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> S/RES/1101 (1997).

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in *La Comunità Internazionale*, Vol. 52, No. 1, 1997, p. 8.

<sup>38</sup> S/RES/1105 (1997).

<sup>39</sup> *Europe*, No. 6967, 2/3 May 1997, p. 5.

The troop-contributing countries firmly rejected these requests; they were anxious to avoid being drawn into potential conflict situations not central to their purpose, and believed that keeping the force's mandate restricted was a key prerequisite for its success. They agreed that repression of armed groups and restoration of order should be left to the government that would be established after the new elections, while the relevant international organizations would assist in building up the Albanian forces needed to accomplish these goals. Moreover, it was far from certain that the Security Council would have given its approval to a wider, more intrusive mandate.<sup>40</sup> The UN Secretary-General resolutely ruled out any change in the mandate even in case of a deterioration of the situation. In particular, he excluded that the troops might be given the task of disarming the population<sup>41</sup>.

The emphasis on the humanitarian - rather than on political - goals of the mission was clearly aimed at winning the broadest possible consensus within the Security Council and, in general, at selling it to public opinions in the countries involved more easily. "This operation is a humanitarian one to make sure aid gets to the people", said Kofi Annan.<sup>42</sup> In reality, according to the aid agencies operating in Albania, there were only limited food shortages in the country. "There is no famine here. Not a single person is starving", said Nina Winquist-Galbe, spokeswoman for the International Committee of the Red Cross.<sup>43</sup> The workers of both the Red Cross and the World Food Programme also underlined that, since the beginning of the crisis, they had not had any major incident as they discharged their tasks and that the major commercial channels in Albania had remained open.<sup>44</sup>

Several international observers expressed doubts with regard to the mandate approved by the Security Council or the real capacity of the force to accomplish it.<sup>45</sup> Even in Italy the discussion on the goals and means of the international action in Albania was quite intense. Some opinion-makers denounced basic incongruities in the mission's goals<sup>46</sup>, but most of the debate revolved around the scope of its mandate. The fact that the force had not been authorized to perform police tasks was widely criticized. Attacks by the local gangs on Italian companies and businessmen, which took place repeatedly even after the deployment of the troops, gave rise to the request that the MPF be entrusted with the task to protect them. By the same token, the recurrent alarms about possible new waves of refugees generated some pressure for the MPF to prevent the boats from leaving the Albanian coasts and to arrest the gangsters involved in the organization of the clandestine landings.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> The Italian Defense Minister, Beniamino Andreatta, hinted at a possible veto from China should the willing states request a wider mandate: see his interview to *La Stampa*, 1 July 1997.

<sup>41</sup> See "Annan da Prodi: 'Il disarmo non è vostro compito'", *La Repubblica*, 16 April 1997.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in *Financial Times*, 21 April 1997.

<sup>43</sup> Quoted in *ibidem*.

<sup>44</sup> "Aid workers in Albania wonder why they need UN troops", *International Herald Tribune*, 22 April 1997.

<sup>45</sup> See, for instance: "Rethink for Rome", *The Times*, 2 April 1997; "Uncertain mission for Albanian force", *International Herald Tribune*, April 5-6 April 1997; F. Bonnart, "This military force can't do the job", *International Herald Tribune*, 9 April 1997; "Uncertain fate for Albanian mission", *The Guardian*, 15 April 1997; "Les limites de l'opération 'Alba'", *Le Monde*, 16 April 1997; H. Sonnenfeld, "Alla missione Alba manca ancora una chiara definizione dei poteri", *La Repubblica*, 12 June 1997.

<sup>46</sup> See I. Montanelli, "Missione fantasma", *Corriere della Sera*, 6 May 1997; S. Romano, "Perché è già fallita la missione in Albania", *Panorama*, 15 May 1997.

<sup>47</sup> This was requested, for instance, by Antonio Martino, who had been Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Berlusconi government. See his interview to *Corriere della Sera*, 6 May 1997. For a reply from a representative of the government see the interview of Beniamino Andreatta to *La Stampa*, 9 May 1997.

