

THE LEFT.

Political Thought / Biographic Profiles



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Foreword



**Gentiana
Sula**

Political Thought of the Albanian Left

The non-monolithic Albanian left, influenced by different political developments at the national and European level, with its choices and decisions in the taking and holding power at the end and after World War II, has long been a challenging theme to address.

The communist regime, which ruled for half a century, eliminated dissenting thought, retouched the past and altering the names of those who had made history for the country; the regime took great care to present itself as a left unified as an iron fist since its beginnings, widely accepted by the people, and which held power in their name.

Albania's situation in the early 1990s, covered by bunkers, isolated from the rest of the world, impoverished, collectivised, expropriated, with prisons overflowing with political prisoners, with internment and forced labour camps from the north to the south, saw massive emigration of thousands of Albanians seeking a future outside their country, clearly indicating that Albanian Communism was not as stable and loved as its proponents had claimed.

“You see that here truth is intended to be concealed”, Xhavid Qesja told the interrogator, “... There is plenty that you do not find right, yet you do not speak... [One] should speak up, have principles, be courageous”.

Sejfulla Malëshova, Konstandin “Kostë” Çekrezi, Tajar Zavalani, Musine Kokalari, Isuf Keçi, Skënder Luarasi, Xhavid Qesja, Isuf Luzaj, Petro Marko, Zef Mala and other individuals were inspired by ideals of social justice and worked to establish and shape the Albanian left.

The end of World War II and the seizure of power by the Communist Party of Albania was decisive for their fate, and that of many others who were persecuted, jailed, executed and stigmatised for generations to come. The opposition within the left, almost unknown to present-day society, overwhelmed by the

narrative of the past, has inspired this project, which forms a first step in the study of the Albanian left beyond the activity of the Communist Party.

The Authority on Access to Information on the Former State Security Service (AIDSSH) and the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Tirana have joined together for this significant and challenging project, which attempts to shed light on this aspect of our recent past, forsaken by much of Albanian society. Ten prominent individuals – intellectuals, philosophers, journalists, thinkers and translators, writers and analysts – well-versed in the historical dynamics of the country and the international scene, were subject to thorough study by a high-level academic team.

A total of 4475 pages of files were declassified by AIDSSH and were made available to six researchers who applied a multidisciplinary approach to the selected profiles, by interpreting the image of the political thought of the Albanian left within the framework of that of the global left throughout the twentieth century.

By examining the individuals of this first volume and the profiles introduced to the reader, we endeavour to present the ideas and thoughts of those who attempted to establish a European left; an endeavour which continues. Moreover, this publication comes with a dual purpose: it is both an invitation to reflect and an opportunity for younger generations to learn about such individuals with clear, specific and distinct political identities, important parts of Albania's historical legacy.

Gentiana Sula

Head of AIDSSH

Foreword



**Stine
Klapper**

Dear reader,

We present ten important individuals here for your contemplation, and while some are more well-known than others, all of them have one thing in common: they were leftist political thinkers and actors, and were in different ways dissidents during Albania's communist period. Their life stories teach us many important lessons, as valid today as they were in the dark times in which they lived. I would like to emphasise two of these here:

1. Ideologies are fluid. This is true for personal ideological beliefs as well as for broader interpretations. Leftist political thought has developed over centuries and continues to progress. It is highly pluralistic and has countless forms of definitions and practices. Political ideas and their implementation are shaped by their context, responding to historic, social and economic developments. The belief that there is only one single truth, one final definition or one ultimate answer to the complexities of society, the state and the economy is not only wrong, it is also dangerous. This approach, when put into action, has had disastrous consequences, especially in the twentieth century and for Albania. If open discussion and criticism are banned, if the change and realignment of political direction are prevented, if power is monopolised, and if ideology is instrumentalised, we can end up with atrocious governments – regimes that come to embody the opposite of what the pioneers of leftist political thinking dreamt of.

This does not mean that such ideologies and political ideas are inherently dangerous. On the contrary, we live in a world which is sorely lacking in such ideas, visions and political discussions. Too many conversations revolve around the politics of power and technocratic small-mindedness, which has dominated discourses and beliefs. Political ideas and ideologies should be engaged with and discussed, examining their complexity and their usefulness as a compass to guide political decision-making in order to enable progress and more democratic, just and equal societies – but never with the approach of a single or ultimate truth.

A examination at the individuals portrayed in this book can inform today's political debates on norms, values and political orientations. Some of those individuals listed here can be considered pioneers of social-democratic

thinking in Albania. Learning about their lives, ideas and convictions will enrich present-day discussions about social, democratic, emancipatory and internationalist answers to the many challenges our societies face.

2. Structures matter, but individuals carry responsibility – they have a responsibility to act and to react. Albanian history took a terrible path under the Hoxha regime, but not every person followed the government's orders. Many individuals made their fellow citizens and the greater good their personal responsibility. They resisted, oftentimes paying a high price. We should honour them and pay our respects for their courage. At the same time, we also want to show that they did not always follow a single, straight heroic path; it is hardly ever black and white. People struggle, not only with external repression but also with their own identity. Some fought as antifascist partisans, supporting the leftist ideology of a new political elite and believing in the noble goal of equality, only to later find that this same ideology was used to oppress the many and put power in the hands of a few. This realisation can stir the core of one's identity. Not everyone drew the same conclusions, which one can see in the different paths these individuals took. As complex individuals, they often struggled with their convictions and actions, and yet they offer proof of why and how assuming individual responsibility is possible and crucial.

Importantly, they demonstrated the existence of opposition to the Hoxha regime from the left by those who believed in the core values of freedom, justice and solidarity, and who protested against the misuse and perversion of their ideology. The communist regime might have called itself leftist, but it worked against so much that the core of leftist ideology stands for.

We would like to thank the authors for their excellent research and AIDSSH for their cooperation. This work is extremely valuable and we are convinced that this publication will serve as a starting point for many enriching discussions and studies to come.

Stine Klapper

Head of Office FES Tirana

1892

31 March 1892
Konstandin (Kostë) Çekrezi was born in Ziçisht near Korça.



1913

25 November 1913
Petro Marko was born in Dhërmi.

1890

1913
Isuf Luzaj was born in Kanina.

2 March 1890
Sejfulla Malëshova was born in Malëshova.

1917

1917
Isuf Keçi was born in Tirana.

10 February 1917
Musine Kokalari was born in Adana, Turkey.

7 November 1917 (25 October 1917 in the Julian calendar): the communists headed by the Bolsheviks and Lenin seized power in Russia.

1924

June 1924
the June Revolution took place in Albania, with the support of Albanian leftists. The government that ensued was led by Fan Noli.

1919

2-6 March 1919
Third International (Comintern) was established in Moscow.

1899

1899
Sami Frashëri published the political treatise Shqipëria ç'ka qenë, ç'është dhe ç'do të bëhet [English: What it has been, what it is, and what it shall be], a manifesto of the Albanian liberal elite in Bucharest.

19 January 1900
Skënder Luarasi was born in Kolonja.

1900

14 April 1915
Zef Mala was born in Shkodra.

1915

Early 1918
the Russian Bolshevik Party renamed itself the Russian Communist Party.

15 August 1903
Tajar Zavalani was born in Korça.

1903

1922
the organisation Bashkimi [Unity] was established by members such as Sejfulla Malëshova and Tajar Zavalani.

25 maj 1922
Xhavid Qesja was born in Kruja.

1922

1918



1946

10-23 January 1946
37 Albanian Democratic Union members arrested, Musine Kokalari amongst them.

February 1946
during the Fifth Plenum of the Central Committee, Sejfulla Malëshova stripped of his Party functions.

1945

13 June 1945
Skënder Luarasi returned to Albania.

1950

13 May 1950
Petro Marko released from prison.

Në 1949
Zef Mala released from prison.

29 February 1950
Isuf Keçi arrested.

1949

1948
Sejfulla Malëshova expelled from the Communist Party during the Eighth Plenum.

Spring 1947
Petro Marko arrested.

May 1947
Zef Mala arrested.

September 1947
proceedings of the Trial of the members of Popular's Council (Albanian Parliament).

8 May 1945
Second World War came to an end in Europe.

2 December 1945
elections held for the Constitutional Assembly; Skënder Luarasi was elected a member.

1945

5 March 1953
Stalin died.

1953

1951
Sejfulla Malëshova interned in Fier.

1951

1947

7 April 1939, Albania
invaded by fascist Italy.



1939

1939: Konstandin (Kostë) Çekrezi, Sejfulla Malëshova and Ymer Dishnica established the Confederation of Albanian Exiles, an association characterised by relatively left-wing views.

1939: Tajar Zavalani interned in northern Italy for his activity opposing the occupying Italian regime.

1 September 1939: Second World War began with the German invasion of Poland.

1935

January–February 1939
Zef Mala arrested along with other Shkodra communist group members.

1935
Third International (Comintern) put forth the idea of creating "Popular Fronts" that would counter the danger of fascist governments.

1927

28 August 1927
the Albanian Communist Group was established in the Soviet Union, with members including Sejfulla Malëshova, Tajar Zavalani, Lazar Fundo, Ali Kelmendi.

