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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

PROGRAM 60 Minutes

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CITY Washington, D.C.

SUBJECT Enver Hoxha

MORLEY SAFER: Enver Hoxha, who ruled Albania for 41 years, died on Thursday. He was 76. He was also the world's longest-serving communist leader. In "You Can't There from Here," we take a look at Albania. And we must frankly admit we had to do it with whatever bits and pieces of film that are available on the country, because you not only can't get to Albania from here, almost no one can get to Albania from anywhere. Party leader Hoxha sealed the country tight years ago. It remains to be seen what Hoxha's successor will do about opening the borders.

Meantime, come along and take, at the very least, a peek inside his country.

It is by far the most backward place in Europe, locked in by barren mountains on three sides and the Adriatic to the west. It was primitive by the standards of 1912 when it more or less became a nation, and is only slightly less primitive in 1985.

It had been the stomping ground for every baked and half-baked regime in the Balkans, fought over by Greeks and Turks, Serbo-Croatians and Italians. The Albanians themselves were victims. They would make their almost seasonable refugee trek into the mountains, a cycle of massacre and escape that had gone on for centuries.

The Albanians themselves were no slouches in the bloodbath department. They had been having blood feuds with each other for generations, a nation of fiercely defiant clans. And the few Albanian movies that are made celebrate the misery with unbridled glee.

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[Film clip]

SAFER: But enough of Albanian cinematic art. In 1922 along came Zog, the toughest man in the Tosk (?) clan, a solider in both the Ottoman and the Austro-Hungarian armies. He declared himself president, then King Zog I. He would create under his rule, he said, a pleasant land for peasant people. Albania's capital, Tirana, became an instant Ruritania.

By 1938, Zog, well into middle age and still a bachelor, felt it was time for him to find a queen. He told the resident ambassadors to spread the word among European royalty, "Send photographs." He chose a Hungarian countess with an American mother, 21-year-old Geraldine Epone (?). We caught up with her in Paris.

GERALDINE: My husband didn't want to see any of the others.

SAFER: He saw your picture, and that was it.

GERALDINE: That was it.

SAFER: And how did you feel about this sort of arranged marriage?

GERALDINE: I was panic-struck. I was absolutely --nobody very much asked my opinion, and I didn't know him. And after I met him everything was all right.

SAFER: You mean once you saw him it was love at first sight?

GERALDINE: Yes. I was a 20-year-old girl, and a 45-year-old -- he looked wonderful. And he had an immense personality. Of course, it was finished. And he had a great sense of humor.

SAFER: Not every Albanian agreed. Just about everywhere Zog went, someone tried to kill him.

GERALDINE: And when the shooting began, he immediately shot back.

SAFER: He carried a gun with him.

GERALDINE: Always. That gun saved his life five times.

SAFER: He may be the only chief of state who ever shot back at an assassin.

GERALDINE: He's an Albanian. [Laughter]

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SAFER: What does that mean when you say it in such a proud way?

GERALDINE: Well, because they are fighters. They are people who when they give their word, they keep it, usually.

SAFER: Their wedding set Tirana on its ear. Never had there been a day like it. The King chose Count Ciano, the Italian Foreign Minister, as his best man, a choice he soon would regret.

Exactly one year after the wedding, in 1939, Queen Geraldine gave birth to a son, Prince Laika (?). On that same day, the Italian army invaded. You see, Count Ciano had gone home and told his father-in-law, Benito Mussolini, that Albania was ripe for the taking. And the Italian army poured in, gleeful, by the bagful. It was a mechanized army versus the ox cart. And once again the Albanians headed for the hills. Zog, the Queen, the Prince, and entourage left by limo for Greece, then Turkey, Romania, Poland, France just ahead of the Germans, then Britain, and finally to exile in Egypt.

The Queen recalls that day her son was born, the same day the Italians invaded.

GERALDINE: I wanted to see my baby, so they brought the cradle next to me and they put him in my arms. And to my horror, I saw an immense revolver under his pillow. That's a custom that has to be kept. It's a boy.

SAFER: Who put that revolver there?

GERALDINE: His father.

SAFER: The King put it there.

GERALDINE: Yes.

SAFER: As a symbol of something?

GERALDINE: A symbol of, you know, fighter.

SAFER: Meantime, in Albania the mountain men were forming a resistance to the Italians and Germans organized by a ban of intrepid English officers. But as the war ended, the Soviet army insured that the communist guerrillas emerged the most powerful. Their leader was Enver Hoxha, a Marxist school-teacher.

Hoxha was and remained a Stalinist. He toyed briefly with the Khrushchev Russians, but found them too soft. He turned to China, but rejected it after a brief embrace.

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In the late '40s the British and American governments decided Hoxha must be removed, not by an Allied invasion, but by an army of free Albanians. They were trained secretly in Germany for what would be the first try by the West to destabilize a communist government.

The American side was led by an OSS and CIA agent named Robert Lowe (?), an old hand in the spy business and the Balkans. The British agent acting as liaison was named Kim Philby.

