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Division of Continuing Studies  
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# Professor hopes to return to Albania

**GUPTA from page 1**

gers of visiting the country riddled by anarchy and rebel groups today — a country that has never fought a civil war, but now finds its children carrying machine guns and hand grenades.

Instead, the two discussed the city's top-notch restaurants.

"The Albanian people are the most hospitable people in the world," Gupta said. "I would have probably stayed — and hid myself in a closet every night."

Nighttime was the dangerous time, he said. With the curfew, the streets were abandoned each night by 7. At night, the rebels were left alone to loot businesses and shoot their guns.

During the day, Albanians travel the streets to go to work and go shopping as usual, he said.

Gupta said he traveled to the University of Tirana every day, although Albanian President Sali Berisha's government had closed all schools — even the kindergartens.

## The rebellion begins

Gupta taught school only a few days before schools were closed and the curfew was placed on his freedom, he said.

When Gupta arrived in Albania on Friday, Feb. 21, the country was "perfectly safe," he said. No travel restrictions existed, and he would leave his hotel to buy fruit at 9 p.m.

The darkness was not threatening then, he said, and the people were not scared.

At that time, a large number of Albanians had already lost their savings in failed pyramid schemes, and were calling on their President Sali Berisha to resign. They blamed Berisha for not warning his country of the bad investments, Gupta said.

The early rebellions started in the southern Albanian town of Vlore one or two days after he arrived. Ordinary citizens began to take over military garrisons and armories. The military guards did not resist, perhaps because they could not fire on their own people.

Soon, Albanians who had never handled guns before stole high-powered machine guns, tanks and grenades. They shot their guns into the air to simply demonstrate they had guns, Gupta said. They wanted the government to know they wielded power and would continue to gain power until the president resigned.

"If the president would have resigned two weeks ago, I would still be (in Tirana)," Gupta said.

But Berisha did not resign, and refused any concessions demanded by his people. So they acquired more and more guns, Gupta said. There were unintentional injuries, but no rebels attempted to damage property or hurt anybody, he said.

Then the tanks came into Tirana.

In broad daylight — 2:30 in the afternoon — a military garrison was looted in Tirana. Rebels simply broke the locks. Guards, if there were any, ran away when they saw the approaching mob.

The president declared a state of emergency, closing the schools and setting a 7 p.m. street curfew. Shops

and government offices closed at 3 p.m. The curfew was later extended by one hour, but the streets were still deserted after dark.

Soon police began to abandon their posts, and military officers joined the rebels.

"The common people were really afraid" because of the near-disappearance of police meant to protect them, Gupta said.

Political supporters of both the Socialist party and the Democratic party in power under President Berisha started to worry that members of the opposite party might seek revenge for past political events, Gupta said.

They would not sleep in their homes, he said, and were "trying to remain as invisible as possible."

In the meantime, Gupta stayed in his hotel and learned to sleep well in spite of the machine-gun fire at night. He continued to have his shoes shined each morning by a familiar face at the hotel.

"I became part of the furniture," he said, laughing.

## A turn for the worse

About 100 reporters from around the world began to flood Gupta's hotel, located across from the prime minister's palace. More people got guns and shot them in the middle of the streets, sometimes from their Mercedes Benzes, Gupta said.

Other European countries sent representatives to convince the Albanian government to make concessions to quiet the violence. Albania granted amnesty to all those who had stolen guns, tanks, fighter planes, helicopters and even navy ships.

But the rebellion would not end without a resignation from the president. Armed gangs began to break into businesses and homes, loot and beat Albanians. The rebels had moved from protesting the government to hurting their neighbors.

"That didn't happen in the beginning at all," Gupta said.

When U.S. ambassadors received word of the violence against people, they decided to send some personnel and families home to America, Gupta said.

On March 4, the U.S. Agency for International Development invited Gupta and other professors for a meeting where they were warned to observe the government's laws and keep a low profile as foreigners in the country. They were also warned that they could be asked to leave if the situation in Albania got worse.

Ten days later a message arrived from the U.S. government telling Gupta he should be ready to leave the country as quickly as possible.