1928

1 September 1928
Zog (Ahmet Zogu) proclaimed King of Albania.

August 1935
Konstandin (Kostë) Çekrezi took part in the Fier Rebellion.

25 March 1925
the organisation KONARE was established in Vienna. That same month, leftists were organised into what became known as the National Liberation Committee.

January 1925
Ahmet Zogu was proclaimed President of the Republic of Albania.

July 1933
National Socialist (Nazi) Party declared the only legitimate party in Germany.

12 December 1936
Skënder Luarasi volunteered with the Republican side in the Spanish Civil War.

1936

1937: Shkodra communist group was established.
Summer 1937: Petro Marko volunteered with the Republican side in the Spanish Civil.

1940
Tajar Zavalani settled in London, working for the BBC for the rest of his life.

May 1940
Petro Marko imprisoned in Italy until 1942.

1940

Summer 1941
Xhavid Qesja admitted to the CPA.

8–14 November 1941
Communist Party of Albania was founded.

Late 1941
Zef Mala arrested and sentenced to internment in Ventotene, Italy.

1941

27–28 December 1941
Konstandin (Kostë) Çekrezi established the organisation "Free Albania".

1933

1944

1937

1925

24–28 May 1944
Congress of Përmet held; Sejfulla Malëshova was selected as member of General Committee of the National Anti-Fascist Liberation Council.

28 November 1944
Isuf Luzaj left Albania.

8 April 1944
Isuf Keçi readmitted to the Communist Party of Albania.

June 1944
Skënder Luarasi released from a concentration camp in France.

October 1944
Sejfulla Malëshova promoted to Central Committee and Political Bureau of the CPA, then appointed Minister of Propaganda and Culture.

October 1944
Petro Marko repatriated to Albania.

June 1943
Sejfulla Malëshova returned to Albania; on 4 July 1943, he participated in a meeting of the General National Liberation Committee.

Summer 1943
Zef Mala returned to Albania.

October 1943
Musine Kokalari, Isuf Luzaj and others founded the Social Democratic Party.

28–29 June 1942
Extraordinary CPA Conference held, condemning the members of Communist Youth Group as a faction within the Communist party.

16 September 1942
Peza Conference held; National Anti-Fascist Liberation Front established.

September 1942
Isuf Keçi expelled from the Communist Party of Albania.

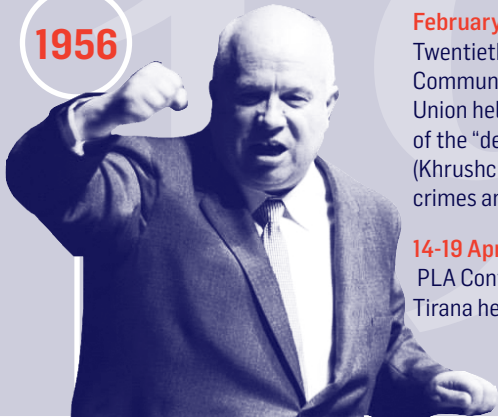
November 1942
Balli Kombëtar [National Front] established as a political organisation.

1944

1943

1942

1956



February 1956

Twentieth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union held, marking the beginning of the "destalinization" process (Khrushchev denounced Stalin's crimes and personality cult).

14-19 April 1956

PLA Conference in Tirana held.

1966

November 1966

Fifth Congress of PLA characterised the war against religion as an essential aspect of class struggle.

19 August 1966

Tajar Zavalani died.

1959

10 January 1959

Konstandin (Kostë) Çekrezi died.

1959

Zef Mala released and moved to Shkodra, later interned in Zvërnec near Vlora.

October 1955

Zef Mala sentenced to 5 years prison in Burrel.

1 November 1958

Xhavid Qesja interned in Zvërnec near Vlora.

8 October 1961

Musine Kokalari released from prison and interned in Rrëshen.

3 December 1961

Soviet-Albanian split – governments break ties.

1955

1958

1961

1978

1978

Zef Mala interned in Labova near Gjirokastra

1990

1994

1967

12 June 1971

Sejfulla Malëshova died in the hospital in Fier.

1984

8 December 1990

Student Movement began in Tirana.

1994
Xhavid Qesja died.

1967

12 September 1967

Xhavid Qesja sentenced to 10 years in prison.

1979

31 December 1979

Zef Mala died in internment in Labova.

1984

Isuf Keçi died.

1991

31 mars 1991

Albania held its first multi-party elections since the 1924.

1983

14 August 1983

Musine Kokalari died.

27 April 1982

Skënder Luarasi died.

1982

25 November 2000

Isuf Luzaj died.

2000



Introduction

The Left that Lost

Were the communists who seized power in Albania the only alternative, or were there any other nuances of the left, lost to the communist monochrome of Hoxha's regime for more than four decades? Above all, how distinct were the contours of the left and how well-known were its principles? Ten individuals of the Albanian left are portrayed in this research work by six historians, with the aim of redeveloping to a somewhat unknown (or rather misinterpreted) framework of political thought of the 1930s and 1940s and beyond, as much as it could be documented. Here we discuss Albania's lost opportunity to have another left, in opposition to the extreme version that came to power instead. This booklet thus comes as a *sapere aude* (dare to know) on lost opportunities. The human stories of Sejfulla Malëshova, Konstandin Çekrezi, Tajar Zavalani, Musine Kokalari, Skënder Luarasi, Xhavid Qesja, Isuf Luzaj, Petro Marko, Isuf Keçi and Zef Mala come to different endings, as wide as their as different political approaches, stemming from the same dream: an Albania better than the monarchy. They saw their dream crumble to pieces, albeit in different forms. Some were racked with guilt, some suffered in the prisons and in internment, and others found freedom elsewhere, upon learning that the revolution was devouring the heads of its offspring.

A forerunner study by Ilir Kalemaj serves as a foreword to the biographic profiles, wherein he touches upon the colours that faded into grey under the communist system. He notes that in an effort to contribute to the study of the political thought of the Albanian left, he selected 10 profiles who represent varying leftist currents. The selection criteria were based on their public positions, which demonstrated their political identity, and participation or membership in leftist groups, in order to better understand the evolution and/or the metamorphosis of leftist political thought in Albania. The 10 individuals carried out political activity over three historical periods: the interwar period, during the Second World War and during "the dictatorship of proletariat". We have excluded that those of the left which helped in installing the so-called dictatorship of the proletariat and is responsible for the oppression of Albanians (even when they were sentenced by that same regime that they helped install).

Ideological Features

Since its genesis, as Kalemaj notes, the left in general has possessed certain ideological frameworks which have persisted since at least the French Revolution and the Paris Commune. One of them is social justice, which may be achieved through the redistribution of resources and income. With the ideological requirement of social justice, the left considers itself progressive and bears internationalist features, which aim at eliminating social and economic barriers; its modern version aims at closing the gap between the rich and poor. There has been great disagreement about the mechanisms to reach that aim, depending on which left we are referring to. The Marxist left calls for the elimination of social differences through the mechanism of “class struggle”, the elimination of the “privileged class”, thus ultimately reaching the final stage, which Karl Marx called “post-revolutionary political state”. Kalemaj points out that the social-democratic left aims to achieve this through the mechanism of expanding the middle class, progressive taxation and fiscal policies that aim at consolidating the finances of the most vulnerable group of society, such as marginalised groups, workers, minorities, and others.

Apparently, Albanians during '20-'30 of XX century embraced many of the principles of the left, either Marxist or social democrat. The (forerunner) study of Kalemaj and other historians shows that the history of the Albanian left goes even more back to the past, to the ideas of Sami Frashëri. As such, it undoubtedly precedes the Communist left, even though the 47 years under a Stalinist, totalitarian regime, the Communist Party of Albania (CPA) tried to instil the idea that the Albanian left began with the founding of the CPA.

Although research has traced the beginnings of the Albanian left to the late nineteenth century, it is in the early 1920s that the fundamental principles of the left such as social equality, national wealth redistribution, and particularly land ownership reorganisation became evident in the press and the debates of intellectual circles. By considering the June Revolution of 1924 led by Fan S. Noli as a representative of the liberal left, with a governing program characterised by doses of utopia and radicalism, Kalemaj, nonetheless easily distinguishes the elite's desperate need to find a political alternative to sever the country from its Ottoman legacy.

Six Colors of the Left in Albania

As Kalemaj observes, the left in Albania like in the rest of the world has been pluralistic and not monolithic. From the beginning, at least six different currents can be differentiated.

The romantic left: comprised individuals adhering to leftist ideology who exercised their activity up until the onset of World War I. Kristo Frashëri characterised them as “those who did not know the essence neither of the communist doctrine nor of the social-democratic platform, but only the human aspect, which was propagandised by European socialist militants”. Its genesis is found in Sami Frashëri who, with today’s optics, is considered a social democrat or non-Marxist socialist. It also includes names such as Stavro Vinjau and Dhimitër Fallo, the founder of the first communist cell in Korça, in April 1928.

