



Vincenzo Paris/Reuters

An Albanian passing his child Monday to an Italian sailor at the port of Brindisi, now swamped by refugees.

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## Italy Strains to Welcome Albanians

### As Port City Runs Out of Room, Prodi Message Is: Stay in Homeland

By Celestine Bohlen  
New York Times Service

BRINDISI, Italy — Three days into the latest exodus of Albanians onto Italy's southeast coast, this ancient port city has run out of room.

On Friday, the number of refugees here was about 300; Monday it reached 3,000, not counting the latest arrivals, about 900 people aboard an aged military frigate that ran out of fuel about 12 kilometers out of harbor.

All but about 120 of the ship's occupants were taken aboard an Italian ship and ferried north to the larger city of Bari, under armed guard.

"We are completely full," said

Pietro Antonacci, the deputy police chief in Brindisi, ticking off a list of 18 temporary settlement centers commandeered since the weekend, including hotels, church centers, sports camps and nursery schools. The latest estimates of new Albanian refugees for Italy as a whole was close to 6,000.

It was 7 P.M. on Friday when local officials in Tutturano, a farming village of 3,200 that lies among vineyards and olive groves about 15 kilometers outside Brindisi, had word that a busload of about 40 Albanians was on its way. Working through the night, they cleaned up an old nursery school that had been vacant for three years.

Now the school is the temporary

home of 40 Albanians, among them Nuredin Lejla and his family. The Lejlas — including Ada, 15, a student at Tirana's language school — were among the first families in the Albanian port city of Durres to make a dash for the open sea, after hearing the first bursts of gunfire last Thursday, the day Albania descended into near-total chaos.

"Until then Durres was calm, and then little by little the war came there," said Mr. Lejla, a mechanic who looks older than his 44 years. "Everywhere people were running because they were afraid."

In normal times, a ferry takes about

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## President Is Meddling, Albania Rival Asserts

### Let Government Work, Socialist Urges

Reuters

TIRANA — The main challenger to President Sali Berisha, the Socialist leader Fatos Nano, urged him on Monday to stop interfering in the work of the government and try to restore order after weeks of unrest.

Mr. Berisha, under increasing pressure from abroad to step down, was awaiting the arrival of a high-level European Union mission. Its goal was to help consolidate the calm of recent days, possibly by aiding the Albanian police.

The 11-member mission was being flown to the capital, Tirana, by helicopter. Rinas airport, which serves Tirana, was closed for the fifth day in a row.

Rebels holding southern towns say they will not surrender their weapons until Mr. Berisha leaves office.

Mr. Nano, who was released from prison last week in one of several concessions by Mr. Berisha, has said that the president should step down, but that Mr. Berisha's departure from office is not his first priority.

Mr. Nano said at a news conference at Socialist Party headquarters that his message for Mr. Berisha was that he should "cooperate, not interfere."

"Since the majority of protesters continue to demand his resignation, it means he hasn't got the message," Mr. Nano said. "I would prefer to shake hands with him as an Albanian citizen and not as president."

Mr. Nano served briefly as prime minister in 1991. He was jailed in 1993 on corruption charges, which he asserts were politically inspired. Now he is being mentioned as a possible successor to Mr. Berisha.

The president says he will resign if his Democratic Party loses elections that have been called for June.

Mr. Nano has thrown his support to Prime Minister Bashkim Fino, a fellow Socialist who was appointed last week to head a government of national reconciliation.

Shops in Tirana were open Monday, following five days of turmoil last week. Public transportation was operating and public employees obeyed a government order to return to work. But a state of emergency remained in effect in Albania, with schools closed and a curfew in effect from 7 P.M. to 7 A.M.

At least 100 people have been killed in the country in more than a month of

amid investment funds. The collapse of several of the funds, in which thousands of Albanians had placed their savings, set off anti-government protests that evolved into an armed revolt, with widespread looting of weapons from army depots.

The government has appealed to citizens to turn in weapons, and on Monday state-controlled television showed Kalashnikov rifles, a shoulder-launched anti-missile and dozens of cases of ammunition being handed in at a Tirana police station.

"We shouldn't be hearing shots at all," Mr. Fino said. "If people hang on to these arms it will be the ruin of the country."

About 6,000 Albanians have fled across the Adriatic Sea to Italy, including more than 800 rescued Monday by Italian coast guards from a decrepit navy ship.

EU foreign ministers approved the mission after rejecting military intervention, which the Albanian government had requested. They pledged to "help Albania restore civilian structures and law and order."

"The primary task will be to help the Albanian authorities recover the levels of administrative control," a diplomatic source in Rome said.

Mr. Berisha said in an interview with Europe 1 radio of France that he would ask the EU delegation for police and economic aid to help to rebuild Albania's institutions and stabilize the economy.