Why did that whole operation fail so badly?

ROBERT LOWE: Entirely due to the fact that we were betrayed by Kim Philby, the famous British double agent.

SAFER: Philby, while rising to the highest ranks of the British Secret Services, was a full colonel of the Soviet KGB, perhaps the most successful, most destructive spy in the history of espionage. In 1963 he defected to Russia.

LOWE: To have fooled his own people as well as he did, and to fool us as well, I mean he must be the shining example of a double agent in the KGB school in Moscow.

SAFER: It's remarkable when you think about it that you had these two great powers trying to destabilize a tiny, still unstable government at the end of World War II, and we couldn't pull it off.

LOWE: Well, that's the harm a double agent can do you. I mean, you know, it's -- people say, well, espionage doesn't matter anymore because we've got satellites, and agents are redundant. Well, it isn't true if he's in the inside reading all your messages and knows what's going on and can inform the opposition.

So, as I say, we were playing poker with a mirror behind our back. They were reading all our cards. Every time we made a move into -- we put people into Albania. So there was no way we could succeed. And eventually, when it became so obvious that there was this terrible leak somewhere, we had to abandon the operation. We couldn't go on sacrificing these brave men that were going in. It was like sending them to their death. I mean it was impossible.

SAFER: The Anglo-American attempts went on for five years. Virtually every agent was caught and executed. The government massacred their families and friends as well. Thousands died as a result of Philby's betrayal.

The unsuccessful operations only served to further

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Hoxha's control over Albania. That control took the form of the most repressive government in the world, a kind of Marxist Ruritania.

Hoxha outlawed all religions. The churches and mosques were closed. Sacrilege became national policy. The churches became museums of atheism, or put to uses that would remind people that worship of anything but the state was criminal. The penalty for performing baptism can be death. The penalty for operating a business can be death. There is no private property, no private cars. Hoxha was a bigger brother than even a George Orwell could contemplate. He was a living saint whose likeness was everywhere, to whom praise, enforced praise, was almost continuous. The pantheon is shared only by the dead saint Stalin.

The people live lives of enforced drabness. It is an event of serious proportions when a shipment of fashionable shoes arrives in a state shop.

Contact with the outside world is almost nonexistent. The regime feel the Soviets, since Stalin, are too soft on capitalism. So Russians are banned. Americans, of course, are also banned. But occasional groups of sympathetic European tourists and the very odd television journalist are allowed in on stringently guided tours. Their output is a textbook example of deja vu.

For example, in the French film the emphasis was on a model farm, a model factory, folk dancing, and a wedding.

The German film, however, showed, a model farm, a model factory, folk dancing, and a wedding.

The Finnish film, on the other hand, showed a model farm, a model factory, folk dancing, and a wedding.

You get some idea of the bride's enthusiasm about having a government guide as a wedding guest.

One other thing that seems to strike every visiting cameraman is the main square of Tirana, where the traffic cop does a pantomime of traffic direction. Broad heroic avenues that certainly do belong to the people. Barely a skid mark or pothole to be seen. Only the tramp of socialist worker designer shoes to be heard. The little traffic there is to direct consists of one of the few foreign imports into Albania, cars for party functionaries and for Hoxha's personal clan.

Hoxha was 76 when he died, having completed the 40th volume of his autobiography. To the last, he was firmly in

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charge of a country that wanted him very badly to die, for change, change that could only be for the better.

The West has given up on changing Albania, but there is a minuscule band of emigre Albanians who are still trying. They meet in Paris and Brussels, here and there, professing more power than they have, predicting invasion every day.

They are led by the little prince who was born the day his nation died, Prince Laika, now King Laika, whose father Zog passed away in 1961. Wherever he goes, his bodyguard moves with him. At seven feet tall, he can hardly travel incognito. He still carries the pistol his father placed in his cradle, and he vows to revenge the death of Albania.

How do you achieve that, through armed force?

LAIKA: It will have to be through some kind of violent change. Let's hope that it will be with a minimum of bloodshed.

SAFER: That, of course, has been tried before.

LAIKA: Surely.

SAFER: By British Intelligence, by American Intelligence. And they were abject failures.

LAIKA: Absolutely. But you said the key words. British Intelligence, American Intelligence does not necessarily mean Albanian Intelligence.

SAFER: How big is your operation? How many troops do you have?

LAIKA: That's a security question. I will not answer.

SAFER: But I mean just give me some idea.

LAIKA: I can't. It's the most well-kept secret we have. Even the troops themselves don't know how many there are.

SAFER: King Laika, for all his determination, is not taken seriously by anyone. His fate and the fate of Albania was sealed way back in the early '50s, not just by Enver Hoxha and his uses of terror, but by an urbane, civilized, educated Englishman who worked out of this nondescript building in London that was the headquarters for British Intelligence.

If knowledge is power, then Kim Philby used knowledge to mug a nation.

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