

## Musine Kokalari and the Anticommunist Resistance in 1945-1946



### History

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### Abstract

The figure of Musine Kokalari is not treated on its full intellectual dimension, despite the change of political systems. Besides a talented writer she had a strong intellectual and political commitment in Albanian society, following the war. This political commitment of hers couldn't be understood unless we analyze her political opinion expressed at the Social Democratic Party's program she compiled, and the historical context of the communist opposition confrontation with Albanian communists came to power. Her moral and intellectual resistance has left an indelible mark on the Albanian intellectual thought.

*“To preserve as much as possible from the moral values”*

Musine Kokalari

In the history of anti-communist resistance in Eastern Europe, Albania's political history is not very similar with the political histories of the other countries from East Europe. This dissimilarity happens due to the fact that Albania's political history before the Second World War was dominated by the King Zog I and his followers and therefore did not have a rich political life with a clear construction of the political parties. Thus, Albania as a country that entered more quickly than any other country in Eastern Europe in sovietism process, each tool and resistance's acts in the first years after the Second World War were crushed and persecuted by the communist regime. The new Communist leadership that came to power, after forbidden the return of King Zog in the country, announced that it would establish a type of popular democracy that will be reflected in turning the country into a republic and the respect of certain human rights. The statement of the Antifascist National Liberation Council on 24 October 1944, created the hope that the new government will probably be able to respect certain minimum principles of popular democracy. These hopes were envisaged in people who didn't know the nature of communist regimes and their methods to dominate the country's political life. It comes since a large part of intelligence persons had no doubt that the communists, as well as during the war, would try to avoid sharing power with any other political faction. Among the most courageous intellectuals to oppose the installation of the communist dictatorship in Albania was the young Albanian writer, Musine Kokalari, one of the most unique voices in Albanian culture. During the years '30 she had held the literary pseudonym “muse” because of the fragility of her prose to treat conservatism topics in society, but at the same time these are real lexical monuments of Gjirokastra city and the southern dialects of Albania. This time she had to face the harshness and political terror much harder than the battles with conservatism in her writings.

The period when the communist government in Albania gave the illusions that could accept also the opposition participation is very short. It lasted from December 1944 to December 1945, a period which had not officially ended yet the World War II and still were not divided the spheres of influence in Eastern Europe. During this time Albania was rapidly going toward sovietism under Yugoslav assistance. However, despite the quick steps that were casting in this area, the communist government formally followed the steps of the government's legitimacy.

On December 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1945 would be held the first elections to form the Constituent Assembly that would decide the government form in Albania. Their development and performance were conditions that the Albanian government should fulfill, in order to gain a full and unconditional recognition. The rapid measures toward state and government communism, even though the Albanian Communist Party continued to not being declared and to hide through National Liberation Front, had created a not appropriate climate for revitalization and political participation of the Albanian opposition in public and social life of the country. *In Albania was established a communist regime according to the Soviet model, but unlike other "popular democracies", this process was developed with the direct assistance and support from Yugoslavia and Tito.*<sup>56</sup> Soon, in flow of correspondence of the Temporary Government with the Allied governments to ensure recognition, as well as measures towards communism of Albania, the Westerners who were operating in Albania through its military and civil missions felt the necessary to assist and support the fragile Albanian opposition. Furthermore, within the National Liberation Front there were figures and personalities who didn't agree with the format of the new state organization, such as the local courts, councils and executive committees, forms borrowed from the Soviet communist system. Another big discontent was the expropriated elements or big merchants whose assets were subject to the law "On Extraordinary Tax of the War".