Utopic (communist) left: was represented by individuals like Qemal Stafa, Sejfulla Malëshova, Zef Mala, Halim Xhelo, Ali Kelmendi and others, who participated in the war against the Italians and Germans. However, some of them did not live to see the instalment of the Hoxha regime, which did not prevent them from taking strict Marxist-Leninist approaches at times, such as in the cases of Xhelo and Kelmendi.

Trotskyist left: its followers, as in the Soviet Union, were often only labelled as such in order to be attacked as political opponents, although they were rarely familiar with Trotsky’s ideas and stance. L Lazar (Zai) Fundo, an early Comintern and Balkan Communist Federation member, was labelled a Trotskyist.

Socialist left: with a sound ideological distance from Leninism, and as a superposition of traditional Marxism, it included Gjergj Kokoshi, the first Minister of Education and Suad Asllani, both sentenced by political trial in 1946. By defending the thesis of a socialist left and opposing the installation of the totalitarian regime, their names are the most befitting in this category of historical left.

Social-democratic left: which included Musine Kokalari, Isuf Luzaj, Skënder Muço, was represented by prominent ideologues who shared the basic ideas of the progressive left, such as social justice, redistribution of income, fighting social inequalities, while strongly upholding political liberalisation, the need for a pluralist political system and a private property-based economy.

Nationalist left: whereby the likes of Tajar Zavalani, Kostë Çekrezi, Fan Noli, Skënder Luarasi, can be noted, who unified the ideas of a leftist economic programme with the national ideas of an Albania united with Kosovo and other lands claimed by Albania, as evident by their written work.

Kalemaj points out that this is a general typology for research purposes as there were many individuals who could easily fall into several categories, such as activists of Balli Kombëtar [the National Front] like Hysni Lepenica, Skënder Muço, Isuf Luzaj.

The Wicked Alternative

Marxism as a philosophical doctrine, leftist political current and socialist working-class movement began in 1864–76, under the leadership of Karl Marx, while Albania was still part of the Ottoman Empire. In 1919, when the Third International, otherwise known as the Communist International (Comintern), focused on the international aspect of the spread of communism, Albania had just declared its independence and was disputing the setting of its borders at the League of Nations. According to Kalemaj, it was the Albanian diaspora organisations – like KONARE of Fan Noli and Kostandin Boshnjaku in Vienna, and youth studying in the Soviet Union, such as Llazar Fundo, Tajar Zavalani, Halim Xhelo and others, who embraced leftist ideas in the 1930s Albania. Although finding the cells in Korça, Elbasan, Tirana and Shkodra to be relatively undeveloped, Kalemaj notes that they planted the first seeds of the Albanian communist movement. Ali Kelmendi, Koço Tashko and Miha Lako, among others, also played a prominent role in agitation and propaganda as well as in shaping the first communist cells in Korça.

Partly in spite of Ahmet Zogolli (later to become King Zog, Albanian: *Mbreti Zog*), and partly as a natural need for development, the early leftists were as much social democrats as pragmatists, anarchists and idealists, oftentimes blurring those lines. The “chaos” was “reorganised” during WWII, by establishing the CPA (November 1941) which, under Yugoslav direction, adopted the Stalinist model. This used the war to legitimise their power after liberation, whilst at the same time signalling the beginning of an internal war that would eliminate all factions that did not follow the “party” line, which led to the violent, dictatorial regime. During the interwar period, the Bolshevik system was fully established in the Soviet Union, and began its global spread that would also serve as a geopolitical mechanism to extend its sphere of influence. With the CPA established under strong Yugoslav influence, factions – like faraway satellites of the home base in Moscow – would also become evident; though in Albania they would appear with ideological nuances and reflect the need to condemn enemies. Trotskyism was one of the alternative currents positioned against Stalinism, referring to Trotsky who as a critic of Lenin had anticipated the superposition of the “dictatorship of the proletariat” over the proletariat, of the party’s Central Committee over the party itself and eventually of one single man over the Central Committee. We see this delineated quite early in the Albanian left.

One of the most active groups prior to the establishment of CPA was the (communist) Youth Group, established in 1940, headed by Anastas Lula and Sadik Premtja. To CPA leaders, these groups (Youth [Të Rinjtë], the Fire [Zjarri], among others), who were also distrusted by the Yugoslav emissaries at the CPA, were labelled Trotskyists and were purged. Certain opponents who had been communists, including Anastas Lula, Llazar Fundo, and Mustafa Gjinishi were expelled from the party or/and murdered during the war. The names of others who belonged to pre-party communist factions were noted down for later. Non-Stalinist communists treated in this research, such as Sejfulla Malëshova, Isuf Keçi, Petro Marko, would suffer bitter fates after “liberation” of the country, because being a communist and adhering to the party line were not necessarily the same thing. First and most seriously, the Albanian social-democratic left disappeared, beginning with the former Minister of Education, Gjergj Kokoshi, who had been in the forefront of the armed war, to continue and later with voices of thought and literature, such as Musine Kokalari, Suad Asllani, Myzafer and Arshi Pipa. The trial of the sixteen parliament’s members officially and publicly killed off dissenting thought within the left, foreboding what would follow.

The class struggle did not bring about a classless society, as initially preached by Marx and Engels; it rather created a new “class”, the party state, the functionaries of which enjoyed the only privileges in society and which, according to Milovan Đilas and the victims themselves, was a far less meritocratic class than the bourgeoisie. The new communist class that had consolidated its power following the WWII had achieved societal control, both political and economic power, thanks to their careerism

rather than their merits or knowledge. Among all those nuances, social democracy could have been one of the alternatives to Marxist left. Taking after the Danish model, established in 1876, which in 2020 is found in currents of the UK Labour Party and in the movement of Bernie Sanders in the United States, this current embraces social justice and the concept of wealth redistribution through progressive taxation, both historic and current principles that were fully reflected by the Albanian social democrats of the 1930s and by the short-lived Social Democratic Party of Musine Kokalari, Isuf Luzaj and others.

Drowned Thoughts

Once the totalitarian system took power, the variety of “permitted” thinking was greatly diminished. What was the non-Stalinist left under the circumstances of such a regime? Kalemaj argues that it is difficult to talk about the political thought of the left under the circumstances of a Stalinist totalitarian regime which mercilessly fought against every individual or faction that dared to exhibit non-Stalinist ideas, on the right or left. Notable left names, who had championed a communist state, were silenced forever, sometimes as collaborationists (Kolë Tromara), other times with the group of representatives who opposed the government (Shefqet Beja, Kolë Kuqali, Sheh Ibrahim Karbunara, Irfan Majuni, Enver Sazani, Riza Dani, Selaudin Toto or Kostandin Boshnjaku), as well as for their great public influence (Musine Kokalari, Gjergj Kokoshi).

The suppression of the non-Stalinist left took place continuously and engulfed numerous activists and thinkers of the communist left, attesting to the incessant consolidation of Hoxha’s power.

Following the post-war purge, the Tirana Party Conference of April 1956 would serve as an example to all of those who would dare raise their voice against government officials. Under the hope sparked by the de-Stalinisation process, Tirana’s communists hoped to make their leadership more humane. The 300 questions addressed to the Conference Presidium, and which expressed rightful concerns about the country’s harsh condition, the Bloc’s privileges and lack of democracy within the party, served only to identify the dissenting voices. According to Kalemaj, in only a few hours, the prosecutors of the Tirana Conference turned into defendants and the hope for change, characterised even with rebellious nuances, turned into the greatest fear from the power of suppressive people. The “witch hunt” that ensued forced 243 party organisations and 2000 communists to condemn the “hostile” activity of the conference’s critics and their supporters. Over the following weeks, months and even years, the most audacious ones were hanged. The Tirana conference would hang over their heads as the sword of Damocles, while de-Stalinisation would never take place.

In 1962, the youth would make one last effort, headed by the journalists Fadil Kokomani and Vangjel Lezho, followed by soldiers such as Trifon Xhagjika and Thoma Rafaeli. What started as cultural demands transformed into a political action, calling for the easing of the dictatorial regime and for freedom for political prisoners. All were arrested and Xhagjika and Rafaeli were executed. Later, in 1979, two journalists were also executed by gunfire, following a letter addressed to the Central Committee demanding Enver Hoxha’s removal from office. Additionally, this study will reveal the leftist thought of the communist Xhavid Qesja, monitored and “*preserved*” by State Security (Albanian: *Sigurimi*), a lone voice of dissent who went from one prison to another. The left had indeed not emerged with Enver Hoxha, but, as this study will demonstrate, its history was perceived, interpreted and recounted according to his approach. Among left currents, the harshest and deadliest alternative prevailed: *In absentia lucis, Tenebrae vincunt* (In the absence of light, darkness prevails).

Sejfulla
Malëshova

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Between dreams and disillusionment

The young man who embraced communism quite early, who quickly climbed the ladder of power and fell with the same speed, the popular poet, would end his life alone in a poor quarter of Fier. Lalaj poses the question of whether Malëshova was an unwavering communist or a moderate leftist, perhaps a social democrat, as argued elsewhere; and lastly, was he a victim of the power struggle or a scapegoat of his own ideas?

