

Two steps forward?

Albania and the Albanians. Articles

Publisher: [Bjoern Andersen](#)

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Cultivating the river banks. Tirana. Photo: Bjoern Andersen, 2005

Two steps forward? / Albania and the Albanians / Draft edition [2005-2007]

In December 2005 a little book about Albania was issued in Danish (the book's Danish web-site is: <http://bjoerna.net/to-skridt-frem/>).

I'm now going to edit a parallel edition in English. Hopefully, it can be published in 2008.

To begin with I have published a draft on the internet as a PDF-file:
<http://bjoerna.net/articles.pdf> [Jan. 2006: approx. 100 pages, 2-3 MB].

In 2006-2007 the »missing« articles in the Danish edition will be translated and all articles will be revised. The »missing« articles are about the political situation in 2005/2006, the »Foundation of Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes« and the religious tolerance conferences in Tirana in 2003 and 2004.

My plan is to pay Albania a visit in late 2006 and again in 2007 and to interview researchers, journalists and institutions.

Any comments and suggestions will be welcomed.

Best regards from

Bjoern Andersen, post@bjoerna.dk, 19th December 2005 [revised 3rd December 2006]

Some of the articles in English [HTML-editions]

- [Danish sociologist's thoughts on Albania's past, present and future. Interview with Bjoern Andersen in Tirana Times 1st December 2006.](#)
 - [»We have to change the mentality«. Interview with Qemal Minxhozi when he was retiring as a chargé d'affaires in Copenhagen.](#) April 2005 [only as a PDF-file]
 - [Doing the homework. Roads and bridges in the vicinity of the city of Burrel in the Mat area, Albania](#) [September 2005]
 - [Progër. A village in the neighbourhood of Korça in Southern Albania](#) [January 2006. Comments on a socio-antropological study. The article is not in the Danish edition].
 - [Albanian immigrants in Athens. Power relations and health. A review of Anna Mousouli's book](#) [November 2005]
 - [Holberg on Scanderbeg. Scanderbeg is one of the greatest generals ever - wrote the famous historian Ludvig Holberg in 1739. A viewpoint from Copenhagen](#) [May 2003]
 - [Gjakmarrja. Albanian Highlander's »Blood Feud« as Social Obligation. A review of Diana Gellçi's book](#) [November 2005]
 - [The Albanian girl and the Danish artists](#) [September 2005]. Albanian edition: [Vajza shqiptare dhe artistët danezë](#)
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Two steps forward?

The book was published (in Danish) in December 2005. It is in 10 chapters:

Introduction

- 01 Two kinds of friends. The sweet ones and the sour ones. The sweet ones are nice, the sour ones are telling the truth.
- 02 Summer and autumn 2005. The election and the new government. The voters turn-out in the different parts of the country. Black, grey and white economy. Construction. Labour force, employment, emigration to Greece and other countries. The cafées. Traffic (traffic-culture). Policework. The programme of the Berisha-government. Albania and Kosova. Albania in the Balkans. Corruption. Fatos Nano, Edi Rama and the future of the Socialist Party.

Doing the homework

- 03 Interview with Qemal Minxhozi. *We have to change the mentality.*
- 04 Doing the homework. Two examples: Gurrë e Vogël and Urakë. A conversation with the mayor of Burrël (Skender Lleshi).

Sociological studies

- 05 Albanian immigrants in Athens (comments on a book by Anna Mousouli).
- 06 Feuds and vengeance. The kanún. A novel by Kadaré (comments on a book by Diana Gellçi).
- 07 Family violence in Tirana (comments on an article in *British Medical Journal*).
- 08 The Foundation of Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes.

Religious tolerance

- 09 Religious tolerance (the Tirana Conferences in 2003 and 2004). The Tirana Summit-Declaration (2004). The inauguration of the Mother Teresa-statue in Tirana.

The Albanian girl

- 10 The Albanian Girl and her affair with the Danish poet, Christian Winther (the girl might have been of Albanian descent, but most likely she was from *Colli Albani* - the Albani hills just outside Rome).

An English edition (with some more chapters) will be published later on, maybe in late autumn 2006.

Abstract

Albania is in a much better position than in 1991 or 1997, but the transition from a communist dictatorship to a modern European state has been very difficult, and still there are deep and serious problems in social life, economy and politics. Export is small and is only improving slowly, import is much bigger. The black sector is alarming big. Many Albanians have to work and live abroad - and resource-drain has emerged. Organized crime and trafficking has a big impact on social life. Family violence is widespread. Corruption has - as it seems - risen in the last years, and the political initiatives to get rid of it are not sufficient. On the other hand, police work seems to have improved, at least to some extent. Roads and infrastructure have been improved, but the severe problems in electricity-supply persist and invalidate economy.

In many aspects the Nano-administration moved Albania in the right direction, but too slowly as it seems - and the two major political forces were not able of co-operating technically. Many ordinary people wanted a change and therefore the socialists lost the parliamentary election and a new government was elected. The voters turn-out was *very small* (less than 50 %), which is a bad signal. By now, it is not to say whether the new Berisha-government has the will and power to change the points and to make Albania ready for an integration in the EU, but it has issued an ambitious programme in 2005.

Since Edi Rama was elected mayor in Tirana some years ago, the situation has improved in the capital in many aspects. Now, Rama also has been elected chairman of the Socialist party too.

Some Albanian initiatives are to be appreciated, especially when they are aiming at modernizing mentality and behaviour in social life, economy and politics. Definitely, a new Albania has to be

developed by the Albanians themselves and - to a high extent - they have to rely on their own resources. Support from the EU is necessary, but it will have no deep impact, if good Albanians *at all levels* are not doing the proper homework and are not taking responsibility.

Among the good initiatives are the religious tolerance-initiatives (2003, 2004), *The Foundation of Conflict Resolution and Reconciliation of Disputes*, some media initiatives, demonstrations against corruption - and maybe the *Mjaft*-movement too. But much more - and much more widespread - initiatives are necessary.

The author

Bjoern Andersen is a sociologist and a philologist. In recent years he has written books and articles about

- The Albanian history. The intervention in Kosova.
- The Danish Law of 1683.
- Ludvig Holberg.

Holberg (1684-1754) was the most outstanding Danish-Norwegian author in the Enlightenment. He was a playwright, a philosopher and a historian; he has written an essay about Scanderbeg. (Cf: <http://bjoerna.dk/Holberg/Scanderbeg.htm>)

[Links: Reports, background articles etc.](#)

The Danish *Side = Page*.

The Danish edition can be examined at: <http://bjoerna.net/to-skridt-frem-net.pdf> [5,3 MB].

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- [Albanian Brain Drain. Emigration of the intellectual elite](#). By Assoc. Prof. Andrea Koxhaj and Assoc. Prof. Fatmir Mema

Bjoern Andersen: <http://bjoerna.net/articles/BA.htm>

Version 1.8 - 3rd December 2006 - The articles may be quoted free of charge, but only with a proper reference.