The first contacts of British with the opposition were settled in June 1945, through people who were working at the British Military Mission, such as Kiço Xhonga, Ing. Avdulla Muça, Shaban Balla, Niko Beço, Hivzi Golja, Llazi Posti etc. The above intellectuals, familiar with the British Military Mission, provided the communication between mission and the coordinator of the resistance group Sami Çeribashi, *with excluded elements from the Front such as the former education Minister Gjergj Kokoshi and social-democratic group represented by Musine Kokalari. They also include the Committee of enterprising created in spring 1945, and Qenan Dibra, known exponent of Legality Movement Party.*<sup>57</sup>

The Social-Democratic group was led by Musine Kokalari, an intellectual and writer known for the time. This grouping was created during the World War II, where were known figures of Albanian intellectual world of the time like Suad Asllani and Musa Disdari. It is interesting that the Albanian opposition after the war is constantly considered *en bloc*, an

<sup>56</sup> Hamit Kaba, Ethem Çeku. Shqipëria dhe Kosova në arkivat ruse 1946-1962 (Albania and Kosovo in the Russian archives 1946-1962). Qendra e Studimeve Albanologjike (Centre of Albanological Studies). Instituti i Historisë (Institute of History). Tirana: 2011, p. 16.

<sup>57</sup> Leka Ndoja. Zanafilla e Bashkimit Demokratik (Genesis of the Democratic Union). Bashkimi Demokratik Shqiptar 1946 (Albanian Democratic Union 1946). Instituti i Studimit të Krimeve dhe Pasojave të Komunizmit (Institute of Crime Research and Consequences of Communism), Tirana: 2015, p 9

opposition based on the right ideology. This suggestion and opinion by analyzing the opposition groupings didn't correspond to the reality.

Based on this analysis of the Social Democratic Party's program, in which Musine Kokalari was the founder, belonged to the left scepter of political parties.

The Social Democrat grouping represented a moderate political current of Albanian left, which was an evolution of the Albanian society without being required extreme measures copied from the communist system by Soviet Union. In article two of the Social Democratic Party's status was written that *SDP is an evolutionary in terms of economic collectivization*.<sup>58</sup> So, the social-democratic grouping demanded an evolution of the economic relations in Albania rather than a violent collectivization that was implemented by the Albanian communists. Likewise in terms of the agrarian problem, one of the biggest problems of the Albanian society of that time SDP in its statute, article three mark *that has the main purpose to provide to the peasant enough land, eliminating the exploitation, speculation and parasitism. In addition, to the proletariat will provide food, housing and all other benefits, making life enjoyable*.<sup>59</sup> From phraseology used by SDP is seen that it was too close to the Albanian leftist attitudes aiming a social transformation and responding the needs of time. As a short-term and hopeful purpose to realize a balance in the economic life of the Albanian people, SDP looked the implementation of *an agrarian reform that would be the first stage of land allocation*.<sup>60</sup> Moreover, on the program was aimed the realization of *a social security system for the protection of all social classes*.<sup>61</sup>

Musine Kokalari and the Albanian Social Democrats were aware that Albania should have a social justice in order to have much more political freedom. Even in terms of foreign policy SDP was about to support the idea for realization as soon as possible a Balkan confederation,<sup>62</sup> being a step in advance of Albanian communists who didn't dare to openly express that purpose in any of their program. However, despite these similar attitudes with Albanian communists, their attitudes were again named dangerous to the monopoly of power who Communists wanted to reach, because the Social Democrats were for an active parliamentary and the opposition existence in the country's political life. It included three organizations.

Nevertheless, even the British Military Mission which was the most active in meetings and consultations with the Albanian opposition didn't follow any party preference. They were interested in having a united opposition in such a manner that the political life in Albania, shouldn't monopolized by the Albanian Communist Party.

In the frequently meetings of the Head of British Military Mission, Palmer and members of this mission, Majors Smith, Arnot and Leon with initiative committee composed of new groupings, was underlined the necessity for the creation of a united opposition that would include

<sup>58</sup> Musine Kokalari. Vepra 2, Programi i Partisë Socialdemokrate (the Program of Social Democratic Party), Geer: 2009, p. 435.

<sup>59</sup> Musine Kokalari. Vepra 2, Programi i Partisë Socialdemokrate (the Program of Social Democratic Party), Geer: 2009, p. 435.

<sup>60</sup> Musine Kokalari. Vepra 2, Programi i Partisë Socialdemokrate (the Program of Social Democratic Party), Geer: 2009, p. 436.

<sup>61</sup> Musine Kokalari. Vepra 2, Programi i Partisë Socialdemokrate (the Program of Social Democratic Party), Geer: 2009, p. 436.