The portrait of the afflicted man whose gaze drifts aimlessly and then meets the eye, does not say much of the person behind it. Neither does the high forehead nor the thin lips and slender face. Only when we uncover his story does his undecipherable gaze explain nearly everything. The young man who embraced communism quite early, who quickly climbed the ladder of power and fell with the same speed, the popular poet, the anonymous translator who rendered into Albanian the works of Goethe, Pushkin, Nekrasov, Gorky and Marx, would end his life alone in a poor quarter of Fier. Only his sister bid him farewell to the afterlife, along with the gravedigger and two State Security agents, who for the past twenty years had become his shadows.

Sejfulla Malëshova is widely accepted by Albanian scholars as one of the most educated and refined, but also one of the most debated individuals of the Second World War and post-war. The historian Ana Lalaj, upon whose work this article relies, carefully draws several fine lines between these extremes, which she finds as defining of his character. At the beginning of her study, she poses the question of whether Malëshova was an unwavering communist or a moderate leftist, perhaps a social democrat, as argued elsewhere; and lastly, was he a victim of the power struggle or a scapegoat of his own ideas?

Born in March 1900 in Malëshova, his customs official father, Tasim Hoxha would bring him to Vlora, where it is believed that he took

his first Turkish lessons. Later on, he attended Saint Adrian College in Calabria and then moved to Rome to study medicine. This is probably the time when he changed his last name from Hoxha to Malëshova. When he was 19 years old, in 1919, new nation states were being created across Europe, whilst Bolshevik communism was taking hold in Russia. In 1919, when the masses demanded the end of the bourgeoisie, communism also arrived in Albania, a country without any established leftist parties. However, Lenin's denouncement of the secret Treaty of London, which sought to shrink Albania's territory, aroused sympathy in the country.

There is little information on Sejfulla Malëshova in these years, except for the publication of his first poems under the pen name Lame Kodra. A 1944 report states that in 1922, his scholarship in Rome was discontinued because he was considered a "revolutionary" and "subversive element". In that same year we trace him to Tirana as editor of "Xhoka" newspaper. In 1924, regarded as a key year for both sides of the left, Malëshova was in Albania, where he was among those detained for the assassination attempt on Ahmet Zogu. The killing of Avni Rustemi, followed by the June Revolution, the departure of Ahmet Zogu, the Noli government and its subsequent collapse, which led to the return of Zogu and departure of Noli, also marked the fleeing the country of Sejfulla Malëshova, who had been Secretary General of the government of just a few months.

In 1925, exiles on the political left and right, including Fan Noli, Llazar Fundo and Mustafa Kruja established the organisation KONARE (National Revolutionary Committee); the left wing of this organisation established the National Liberation Committee, whilst the right wing split off and established the National Union, signalling their disagreement with the leftist politics of KONARE, and especially with funding by Moscow. Ana Lalaj argues that by the mid-1920s, the left, especially the communist left, could not have advanced through legal means in Albania, and hence it was set up in exile, Sejfulla Malëshova, among others, distinguished himself.

A separate Albanian communist organisation was established for the first time on 28 August 1927, under the name Albanian Communist Group in the Soviet Union. Malëshova was one of the 12 students who through Comintern's support was sent to study in the Soviet Union.

From his private conversations, as revealed by the records processed by State Security in 1951, one finds the following statement: "In 1927, I was admitted as a candidate for the Bolshevik Party. In the 1930s, I became a member. In 1930-31, I disagreed with my Albanian comrades on the matter of tactical work in Albania and the Comintern entrusted the job to Zai [Llazar] Fundo ... I continued to write articles for "Liria Kombëtare" [National Freedom] and continued my job as a philosophy professor in Moscow".

He apparently left Moscow in 1939, although the Albanian Encyclopaedic Dictionary states that he "was expelled for being a Bukharinist". From early on, communists were divided into factions, whose differences deepened every day, as also reflected in the press of the time. During these debates, which mimicked those in Moscow, Malëshova maintained a hard Bolshevik line. However, historian Lalaj states that the later actions of Malëshova raise doubts as to whether his early Bolshevism was his own conviction or necessary ideological conformity of a Party member amid violent conditions.

At the start of World War II, Malëshova found himself in France, and had severed nearly all ties with Albania. This is clearly evident from the subsequent letters addressed to Fan Noli in the United States, whereby he asked him to help him with finding a job in the USA. However, sources suggest a proposal extended by King Zog to Malëshova to work with Albanians in the USA in support of the war, in the interest of Zog's court. In a letter dated October 1944, Miladin Popovi the envoy of Yugoslav Communist Party in Albania during WWII, asserted about him, "This person, who lives in Paris, has done nothing for revolutionary work in Albania thus far".



Was Sejfulla Malëshova an unwavering communist or a moderate leftist, perhaps a social democrat, as argued elsewhere?

Two years later he returned to Albania. According to his file, he apparently affirmed that he entered the country on a regular passport, issued by the Albanian Legation in Paris bearing the name Sejfulla Tahsin. The files show that in Modena he had met Hulusi Spahiu, a soldier and Republican volunteer of the Spanish Civil War, who also established contacts between Malëshova and the Communist Party. On 4 July 1943, Malëshova was present at the meeting of Labinot, where the General Staff of the National Liberation Army was established, and of which he became a member. Malëshova became part of the CPA Central Committee and had important positions at the Congress of Përmet and in the Berat government towards the end of the war. During the war he held important political functions, but not military ones, despite having studied at a military–political academy. It remains unknown whether he partook in fighting, whether as a soldier or in a strategic role.

The historian Ana Lalaj points out that Enver Hoxha needed someone who could explain the war to his soldiers and boost their morale. He has been described as a person who understood the need for popular support as well as for alliances. A knowledgeable, articulate speaker and writer, Malëshova was assigned by Hoxha to take part in numerous war forums, where he drafted resolutions, prepared decisions, issued bulletins and wrote political tracts and even partisan theatre plays.

However, Hoxha appeared dissatisfied with his work, as evident in several letters addressed to Ymer Dishnica stating that “he is doing nothing ... he could be an intelligent communist, he could have worked in Moscow, he could have worked at the Comintern, as Sejfulla Malëshova claims, but the fact remains that he is doing nothing”. Lalaj argues that Hoxha’s discontent was more of a tactic to exploit Malëshova’s capacities and specially to keep him under control. Hoxha was dissatisfied with Malëshova not because he was doing nothing; on the contrary, he “... has intensified criticisms... He criticises quite harshly all articles written in Zëri i Popullit (Voice of the People) and Bashkimi (Unity) against Balli ... He must [be] rid of these flaws ...”. Clearly, Hoxha was not worried because of

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For the first time, I learned here how Mustafa Gjinishi was murdered, and I do not understand why”, he said “... Either he was a traitor of the Party and the people and should have been openly sentenced, or he made mistakes and you do not sentence people because they make mistakes ...

Sejfulla Malëshova

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Malëshova's "productivity", but because he did not agree with Hoxha's new strategy regarding Balli, whose "annihilation" he had already ordered.

Despite some disagreement, by the end of the war, Malëshova apparently still had Hoxha's support, and similarly, enjoyed the respect of the fighters. During the Congress of Përmet proceedings in May 1944, his speech and poetry were met with ovations, and he was chosen as a member of the General Committee of the Anti-Fascist National Liberation Council; in November, he became a CC member, the Minister of Propaganda and Popular Culture in the Provisional Democratic Government and in that same month, he was also appointed Secretary of the National Liberation Front, an organisation founded in October 1944.

In November 1944, when Berat became for a short period of time the headquarters of the Provisional Democratic Government, the Second Plenum of the CPA Central Committee was held, which carried out a political analysis of the war period. This meeting was critical for the future of Hoxha as the leader of CPA, therefore it was kept secret for more than 50 years, until 1996, when the State Archive (Arkivi i Shtetit) disclosed the file. Speeches were given by Malëshova, Xoxe, Hoxha and several members of the Plenum. Malëshova's speech on the political situation of the country was not found in the documentary records. However, as recorded in the meeting's protocol, he spoke several times and he set the tone of the analysis. War sectarianism characterised nearly all debates, and this became the crucial moment in Malëshova's political consciousness. He was neither the most critical of sectarian practices pursued by the leadership of CPA (i.e. the war against political opponents) during the war nor was he critical of Enver Hoxha - the man responsible for encouraging these practices. However, this meeting was the first challenge to his communist formation as an ideology, philosophy and politics. This was to be a dramatic turn in Sejfulla Malëshova's life: Berat became a reference for the troubles that lay ahead.

When discussing war sectarianism, Hoxha himself apparently reflected when stating that as regards Balli, "from the first opportunism we leaped to exaggerated sectarianism". Malëshova took this even further, calling the communists' armed confrontation with Balli a provocation. Even more shocking was Malëshova's statement as he observed how his party was degenerating into a criminal gang. *"For the first time, I learned here how Mustafa Gjinishi was murdered, and I do not understand why", he said "... Either he was a traitor of the Party and the people and should have been openly sentenced, or he made mistakes and you do not sentence people because they make mistakes ... Terrorism shows to the people, the army, and the party, firstly, the weakness of our political line; secondly, it shows distrust in people, and thirdly, it shows that we are not connected with the masses... It indicates the theoretical and political level our Party stands... I was shocked to hear them say the more brutal and terrorist a man is, the more communist he is; I mean we value our comrades based on their brutality and criminality. This is an incorrect criterion. Our Party is thus showing the symptoms of degenerating from a political party to a criminal gang"*.