The situation remains critical, and Albania needs food aid quickly, he said, adding:

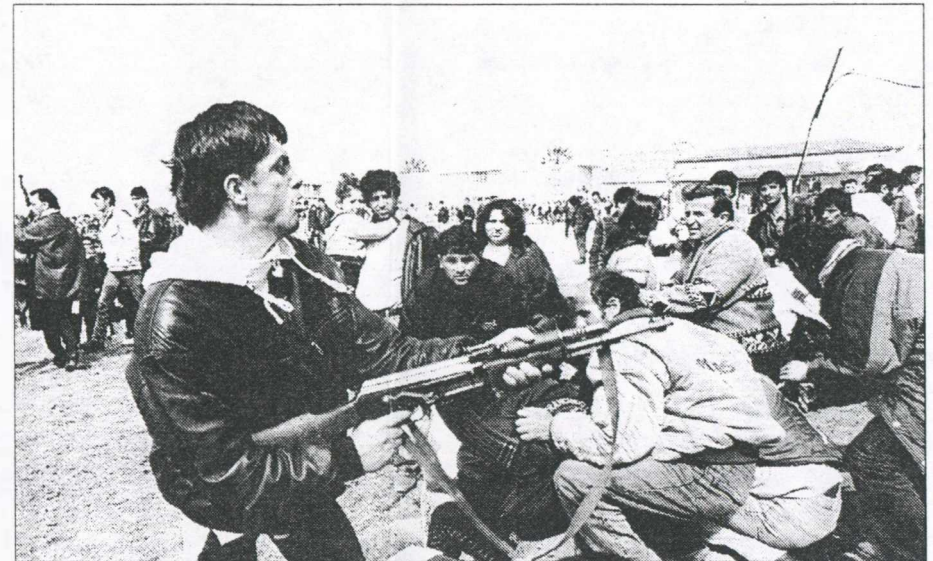
"We will request major assistance to rebuild our institutions, also a very quick humanitarian assistance."

Albanian border guards returned to ransacked posts Monday along the Greek frontier, and police patrolled the streets in nearby towns for the first time in two weeks. The guards had fled in the face of the armed uprising.

On Monday, patrols were sent out along the border with Greece.

In Jergucati, south of the rebel stronghold of Gjirokaster, 30 kilometers (18 miles) from the border, and in nearby towns, the police resumed street patrols and collected weapons from people.

In Gjirokaster, a main town and army base near the border, rebels began Sunday to turn over to the police tanks



Santiago Lamm/The Associated Press

An Albanian firing over people rushing Monday to the beach in Durres, Albania, in a bid to flee by boat.

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five hours to go from Durres to Brindisi. But the Lejla family, together with about 70 other people, piled onto what they described as a tugboat. The journey took three days. No one among them was much of a sailor, let alone a captain; Mr. Lejla had the most experience with boats, and he is a mechanic.

At one point in the middle of the night, the engine broke down, and they had to wait for another ship to come along to repair it. The nights were cold, and the sailing was rough.

"Everyone was sick the whole way, so when we saw the lights of Brindisi, we were so happy," Ada Lejla said.

The boat was pulled into the Brindisi

harbor at dawn Friday. By the following day, the family and half of their fellow passengers (the other half were taken by the Red Cross) had settled into the village nursery school, where hot meals are brought to them three times a day.

"We want to stay, but we don't know if the Italians want us to stay," Ada said. For the moment, they are caught in limbo — with temporary papers, a place to sleep and food to eat, but no money, and for the moment, no prospects. Those Albanians with relatives already in Italy who will come here to collect them are free to go; others can slip away but not many have anywhere to slip away to, or the means to do it.

Already, 650 refugees have been

busied to other parts of Italy to relieve the pressure on the south, which has high unemployment, particularly among the young.

Italian authorities are offering humanitarian relief to the new arrivals, but not so much as to encourage more to come. On a quick visit to Brindisi, Prime Minister Romano Prodi sent a clear message across the Adriatic Sea when he said that Albanians would not solve their problems by fleeing. He emphasized that about two dozen Albanians had already asked to be repatriated, as the violence at home began to ebb.

Here in Brindisi, everyone still has a vivid memory of 1991, when two successive waves of emigrants from the newly opened Albania, once the most isolated of Eastern Europe's Communist countries, threw themselves onto ferries bound for Italy. The city was unprepared, and Albanians were camped out in the streets. This time, the reception is more orderly, although a group of Albanians gathered outside the police station Monday were complaining about poor conditions at their camp site and arbitrary treatment by the authorities.

In the playground next to the Tuturano nursery school where the Lejla family is housed, a group of Italian boys were playing soccer with some of the newly arrived Albanians.

"They shouldn't stay too long," said Massimiliano, 17, with a brooding look.

## UN Chief Calls for Staff and Budget Cuts

Reuters

UNITED NATIONS, New York — The UN secretary-general, Kofi Annan, called Monday for staff and budget cuts and the merging of some UN departments under his control as the first step in his promised plan to reform the United Nations.

In a statement to a UN committee, Mr. Annan announced a reduction of 1,000 staff posts for the Secretariat, or core UN staff, which has about 9,000 employees based primarily in New

He also announced \$123 million in budget cuts for 1998-1999. The current budget is about \$1 billion annually. He said he would consolidate departments dealing with economic and social issues and reduce documentation.

Mr. Annan said that 38 percent of the organization's resources were devoted to administration and that he was committed to reducing this by a third and channeling the resources into economic and social programs for