<sup>62</sup> Musine Kokalari. Vepra 2, Programi i Partisë Socialdemokrate (the Program of Social Democratic Party), Geer: 2009, p. 436.

all three organizations. After numerous meetings with the British, it was agreed that the first joint meeting of the three groups and with the presence of Gjergj Kokoshi, on November 17<sup>th</sup>, 1945, to establish a *National Committee* of the Democratic Union organization.

In this meeting they were discuss about the consideration of the issue of participation impossibility in the elections after the legal deadline had finished, a deadline according to law was going at least 40 days before the election date. In this context, without having the possibility from the legal point to participate in the elections, it was reviewed the version of the request for postponement of the election date. They decided to address to allies with a memorandum, which would clearly express their demands, including the possibility of postponing the December 2<sup>nd</sup> elections. The meeting of November 20<sup>th</sup>, was held at the home of Shaban Balla, a geometer by profession and driver at the British Military Mission, and was led by Gjergj Kokoshi.

The leading role of Gjergj Kokoshi were as a result of credentials given by the English as well as his unquestionable authority as a former Minister of Popular Education and Culture and former member of the leadership of the Democratic Front. *At the second meeting of the opposition Gjergj Kokoshi had disagreements with Musine Kokalari about some issues for the drafting of the Memorandum and the leaders of groups. Musine demanded to be included in the memorandum the request for development of a plebiscite in Kosovo.*<sup>63</sup>

Musine Kokalari supported that position not only through her own national formation in the spirit of Albanian Renaissance, but also in the articles of status and spirit that had taken intellectuals who founded the Social Democratic Party. In Article 6 of the SDP's statute is written that *the party intends to fight against any invaders for independence of Albania within its ethnic boundaries.*<sup>64</sup>

It appears that under the rationalization of securing British support to the opposition and its activities, this moment of disagreements between the groups on the issue of Kosovo, was overcome and on November 22<sup>nd</sup> was organized a third meeting in the house of Ali Kavaja, a member of the Resistance Group, tax officer before the invasion and during the war. *In this meeting it was drafted in French The Memorandum by Musine Kokalari and Qenan Dibra, which was handed over to the Anglo-American missions by Qenan Debar, Shaban Balla and Sami Qeribashit.*<sup>65</sup>

While another note was delivered before to the British Military Mission from the Inisiator Committee of the Opposition and the program of 13 pages prepared by Kico Xhonga, translated into English by Emin Bakalli, a clerk in the Ministry of Public Works. The note was handed to Grade Lt. Palmer by Lari Post on November 5<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>63</sup> Leka Ndoja. Zanafilla e Bashkimit Demokratik (Genesis of the Democratic Union). Bashkimi Demokratik Shqiptar 1946 (Albanian Democratic Union 1946). Instituti i Studimit të Krimeve dhe Pasojave të Komunizmit (Institute of Crime Research and Consequences of Communism), Tirana: 2015, p. 11.

<sup>64</sup> Musine Kokalari. Vepra 2, Programi i Partisë Socialdemokrate (the Program of Social Democratic Party), Geer: 2009, p. 436.

<sup>65</sup> Leka Ndoja. Zanafilla e Bashkimit Demokratik. Bashkimi Demokratik Shqiptare 1946. Instituti i Studimit të Krimeve dhe Pasojave të Komunizmit, Tirana: 2015, p. 12

The latter will be traveling that evening to Caserta where the Headquarters Allied Mediterranean Troops was situated. In this way the British would be recognized directly with the program requirements of the fragile Albanian opposition. However, unfortunately there was a discrepancy between Palmer's anticommunist will and zeal and other British officers of the mission and careful calculations by the official London for not getting involved in an open support or planning a possible landfall in Albania.