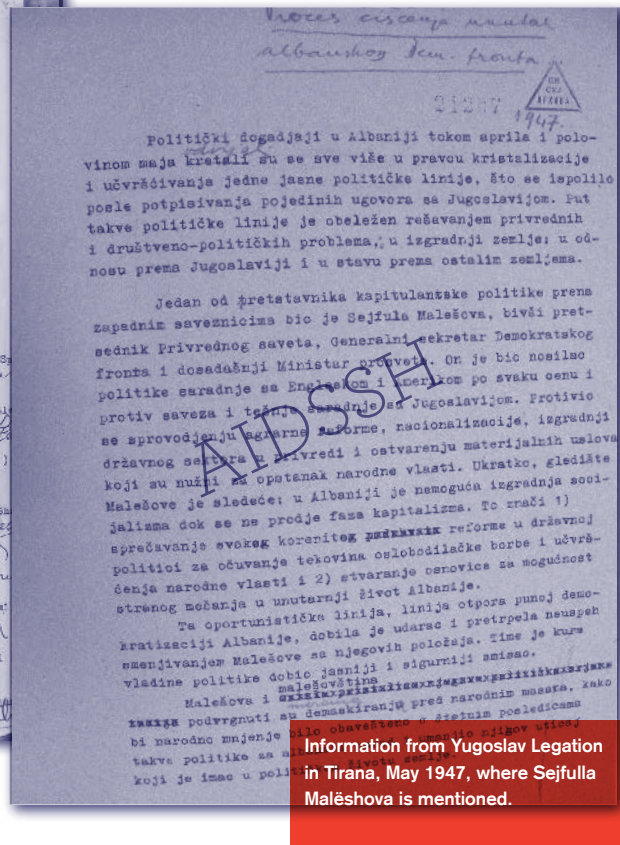
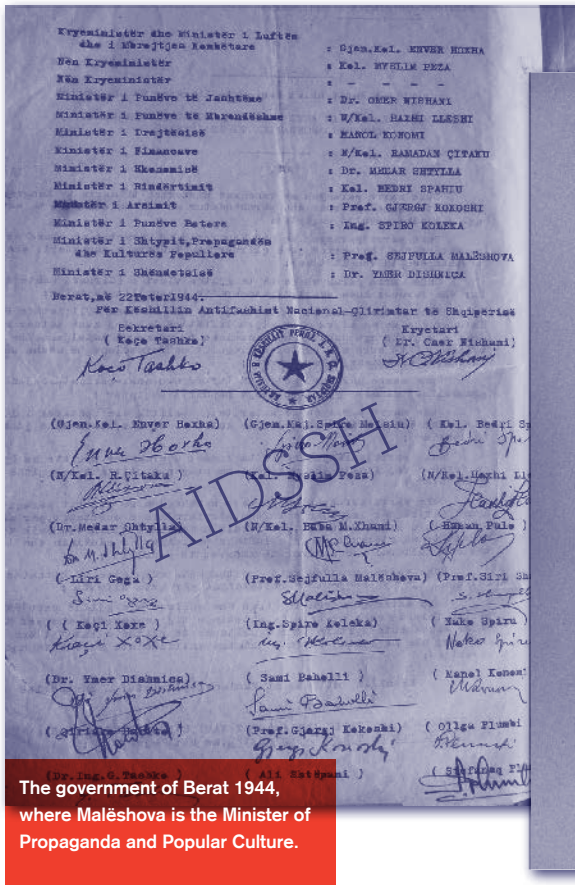
Hoxha calmly received the criticism of the Berat Plenum, although as he later affirmed, Berat personally hurt him. There is no evidence that he defied any of the critics, at least not for a while, because of Berat. Not even Malëshova, albeit he was the most bitter over this criticism. On the contrary, the facts indicate that he greatly relied on Malëshova, granting him immense power, from culture to the economy. Furthermore, in the first year after the war, he was assigned to undertake major reforms, as well as being put in charge of the elections of the Constitutional Assembly.

This political period, roughly 13 months, was the most intensive period for Malëshova as a politician and statesman and began on 26 October 1944, when the National Liberation Front Organisation was established in Berat. At that time, Malëshova published the organisation platform, where everyone is invited, including the communists' opponents, but excluding those who were labeled as "war criminals" therefore had lost their civil and political rights. The Congress of National Liberation Front was convened the following August whereby Malëshova explained and advocated the same platform.



Enver Hoxha and Sejfulla Malëshova, from the left to the right, the fourth and the fifth.

As prof. Lalaj points out, the policy of broadening the Front can be seen as intelligent tactic right before the general elections. The Front Organisation was an electoral umbrella in which numerous individuals with different political opinions and ideologies could partake. In such conditions, where the communists had eradicated the opposition, those individuals could attempt to oppose the regime within Front. On the election of 2 December 1945, the Democratic Front (that would be Communist Party) received 93 percent of the votes. There were some who, despite not necessarily sympathising the communists, benefitted from the Front's open policy, becoming part of the Assembly with communist support. Hoxha took to organising an opposition "from within". Four days after the election, Hoxha convened the Political Bureau (that was deciding the politics of the party), where he sounded an alarm over "opportunism" within the party. He pointed at Sejfulla Malëshova, the architect of Front enlargement platform, as the responsible for such opportunism; he was targeted as well for his economic and fiscal policies, as well as relations with the West. On 11 December, six members signed a document condemning Malëshova's opportunism, and sent the case for further analysis to the CC Plenum, with only Malëshova himself, who did not accept the criticism, opposing. This marked Malëshova's political end. Subsequent acts against were mere sanctions of a predetermined fate. This event furthermore affirmed the conceptual and practical differences between him and the rest of the communist leadership, and he was clearly targeting in all ensuing gatherings. Certainly, Malëshova's platform had not been delivered in secrecy from the Party, but their purpose was different. Whilst Hoxha considered Front enlargement as a pragmatic decision of the moment to benefit his own power, Malëshova manifested it as a conviction. Therefore, he defended his points of view as much as possible, without ever undertaking "self-criticism". For these differing approaches, the researcher Ana Lalaj draws the conclusion that he idealistically wanted to imbue a new spirit of social relations in



the country, both attempting to distance it from communist dogma and to reflect influence of the West, where Malëshova had spent significant time. Sejfulla Malëshova maintained that the path to progress was for his country to rely both on the Soviet Union and the West, despite this being an uncertain path. What is certain though, is that this idealist opinion cost Malëshova dearly. Similarly to the idea of coexistence, that of free competition between state and private property, as a mechanism of economic development, could not have been long-lived. This idea, in opposition to the Hoxhaist programme, which aimed at eradicating private property, came at a price to the philosophy professor, Minister of Propaganda and Popular Culture, and chair of the Economy Committee.

There is an abundance of primary sources documenting Sejfulla Malëshova's views on political, economic and social practices, as well as efforts towards democratic spaces under dictatorial conditions. It is hard to tell whether these ideas would have proven effective if a somewhat milder regime in Albania came to pass. Malëshova himself must have had difficult experiences in the late 1920s at a time of widespread Bolshevik thinking in European communism, under the motto "Revolution from above". Malëshova, as a member of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, had close experience with the terrible purges of the mid-1930s in Russia, which must have also left an impact on his thinking. Perhaps the magnitude of that horror led him to try and avoid something similar happening in his country. Nonetheless, these political positions and ideas of economic reform constituted the major differences of Sejfulla Malëshova's from the majority of the party of Enver Hoxha. The historian Lalaj argues that it is along these lines that Malëshova should be judged, and the core of *malëshovism* should be understood "as an attempt at a humane life under an inhumane regime".

Konstandin Çekrezi



The liberal left democrat Harvard politician, who opposed two regimes

He who had asked for cooperation from Albanian exiles with those of the resistance during the war and who had firmly recognised the government established during the war (that of the Congress of Përmet), had now moved into opposition to the current government. The violence employed in establishing the new regime seems to explain Çekrezi's turn.

“It was the second Saturday, 12 June 1910, when the young boy, Kostë [short for Kostandin] Çekrezi, with the quiff brushed upwards his forehead, was leaving through the cobbled alleys of Korça, as he turned along the path to Mborje, following his father, a short and quiet man. On one side of the mule, they carried a wooden trunk filled with books and notebooks”. Such is the description of one of the most renowned Albanians of the 1930-40s by Andon Andoni, author of the monograph “Kostë Çekrezi, i treti i munguari” [Kostë Çekrezi, the third of the missing]. From this excerpt, depicting him at 18 years old, Kostandin, the historian, journalist, publicist and politician kept two elements in his life until the end: thoughts for his homeland and books. From extant images, aside the pince-nez glasses, one can discern a bright look, reflecting the optimistic vision he harboured for a free Albania.

Born in 1892 in Ziçisht, his first lessons were in Albanian and Greek, later attending the Greek high school of Korça. The Great War interrupted his university studies in Thessaloniki, but in 1918 he graduated from Harvard University, where he studied economics and public administration.