The Prodi government won the Parliament's approval for the dispatch of the troops in Albania only after a harsh political debate that almost brought it down. It was eventually forced to rely on the votes of the opposition after the extreme-left Refounded Communist Party, crucial part of its parliamentary majority, refused to agree to the mission.<sup>48</sup> The final result was, however, an overwhelming parliamentary majority in favour of the mission. In order to persuade opponents of the mission the Prodi government made a constant effort to present it as a purely humanitarian one. To this end it sought to make the most of the declarations of the UN Secretary General.<sup>49</sup>

## 5. Other characteristics of MPF

Invoking Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the Security Council authorized the countries participating in the multinational force to take enforcement action as needed in order to ensure security and freedom of movement of its personnel. The consent of the host state did not exclude resort to Chapter VII, which was justified by the fact that the force was given a mandate that went beyond traditional UN peacekeeping rules.<sup>50</sup> As emphasized by the Mission's head, the invocation of Chapter VII made possible the establishment of rules of engagement that would prove "adequately credible, basically drawn from those for the SFOR mission in Bosnia. The efficacy of those rules was already proven and, in addition, well known by the troops of most of the contributing countries."<sup>51</sup> The objective was to realize the same "tight link between mission, mandate and capabilities" that characterized the IFOR and then the SFOR mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina,<sup>52</sup> avoiding the perceived mismatch and mistakes that marked the international operation carried out in the former Yugoslavia before its reorganization after Dayton.

Initially the Security Council authorized the multinational force for a period of only three months (from 28 March to 28 June 1997). On 16 June the Albanian government requested the extension of its mandate in view of the upcoming general elections scheduled for 29 June. The troop-contributing countries also warned that withdrawing the force the day before the general elections would likely result in a reversal of the gains already achieved. The Security Council promptly extended the mandate of the force for another 45 days (Tirana had requested, however, a three-month extension).

In its initial authorizing resolution the Security Council also called on the countries contributing to the force to provide periodic reports to the Council specifying that the first report should be made no later than 14 days after the adoption of the resolution.

The MPF was composed mainly of troops from Mediterranean and Southern European countries (Greece, France, Italy, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, and Turkey) with slight participation from three other countries (Austria, Denmark, Belgium). On 21 May, when the deployment was completed, the size of the MPF amounted to 6,556 personnel. Nearly half of these were Italian (3,068 troops); the next three largest

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<sup>48</sup> The Refounded Communist Party put forward two main arguments: that the Italian troops would be exposed to high risks and that an operation would make sense only after the resignation of Sali Berisha. See the interview of Fausto Bertinotti to *Il Manifesto*, 2 April 1997. On the negative impact of the political struggle in Italy on the other 'willing' states see "L'Europa non si fida più dell'Italia", *La Stampa*, 10 April 1997.

<sup>49</sup> See, for example, the interview of the premier Romano Prodi to *La Stampa*, 7 April 1997.

<sup>50</sup> For a general conceptualization of this point see Andrea Gioia, *op. cit.*

<sup>51</sup> Press conference of Admiral Guido Venturoni, 14 April 1997 (translation is by the author).

<sup>52</sup> See Gregory L. Schulte, "Former Yugoslavia and the New NATO," *Survival*, Vol. 39, No. 1, Spring 1997, pp. 19-42.

contributors were France (952), Greece (802), and Turkey (774).<sup>53</sup> The force reached maximum size during the election process, with Italian troops boosting the total to 7,215. The costs of the operation were entirely borne by the participating countries, as foreseen by Resolution 1101.

The Chief of the Italian Defense Staff, Admiral Guido Venturoni, was appointed Head of the Mission, headquartered in Rome where liaison officials from the other troop-contributing states were also present. General Luciano Forlani from Italy was appointed Commander of the Force. He was assisted by a multinational headquarters set up in Tirana where a team of Albanian military officials was present.