From the analyzed documents it shows that to Palmer and later Hodgson, the official London emphasized for interference in the internal affairs of the Albanian government on the grounds that the provisional government, dominated by the Communists came to power by the full will of the Albanian people and was not imposed from outside. From trial's testimonies of members of the Democratic Union, it proves that there is a deviation from it, which London had communicated to British officers to support the opposition and the possibility of a landfall in Albania. Palmer highlighted the fact that he didn't receive requests for English intervention for a regime change in Albania, because England as well, was unable to deploy military forces after being occupied in Greece. Palmer had expressed to the members of the opposition "we can not put at risk the lives of any British soldier and that we can not start World War III because of Albania. This attitude of the British proved to be fatal for the Albanian anticommunist opposition hopes.

Woefully of Albanian's history of parliamentarism, the elections were not postponed and took place on the same date specified before on December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945. The Democratic Front won the majority of seats in the Constituent Assembly, about 70 seats and no candidate out of the Front's list. British Military Mission and the American Civil Mission followed the elections closely, but were disappointed by their results. December 2<sup>nd</sup> elections triumph by the Democratic Front and P.K.SH which stayed in the background, gave to the Albanian communists a confidence to go further in their project for the installation of their regime. The model, on which they were based, was the Soviet one, which in Albania was being installed with the direct assistance of Yugoslavs. The Soviet model was a totalitarian system based on a single party. *As such, in the process of the state functioning, it lacks the organisms that serve as a counterweight to power, which control and restrict it from actions undertaken and arbitrary.* Ideological opponents of the communists during the war, "National Front" and "Legality Movement", by the exclusion of them in war against the Axis forces, had lost the legitimacy to exert opposition in Albania, the more so since most their leaders were in political emigration abroad and had no opportunity to influence events in Albania. In this context the only ones who can create problems in the installation of the communist regime in Albania was the opposition of Democratic Union, so for this reason immediately after the elections, the government of Enver Hoxha decided to take repressive actions against them.

*The main tool in the exercise of the power of totalitarian regimes is Tyranny. It's in itself the content of totalitarianism, the total rule by a single party and its leader, the subordination of the individual to the nation-state framework.*<sup>66</sup> A large number of exponents of Albanian

<sup>66</sup> Llambró Filo. Sistemet politike bashkëkohore. Botimet (Modern Political Systems) Ideart, Tirana, p. 358

opposition had very close contact with officers of the British Military Mission, as Lt. Colonel Palmer, Captain Smith and Lt. Arnot. Those arrested were almost all exponents of Democratic Union starting with Gjergj Kokoshi, Musine Kokalari, Sami Qeribashi, Ali Kavaja, Qenan Dibra etc. It resulted that most of them had long been under the surveillance of the People Protection agents and against them was exerted a violent and savage inquiry investigation.

The main charges directed against their collaborations with the so-called war criminals or fugitives in the mountains and attempt to overthrow by violence the government in power. In this process were included 75 persons of whom 9 men received maximum sentences and others were sentenced to lengthy prison terms. The process of inquiry with the judicial one later laid the foundations of the system of eliminating non-Communist elites and political opponents would continue for almost the entire period of Communist rule in Albania. The first trial against Albanian opposition was not accidental. *Special for the communist eliminating instrument was not only the large number of the eliminated, but the selection mode of those executed. It ended the trial on the basis of personal guilt and responsibility. The sentence was not based on personal prosecution for war crimes, but on the basis of social background of prisoners and rumors about it.*<sup>67</sup>

On Musine Kokalari was applied the same strategy to denigrate and imprison her. Her attitude in the trial was a slap against the communist regime and a testimony of a moral force that Albanian intelligence showed against totalitarianism. With full consciousness she had abandoned Calypso muse of creativity and through her intellectual courage entered into history by being transformed into Clio history muse.

In the court she will respond with an unmatched intellectual and human courage that “I do not need to be a communist to love my country. I love my country even though I am not communist. I love its progress. You boast that you won the war, and now you are the winner you want to extinguish those who you call political opponents. I think differently from you, but I love my country. You're punishing me for my ideals!” With Kokalari’s arrest and death the hope that Albania’s communist regime would follow a moderate path to consolidating its power died and by his arbitrary actions, was cleaning off the resistance and the different thought.

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<sup>67</sup> Llambro Filo. Sistemet politike bashkëkohore (Modern Political Systems). Botimet Ideart, Tirana, p. 358-359