Between borders, at just 22 years old he has dealt with sensitive legal, political and national issues that would show him how to be an individual of changing times, such as in a legal case versus a mufti when he worked in Court of Vlora. Life always brought about major challenges and events for Kostandin. He supported the post-independence government and the secular state, and he interpreted for the International Control Commission for Prince Wilhelm of Wied, who at one point ruled

Albania. At 23, he emigrated to the United States and in a few years he had become the editor-in-chief of three important publications, in 1915, “Dielli” (the newspaper of the Vatra Federation), in 1916 “Illyria” and in 1919 “Adriatic Review”.

At the same time, he documented the Albanian community in the USA and sought to transform Vatra into a political association, encountering strong opposition from Fan Noli, with whom would come to disagree on many issues.

In 1919, he published the book *Albania Past and Present*, where he not only rebutted the claims of neighbouring countries to Albania, but as noted in the foreword by the prominent American professor Charles D. Hazen, “[the book] is a first by an Albanian about Albania in the English language” and it provided “an unfolding of Albania’s history, a presentation of Albanians’ demands”.

Hamit Kaba, upon whose work this article relies, is fascinated by the book as it clearly exposes Çekrezi’s ideas: the solution of the redistribution of the property issue as an inevitable obligation, the faith that Albania could become a modern state, and the belief that “nowhere in the Balkans is the woman respected and honoured such [as here]”. However, Çekrezi was aware that the country and the government could not be modernised overnight, as he clearly put it when addressing the critics of Ismail Qemali’s government. Even though Kaba finds some topics idealised, he discerns Çekrezi’s liberal and social democrat ideas in his treatment of minority issues in Albania. During the next three years, Çekrezi alternated between diplomacy and lecturing. As commissioner of Albania in Washington, he made incredible efforts for the recognition of the Albanian government by the USA, resigning in 1922 when he did not succeed. However, his professional and intellectual skills would shine during lectures delivered at the Washington University and New York University.

Çekrezi returned to Albania in 1925 at the time Ahmet Zogu had assumed power as President of Albanian Republic, and through his help, Kostandin secured a printing press. He published the “Telegraf” newspaper and for three years he supported the “ordination” of Zogu as the King of the Albanians (King Zog). But in 1928, a conflict between them came about which would become permanent. The reasons were many: King Zog’s close relationship with the King of Italy, his authoritarian rule, the incompetence of his “courtiers”, and Çekrezi’s probable ambition to become president himself. Hamit Kaba, aside from noting Çekrezi’s ambitions, finds it difficult to reconcile his rebellious nature and education based on American democratic ideas, with the Orient-inspired ruling style of King Zog.

On 14 September 1928, Çekrezi was arrested and sentenced to one year in prison, but he was released a few weeks after. After the shutdown of “Telegraf” he published “Ora” magazine, placing his cousin Vasil Xhaçka in charge. He was back in court in 1931 as one of the organisers of another uprising against the king, which he had openly supported in his magazine, and had even recruited Albanians in the USA. Sentenced to three years, he served two and a half. Upon his release, in 1935, he became involved with the Fier Revolt, another complot against the monarch. The revolt had brought together people of republican, nationalist and even communist beliefs. Çekrezi dissatisfaction with the regime included that it “relied on coercion”, and had brought about four uprisings in ten years. Sentenced to death, he was forced to flee, first to Italy and then France, where in 1939, together with Sejfulla Malëshova, Ymer Dishnica and others, he established the Confederation of Albanian Exiles, an association of relatively leftist expatriates, headed by him.

It was around this time that he was designated a communist, although Kaba does not find any evidence to support this. Çekrezi himself blamed King Zog of this baseless accusation, whilst Dalip Greca, noting that Çekrezi leaned left, explained that he was “an American-type left liberal”. His anti-communism is evident in “Telegraf” writings and debates with prominent Albanian communists of the time. It



At 23, Çekrezi emigrated to the United States and in a few years he had become the editor-in-chief of three important publications, in 1915, “Dielli” (the newspaper of the Vatra Federation), in 1916 “Illyria” and in 1919 “Adriatic Review”.

suffices to note that Çekrezi considered Fan Noli’s participation in Moscow’s 10-year celebrations of the October Revolution a “political suicide”.

More obviously, his differencing political views from communists are evident in his book *The third plan for the partitioning of Albania*. Here, the historian and politician recounts his challenges coexisting with Albanian communists in the internment camp of the Vichy government in France (where he had been sent after the Spanish Civil War). He mentioned a debate with Mehmet Shehu in barrack no. 38, where the future prime minister of communist Albania declared that “in order to implant communism in every country, even and especially in Albania, it will be necessary to eliminate all opposing elements...”. When Çekrezi asked “what if the majority of the people opposes?”, Mehmet Shehu replied “then, the majority should be eliminated”.

He managed to leave Vichy France with the aid of Americans, reaching New York on 27 October 1941. Two months later, Çekrezi gathered a congress of Albanian-Americans, establishing the Free Albania organisation, leading it with his rebellious, ambitious, nationalist and democratic character. His five-point political programme aimed at bringing together Albanian exiles, guaranteeing the rights of the Albanian nation, cooperating with the USA and UK, establishing connections with resistance groups in Albania, and drafting plans for the reconstruction of the post-war Albanian state. According to him, this required the formation of a government that would emerge from the people, “except for all those who want to become kings, princes, dictators and oppressors of the people”.

Çekrezi’s Free Albania presented itself as a government in exile, working to defend Albania’s rights until the Albanian people could freely elect its government, and then it aimed at becoming a “political party with a liberal, democratic and popular programme”.

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Even though he was clearly aware of Balli's shortcomings, he did not approve of the establishment of the communist regime and the relations that the Albanian government developed with the USA and the West. He resigned from Free Albania in May 1945, and would be critical of it, Vatra, Noli and anyone else that supported the Tirana government until his death.

Konstandin Çekrezi

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Çekrezi's initiative was not welcomed by the exiled king Zog, Vatra of Faik Konica or Fan Noli, and the different factions engaged in polemics that went as far as personal insults. Vatra supported a government in exile headed by Zog, which Çekrezi opposed. Hamit Kaba, upon whose work this article relies, finds Çekrezi's position selfish, however, he gives him credit for being the first exiled Albanian leader to seek cooperation with the resistance in Albania, and for his criticism against Zog's claim to be the absolute and legitimate representative of Albanians.

Çekrezi made every possible effort towards the Allies' recognition of the Albanian government in exile during the war, the restoration of an independent Albanian state after the war, defending the country from Greek territorial claims, lobbying the US Department of State. However, as he could not keep the promise he had made to Albanian exiles that the Allies would admit Albania to the United Nations, in 1943 he tactically withdrew. He drew up an agreement between Free Albania and Vatra to set up a National Committee with the functions of a government in exile that would give Zog a mandate only for the war period, whereas the post-war regime would be decided by the people, to which Noli also agreed.

Kaba argues that Noli was more moderate and flexible than Çekrezi, who harboured ambitions to be the head of the Albanian government in exile. Whilst Noli, Zog and Çekrezi's factions discussed the deal, in Albania the leaders of National Liberation Movement held the Congress of Përmet, which established the first CPA's governmental structures. Çekrezi requested recognition of Congress of Përmet's decisions by the Department of State immediately after hearing of it. When this was rejected on 2 November 1944, Çekrezi sent a telegram to President Roosevelt in which he protested, blaming the Allies in general and the United States in particular for not supporting Albania. He stated that the USA had not recognised the government established at the Congress of Përmet because it was dominated by a communist nucleus, but meanwhile it had also not recognised any government in exile. The next day, he received an answer from the Department of State, where apparently several officers shared his concerns.

Çekrezi was a keen analyst of political and armed forces in Albania during WWII. According to him, Balli Kombëtar [the National Front], comprised of local chiefs and peasants who pretended to collaborate with the Italians whilst sabotaging them, was not a homogeneous party. He believed that Balli lost the war against communists because it "could not or did not know how to win over the people".

Even though he was clearly aware of Balli's shortcomings, he did not approve of the establishment of the communist regime and the relations that the Albanian government developed with the USA and the West. He resigned from Free Albania in May 1945, and would be critical of it, Vatra, Noli and anyone else who supported the Tirana government until his death. Çekrezi's liberal-democrat background did not allow him to accept the reality of communist Albania and the support it received from these groups.

Since his remarks against the support of general Hoxha's government were not heeded, to him Free Albania became merely a propagandistic agency for the government in Tirana. He who had asked for cooperation from Albanian exiles with those of the resistance during the war and who had firmly recognised the government established during the war (that of the Congress of Përmet), had now moved into opposition to the current government. Kaba argues that this was due to the strained relations between the communist government and the USA and UK, and because the future of his homeland seemed to be far from the "Western" model that he had championed throughout his life. In particular, the violence employed in establishing the new regime seems to explain Çekrezi's turn.