A "Steering Committee" --composed of senior representatives of the participating countries' ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Defense and chaired by the Political Director of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs-- provided political guidance and strategic direction for the operation. The establishment of this body, which convened 19 times over the lifetime of the mission, was the most innovative aspect of Operation Alba. The Steering Committee was assisted by a Secretariat based at the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Its decision making process was consensus-based, which facilitated the distribution of tasks and responsibilities among the participating countries and strengthened their cohesion. The Steering Committee was seen by the Italian government, which promoted its setup, as an instrument for avoiding disruptive controversies among the participating countries such as those that had occurred during the UN operation in Somalia.

One of the key tasks of the Committee was to oversee the activities of the MPF in order to ensure its fulfillment of the mandate approved by the UN Security Council. The Committee submitted 11 reports to the Security Council, as called for by Resolution 1101, including a final report after the withdrawal of the force. The Committee also sent the relevant information to the OSCE, the E.U., the WEU, and NATO.

Representatives of the Albanian government regularly took part in the meetings of the Steering Committee in an observer capacity. The Albanian government also set up its own committee in Tirana, for the purpose of in-country coordination and contact with the mission. Moreover, a number of high level meetings took place throughout the operation between representatives of the Albanian government and those of the individual troop-contributing countries. Taken together, these measures ensured the involvement of the Albanian authorities in the discussion of all major decisions concerning the development of the operation.

On the whole, thanks also to the measures described above, the accomplishment of the military aspects of the international action proved relatively easy. No remarkable dispute emerged among the participating states on the specific tasks and area of deployment of their respective forces. The deployment of the MPF took place quite smoothly. Even in highly problematic areas such as Vlore, the arrival of the first Italian troops were welcomed very positively by the population.<sup>54</sup> This attitude was certainly due in part to the widespread awareness among the Albanians that the previous Italian intervention - the "Operation Pelican" that took place from September 1991 to December 1993 - had been of crucial importance in allowing the country to come out of the terrible crisis that had followed the collapse of the communist regime. In general, the Albanians have repeatedly shown an inclination to accept benign foreign interference in their internal affairs as a way of addressing the deep-rooted weaknesses of their state more effectively. The lack of popular hostility towards the international force was demonstrated by the fact that the MPF did not

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<sup>53</sup> Data provided by the Steering Committee of the MPF on the deployment as of 4 June.

<sup>54</sup> "Vlore gives Italian force an enthusiastic welcome", *Financial Times*, 22 April 1997.

encounter any major clash with local armed groups. The permissive environment in which the force operated allowed it to contribute substantially, albeit indirectly, to the amelioration of the security situation of the country.

## **6 Civil-military cooperation**

The mechanisms established for civil-military cooperation for the most part paralleled those of the IFOR and SFOR missions, although some innovative elements were also introduced.

The Steering Committee defined the procedures through which international organizations and nongovernmental organizations involved in humanitarian assistance gave notice of their presence in Albania and asked for the protection of the MPF. Representatives of international organizations participated as observers in the meetings of the Steering Committee so that they could put forth specific requests. Of particular importance was the exchange of views and information with such organizations and agencies as the OSCE, the EU Presidency and Commission, the WEU, the International Committee of the Red Cross and the World Food Programme. The UN was also represented at the Committee's meetings by the Department of Humanitarian Affairs. In order to ensure civil-military cooperation at the local level, a specific cell was created at the MPF headquarters in Tirana.

International action in the civilian field involved several governmental organizations and agencies, as well as NGOs. The coordinating framework provided by the OSCE presence in Albania was rather loose. In practice, much of the coordination work was done by the Steering Committee and other specific mechanisms set up at the MPF local headquarters. Furthermore, during Operation Alba two international meetings on Albania on 26 May and 31 July 1997 - the latter at the ministerial level - were convened in Rome. Both were attended by the representatives not only of the troop-contributing countries, but also of the other EU countries, Japan, the Russian Federation, Switzerland, and the United States. The focus of both meetings was the assessment of the results achieved to date by the international involvement in Albania and the preparation for future action.