## Escape under fire

Gupta spent two hours in line that day at a ticket center to reserve a place on a commercial airline. His flight would have left Albania last Saturday.

According to a news report, an aircraft tried to land Thursday night at the Tirana airport, but could not because of machine guns firing on the craft. The airport was then officially closed, and the United States made plans to evacuate its citizens.

In the northern city of Shkodra,

"serious violence" began and buildings were burned, Gupta said. Food shortages became more severe, and the cost of basic food items soared. All government power and order had crumbled, he said.

The day before Gupta was evacuated with Diane Hambley, a UNL professor of marketing who also was in Albania, the two talked on the phone every one or two hours. That night there was no gunfire, and the silence was frightening.

"That night was very dark and very quiet," Gupta said. "It had not been that quiet. It meant that something was happening."

The reason for the silence was unclear, he said, but by the next morning, the remains of bullets shot into the air rained down around the two professors as they drank coffee on a patio outside the hotel.

By 10:30 a.m., they were called to come to the U.S. Embassy, where a white launch pad for helicopters had been built and secured by U.S. Marines.

The professors were shot at while waiting to board the helicopter that would take the two to a U.S. warship waiting off the Albanian coast, he said. They sought refuge behind a wall while surrounding Marines fired back in the direction the bullets came from.

The Marines then hustled the professors and other Americans into the helicopter, Gupta said. From then on, the trip home went smoothly. The only shock came when a woman was shot in the shoulder while waiting for another helicopter, and was brought onto the ship wounded.

That shooting caused a delay in the helicopter evacuation of about 2,000 Americans, he said.

But by that afternoon, the professors were taken by a larger helicopter to the small Italian coastal village of Brindisi. The village was charming to the professors, who were tired, but not too tired to appreciate real Italian food that night and fresh-squeezed orange juice the next morning.

## A hero's welcome

Gupta returned to Lincoln Sunday night, and was greeted by his two sons, friends and a host of television cameras and reporters at the Lincoln Municipal Airport.

"I don't want to be a celebrity," Gupta said. "I just want to go back and do my work."

Gupta said he was concerned that the Albanian president would not step down, and would continue to let his country fall to ruin.

"If he does not resign, the condition in Albania will get worse," he said.

And the damage to the country's fragile economy could deter foreign investment for years, he said.

Gupta said he wants to return because he thought it was important to help teach Albanians to create and understand a strong market economy.

He said he hoped other Americans would not forget that Albanians are good, hard-working people and friends.

"We have to help that country get back on its feet," Gupta said. "It's a great country."

# Police officer dragged 45 feet by car

**By MATTHEW WAITE**  
Senior Reporter

A Lincoln police officer suffered minor injuries when he was dragged more than 45 feet by a man trying to flee arrest early Tuesday morning.

Officer Edward Simpson tried to stop 22-year-old Clarence Barnes from driving away from where he was pulled over on a traffic stop. Simpson reached into Barnes' car and held on as Barnes drove away.

In his report, Simpson estimated he was dragged 45 to 50 feet at speeds up to 20 mph before he could no

longer hold on, Sgt. Ann Heermann said. He then let go, falling to the street.

Simpson was treated and released from Lincoln General Hospital for injuries to his right elbow.

The incident started when Officer Leroy Armen Dariz pulled Barnes over at 13th and G Streets about 1 a.m. Heermann described the event:

Dariz was checking Barnes' driver's license status when Barnes jumped out of his car and ran. Dariz followed, and Barnes ended up circling back to his car, where Simpson had just arrived.

Barnes jumped into his car and

Simpson tried to stop him. When Simpson grabbed him, Barnes started to drive away.

When Simpson let go, two other officers had arrived and took up the pursuit. The vehicle pursuit was short and slow, spanning only one block and reaching a top speed of 25 mph.

Barnes then stopped his car at 14th and F streets, left the car and ran. A short foot pursuit ensued and Barnes was soon caught and arrested.

Barnes was booked for driving on a suspended license, failure to comply with a lawful order and felony assault of a police officer.