"Our country was liberated by a foreign occupation only to succumb to a foreign ideology", stated Çekrezi in "The third plan for partitioning Albania", whereby he points out the new regime's characteristics, describing the events of 27 November 1944: "On that fateful day... Tirana resembled a

INFORMATA MBI REAKSIONIN SHQIPTAR NE AMERIKE

Me sa mendojne ata shikket. Çekrezi pë mundëhet të hyjë sërërisht në shtetin e Shqipërisë të Amerikës. Dhe me qëllim të shikojnë mirë. Se çfarë bëri në Washington, ata shikojnë bashkë me Dept. të Shtetit. Aty thuhet se mbajne lidhje me një fare James Charles, i cili është në kontaktin për Ballkanin. James ka qene në Fier Shqiperi në 1934 dhe flet Jugosllavit mirë.

Çekrezi banon në Afersi të Washingtonit dhe nuk ka ndë një punë legale.

Në jete nga një raport nga 396. Nr. 62-5046 dat. 04-5-948.

Information about Çekrezi, from his Sigurimi file.

INFORMATA MBI TE ARRATSHURIT SHQIPTARE JAS

Thoma Stofani, Franko Çekrezi, Hafat Frier Panojne në Departamentin e Shtetit Ameri

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Exjete nga informata Nr. 15 datë 31 Maj 19

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Model Nr. 7
TEPER SEKKET

KERKESE

Seksionit Evidencës Operative
Pranë Drejtoris Zbulimit Publik M. P. M.

Lutemi kontrolloni si pas evidencave:

Mbiemri Çekrezi
Emri Franko
Adresia Natës
Dat Lindia 1891 Kombësija Shqiptare nënshtrësitja Shqiptare
Vend Lindia Katunat
Në cilat shtete ka jetuar më parë dhe ku ndodhet në kohën e tashme Si qytet i shtetit në Fier Shqipërisë. Ka ikur më 13-Febr 1931 në

Kryetari i Degës _____ Drejtoris _____
Grada _____ firma _____

Emri, mbiemri dhe Nr. i telefonit të buntorit operativ _____

INFORMATA MBI AGJENTAT E DEPARTAMENTIT TE SHQIPTAR

Jane interpretuar nga gjeje "Agjentet Shqiptare" që që shërbejne në Dept. e Shtetit dhe deri tashmë rezultojnë për jo në Sigurimi të shtetit kështu siç është në shtetin e Shqipërisë.

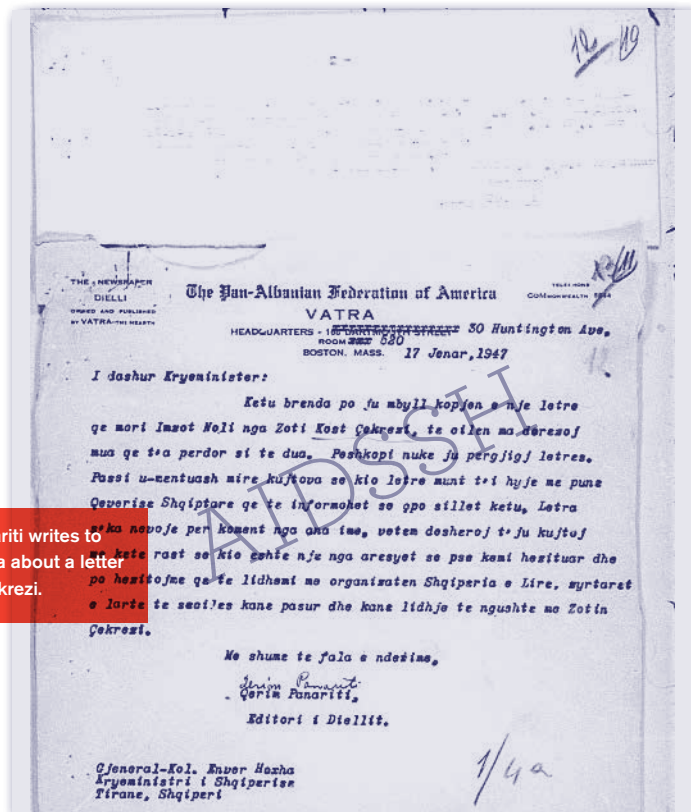
- 1- Kostadin Çekrezi Washington
- 2- Qerim Panariti në Vatra, Sotën
- 3- Stefan Lekaj dhe i Vella " " " " " "
- 4- Lluji Prifti Kryetari i Kom. të Jergani.
- 5- Heli Dindari " " " " " "

Te larte përmendurit nuk dihet se çfarë relatare të rregullta dhe të pa rregullta mbajne në detyr. Venue janë përveç kontaktit në kontakte me elenat të Qeverisë. Në një pjesë e tyre kanë punë vend në par. Org. e ndryshme të Shqipërisë të Amerikës dhe që keteje përvec punes informative që mund të bëjnë, ku direkt dhe ku indirekt bene propagande e hapin parulla kundër Shqipërisë. Si p.sh. fejn e marrëdhënjëve të keqja midis Shqipërisë dhe Amerikës ja hedhin Shqipërisë etj.

Per neve me i rrenikimi tashmë paraqitet Qerim Panariti, abasi ai ka shtëpi në Vatra. Dhe bile Qerim se që u grind në delegacionin e tyre për punën e Komitetit të ndihmave, jesh në një nga Nr. e fundit të arritshmërisë rreth punës së "Brigadave Kulturale" në Shqipëri, si edhe rreth shvillimit të procesit në Shqipëri.

Per sa i përket Kostadin Çekrezi, ai qëndron gjithnjë këtu në Washington. Për para dita ditësh sakoi në New-York dhe u tashmë delegacionit atij delegacioni i u bashkë hapësi ai i derguar i Dept. të shtetit dhe e ftoi që të vinte në Washington, për të marrë kontakt me ndonjë nga zyrtarët e Dept. për të biseduar rreth marrëdhënjëve diplomatike të Shqipërisë me Amerikën. Për delegacioni i tha të shohim. Nga tjetër i sakoi Ministrive të Amerikës. Për ndonjë punë qëndron në Washington.

Report on Kostadin Çekrezi, considered from Sigurimi, an agent of the State Department.



Qemal Panariti writes to Enver Hoxha about a letter of Kostë Çekrezi.

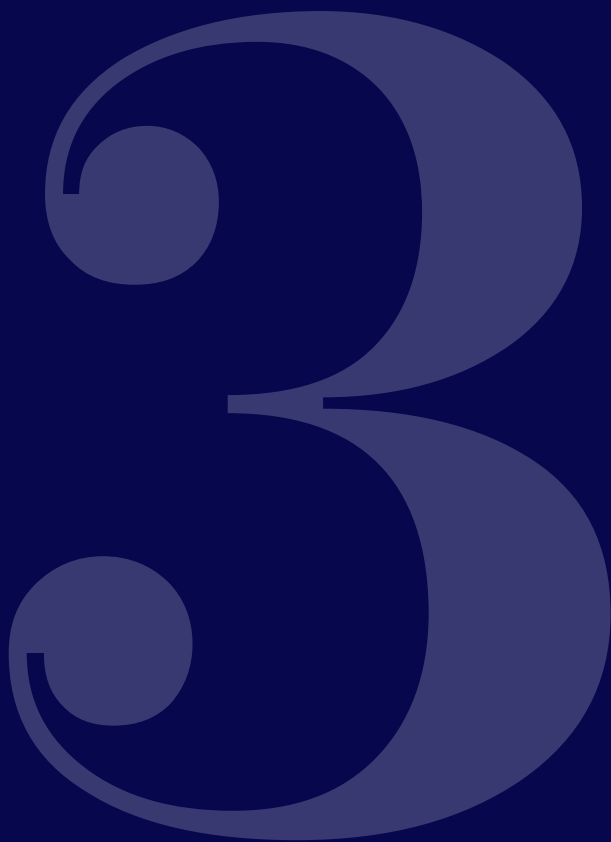
terrible slaughterhouse where the blood of German soldiers mixed with the blood of Albanian opponents of the National Liberation Committee, Ballists¹, Zogists, liberals, guilty or innocent. Roused by the war and thirsty for revenge, the partisans stormed coffee shops and other public and private places, to murder anyone previously designated as ‘enemy of the people’ ... to make an example for all opponents of the new regime”. According to him, “ideological dictatorships, whether fascist [Italian], Nazi or communist, wear the clothing of idealism to reach their goal more effectively”.

In 1951, Albanian State Security opened Çekrezi’s file, category II-A, with the pseudonym *Tomasi*, as “an American agent who poses danger a threat to the interests of our country”. Çekrezi’s greatest concern at this time was his elderly mother, still in Ziçisht near Devolli, with whom it was impossible to communicate.

The historian Kaba vests him with social democrat views. After he passed away in 1959, during his funeral, Noli said of Çekrezi that “a great man of Albania [has] died a poor man”. Çekrezi left behind much in writing, as a political and ideological testament, as he advised that “by grasping the quill, and addressing the reader, first of all we should think that what we are going to write will last forever”.

1. Ballists were members of Balli Kombëtar (National Front), who fought against the Italian occupation and communists, but some of whom also collaborated with the Nazis.