## **7. International support for the national reconciliation process and for the organization of the new elections**

The conduct and coordination of peace-making activities were the responsibility of Franz Vranitzky acting on behalf of the OSCE, with some governments playing active immediate role among the Albanian factions. Of particular importance were the frequent bilateral meetings that took place in Tirana, Rome, and Athens between the representatives of the Italian and Greek governments and those of the Albanian one. The Italian government repeatedly made it clear that the survival of the Fino government was a key pre-requisite for the continuation of the mission and that its fall would lead to withdrawal of the troops.<sup>55</sup>

Some differences, however, emerged among the international actors over the steps to be taken to promote the Albanian national reconciliation process. A source of some

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<sup>55</sup> This point was underlined, in particular, by Defense Minister Andreatta during a speech at the Chamber of Deputies on 7 May.

embarrassment for Italy was the disclosure that its ambassador to Tirana, Paolo Foresti, was secretly manoeuvring to sabotage the mediating efforts undertaken by Vranitzky to promote an agreement among the Albanian parties on the new electoral law (the affair led eventually to the resignation of the Italian ambassador). On the whole, however, the various national and multilateral diplomatic initiatives proved to be mutually reinforcing.

The international mediation activity was of primary importance in convincing Albania's major political parties to sign subsequent political agreements that allowed for the reactivation of the democratic process and led to the calling of the new general parliamentary elections on 29 June (first round) and 9 July 1997 (second round).

The preparation of the elections proved a very challenging endeavour due to the sharp contrasts between the Albanian political parties and to the lack of security in several areas of the country. The OSCE co-ordinator for democracy and human rights in Albania, Brian Pridham, resigned, accusing the countries and the international organizations involved in the management of the crisis of pushing for the holding of the elections at any cost in order to make possible a rapid withdrawal of the troops, despite the fact that some basic conditions for ensuring fair elections were lacking. Some international analysts also warned against the risks associated with ill-prepared elections.<sup>56</sup> The troop-contributing countries did have a keen interest in an early conclusion of the mission, but there was also a widespread conviction that postponing the elections could further exacerbate the already tense political climate. This view was also shared by the Clinton administration whose contribution to urging the Albanian parties to reach a compromise was helpful if not decisive.

A number of attacks on various parties and key political figures, including President Berisha and the Socialist leader Fatos Nano, took place during the electoral period. However, there was not a general escalation of the violence in the country. The overall security situation continued to improve, albeit slowly.

The elections were organized by the Albanian authorities with the assistance of the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, which also monitored the electoral process. A team of experts from the Council of Europe assisted the Albanian authorities in drafting the new electoral law and accompanying legislation concerning media access during the election campaign.

Yet, the final agreement among the Albanian parties on the electoral law was not signed until 8 June after a prolonged struggle that threatened to provoke a new major political crisis. An agreement on the closing time of the polling stations was reached only three days before the elections. Practically all the electoral accomplishments - establishment of the electoral commissions, preparation of the registers of voters and the lists of candidates etc. - were performed very late or at the last moment.

The multinational force granted security to 238 observer teams of the OSCE, preventing possible interference with or intimidation against their activities. OSCE monitors were not involved in any incident. Peacekeeping troops intervened to halt several instances of violence directed against Albanian citizens and candidates participating in the electoral process.

Although a number of voting irregularities were reported, an international troika representing the OSCE, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, and a parliamentary delegation of the Council of Europe declared the elections "adequate and acceptable".<sup>57</sup> Considering

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<sup>56</sup> See, in particular, M. Glenny, "Albania primed for election bloodbath", *The Sunday Times*, 22 June 1997.

<sup>57</sup> C. Lalumière, R. Johnson, J. Ruperez, "Final report. Parliamentary elections in Albania, 29 June-6 July 1997", OSCE, 8 July 1997.



the country's situation, voter turnout was quite high: about 73% in the first round and slightly more than 50% in the second one.

The Socialist Party won a clear victory and an overwhelming majority of the seats in the Parliament. A new government headed by the socialist leader Fatos Nano was formed. Following his party's electoral repudiation, Sali Berisha kept his pledge to resign and Rexhep Mejdani was elected as the new President.

## **8. Other civilian programs**

Several other international assistance programs were launched during Alba operation.

The WEU took over the task of helping the training, reorganization, and reinforcement of the Albanian police forces through the establishment of an ad hoc mission called Multinational Advisory Police Element -- analogous to the task that had already been assigned to the WEU in the framework of the international post-conflict rehabilitation activities in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

NATO sent a mission to Albania to assess the possibility of launching initiatives aimed at restructuring of the armed forces within the framework of the Partnership for Peace Program. This eventually led to conclusion of an agreement on an individual partnership program between NATO and Albania in September.

Other initiatives were undertaken by Greece, Italy, Turkey, and the United States on a bilateral basis aimed at restructuring both the army and the police. Through its *ad hoc* advisory missions, the European Union helped the Albanian authorities to deal with various humanitarian, political, and economic problems. International financial institutions started providing technical assistance for reform of the shattered Albanian financial system, which was a pre-condition for the start of the economic assistance programs in general; the new Albanian government and the International Monetary Fund signed their first agreement on 7 October which paved the way to the holding of an international donors' conference.

On the whole, the United Nations itself performed only limited operational functions. A key role was played, however, by the World Food Program in the accomplishment of the humanitarian objectives of the international involvement.

## **9. Overall assessment of the operation**

Operation Alba was widely considered successful. It accomplished fully the tasks that were assigned to it by the Security Council. The deployment and activation of the multinational peacekeeping force took place quite rapidly and smoothly, and even more remarkably it accomplished its withdrawal within the established time limit. Its presence had immediate beneficial effects on spreading the distribution of humanitarian aid and the other civilian activities undertaken by international organizations and NGOs. In general, the security situation in Albania gradually improved during the presence of the multinational force. The MPF action was instrumental in stopping the spiral of violence that seemed destined to end in all-out civil war. There was no open revolt against the MPF and no major armed clash involving it took place.

The international military presence played a key role in safeguarding the development of the electoral process, by providing the OSCE missions with the necessary

protection and logistical support. Its reassuring presence also favoured a relatively high voter turnout.

The establishment and implementation of Operation Alba was thus a crucial factor in the process that brought Albania out of its emergency phase. It had beneficial effects directly on the security situation and indirectly on the national reconciliation and consensus-building process. It could not, of course, guarantee Albania's future development, which remains uncertain due to the country's many structural weaknesses, but it established some basic pre-conditions for further advancement of this process.

Of decisive importance was the decision to give the mission a clear and restricted mandate that could be efficiently performed within the limits of its actual capabilities: the means matched the mandate. The sustained effort to involve the local leadership in the consultation process on the development of the mission also contributed to its positive outcome.

Whether and to what extent Operation Alba can provide a model for future peace-keeping operations in Europe and elsewhere is an open question. Relevant lessons can be drawn from some innovative aspects it introduced. In particular, efficient mechanisms were created to ensure a truly collective management of the operation, close cooperation with the international organizations active on the ground (including the UN) and the fulfillment of the reporting duties established by the Security Council.

The success of Operation Alba might be seen as an indication of the viability of the "coalition of the willing" model, a proof that it should be increasingly applied in future peacekeeping. However, the international intervention was greatly facilitated by a favourable political environment, which posed no major internal opposition to the multinational involvement - quite in contrast to conditions on the ground in the case of the IFOR/SFOR missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina. The fact that Albanian leadership elites welcomed international help and cooperated with the multinational forces, despite the serious political and ideological differences present on the internal scene, certainly relieved much of the kind of pressure that had confronted the IFOR/SFOR mission in Bosnia.

More generally, it is doubtful that the "coalition of the willing" model is preferable to direct involvement of established international institutions. "Coalitions of the willing" are based on ad hoc and hence often uncertain decision-making and sharing of tasks and responsibilities that may prove inadequate when the deployed troops have to face major threats. The existing institutional framework for international intervention available through the international organizations, albeit in need of reinforcement, can provide important elements of reassurance against both of these risks. In this respect, it is preferable that peace-keeping responsibilities be delegated to institutional actors rather than ad hoc coalitions. In addition, the fact that the intervention takes place in a well-proven institutional context may appear as a substantial advantage to troop-contributing countries anxious to generate political solidarity and support. That was certainly one of the considerations that first led those countries that were ready to (and later did) contribute substantially to the operation to advocate a more direct role of the Euro-Atlantic institutions.