Tajar Zavalani



A communist disenchanted by Stalinism

The late 1930s mark Tajar Zavalani's move from with communist ideas, although the abandonment was gradual though. In his autobiography, Zavalani mentioned that by the early 1930s, he began questioning the Stalinist policy of agricultural collectivisation, which resulted in millions of peasants dying from famine, banished to Siberia and sentenced to the gulags, as well as the exterminations, killings and harsh sentences given out in the Red Army. But what could have marked the final break with his compelling belief in a new post-revolutionary life, was the execution of his brother Hysen in Moscow.

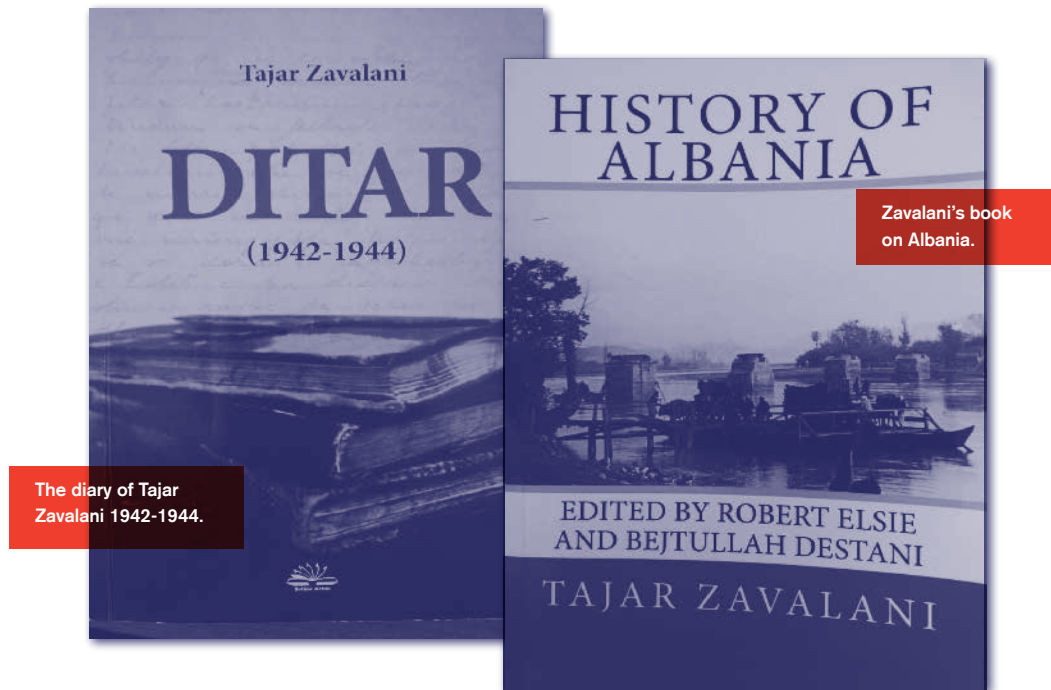
The grandiosity of his literary works has oftentimes attracted compelling styles, the subjects and the choices of the author with the times and places where they were written, thus making the readers become so fascinated by the works that they could hardly distinguish lines and verses, the literary euphoria and fiction, the portrayed settings and real events with the potential desires. This literary "sin" is committed to nurture an unjustifiable love based on expectations rather than on sound logic. However, literature is not responsible for the future of what may seem a plausible promise. Nonetheless the trained reader, Tajar Zavalani, in his thirties, would have hardly been fascinated by Gorky's *Mother*, when translating it in his twenties, and fall in the Bolshevik ideological net, which at the time, had awakened the empire under the revolutionary veil, but without freeing the oppressed. Zavalani was born in 1903 and since he was 10 years old, just like Gorky, he had sought freedom for the oppressed, as it is attested by a conversation with his father, the nationalist Fehim Zavalani, to whom he stated "that it was not fair that most of the produce would go to his granary, rather than to those who had poured their sweat working for it..."

After attending the French Catholic Marist Brothers' school in Bitola (part of the Ottoman Empire, now in North Macedonia), he studied literature in the French Lyceum in Thessaloniki. In 1922, he started working in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tirana, as the secretary of the Albanian Commission for Border Delimitation. According to Hamit Kaba, upon whose research work this article relies, in 1924, the 21-year-old Tajar Zavalani was part of Unity, a political, social and cultural society, with both Marxist and non-Marxist leftist tendencies, along with other

renown individuals such as Avni Rustemi, Llazar Fundo, Reshat Këllici. This may have marked his first encounter with communism. He was in the capital during the June Revolution during which he called for armed rebellion and the end of the sacred unity. “Opinions were divergent,” he wrote “when it was time to eradicate the vestiges of Ottoman rule and transform Albania into a modern state after a western model”. Zavalani supported what he described as the radical leftist group led by Noli, who aimed to completely dismantle the administrative, economic and social system inherited by the Ottoman Empire. The key measures proposed by this group were agrarian reforms, separation of religion from the state, and the building of schools and universities. He attributed the failure of this event to many factors, whilst he regarded Noli government’s closer relations with the Soviet Union as an extreme misstep with great ramifications. Following the suppression of the June Revolution, Zavalani, like many other Noli supporters, moved into political exile, first in Rome and afterwards, for almost 8 years in the Soviet Union, together with 20 peers. In an autobiography known as *Ditar* [Journal], affirming his desire to go to the Soviet Union and his poor understanding of communism, he explained that above all his ambition was to attain higher education. He learned Russian and he attended the Marxist-Leninist School in Leningrad for 3 years. Hamit Kaba notes that during those years Zavalani did not question Bolshevik philosophy and Stalinist approach to building the communist state, on the contrary, Zavalani wrote ‘My greatest intellectual satisfaction was that I found the answer to the question that had long tormented me, which is: What moves human society forward?’ About 10 years later, he would come to disagree with that answer.

On 28 August 1927, Zavalani, Llazar Fundo, Sejfulla Malëshova, Riza Dani and other Albanian students who had continued their studies in the ‘cradle’ of communism were admitted as members of Soviet Communist Party and established the Albanian Communist Group in the Soviet Union. “The Comintern,” recalls Zavalani “wanted me to go to Albania and work illegally, but I refused”. Instead, he established a provisional committee that would handle the preparatory work to found an Albanian communist party, and translated Marx’s *Communist Manifesto* into Albanian. In 1929 he became a specialist at the Moscow Agricultural Institute, whilst in 1930, on the order of the Comintern, he joined the Albanian communists of Albanian Revolutionary Committee (KONARE) in Berlin, headed by Fan Noli. Within KONARE there was a strong difference of opinion, and two platforms and factions were evident: ‘the liberationists’, who believed that a progressive democratic regime should be established in Albania, and the ‘Bolsheviks’ who maintained that a socialist revolution, along the lines of Russia’s October Revolution, must be carried out. At the time, Zavalani held to the latter, but just after one year, in 1931, he, Llazar Fundo and several other communists changed their views on a similar revolution taking place in Albania, after several events took place, although it is not clear whether this is because of what they had seen in Moscow, or because of political developments in other countries. And the reasons would unfold one after the other. Tajar Zavalani returned to Albania in early 1933, following his stay at his family in Thessaloniki. With the help of Mehmet Konica, he began working as the director of the Statistics Office. “During this period,” wrote Zavalani in his autobiography, “I started contributing to the ‘legal’ press, and for the first time, it brought to light my disagreement with the model of Soviet communism ... Nonetheless, I maintained my revolutionary ideas”. It was around this time that he painstakingly rendered works of world literature into Albanian, including Leo Tolstoy’s *Anna Karenina* and *The Kreutzer Sonata*, to Maxim Gorky’s *Mother*, Robert Louis Stevenson’s *Treasure Island*, Alphonse Daudet’s *Tartarin of Tarascon*, Honoré de Balzac’s *Gobseck* and Alexandre Dumas’ *The Lady of the Camellias*.

The late 1930s mark Tajar Zavalani’s move from with communist ideas, although the abandonment was gradual though. In his autobiography, Zavalani mentioned that by the early 1930s, he began questioning the Stalinist policy of agricultural collectivisation, which resulted in millions of peasants dying from famine, banished to Siberia and sentenced to the gulags, as well as the exterminations, killings and harsh sentences given out in the Red Army. But what could have marked the final break with his compelling belief in a new post-revolutionary life, was the execution of his brother Hysen in Moscow during the Soviet purges of 1928 and, as mentioned in *Journal*, the Soviet Union’s attack on Finland in 1940, eye-opening events that eventually pulled him away from Soviet Bolshevik communism. With the occupation of Albania, Zavalani, distancing himself from communism, appeared as an anti-Fascist, but as a nationalist and social



democrat. In 1939, he was interned in northern Italy for his activity against the Italians. With the help and financial assistance of Ernest Koliqi, he was freed and together with his wife, he went to Switzerland. Following a brief stay, Zavalani moved to Paris, where, he mentioned meeting King Zog for the first time. On the fall of France to the Nazis, Zavalani settled in London. From 1940 up to his death, he worked for the Albanian-language service of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC).

The historian Hamit Kaba notes that it was WWII when the characteristics of an anti-fascist nationalist and social democrat were etched into Zavalani's personality, when he was active in the Albanian community in England and America, and who had a clear vision for Albania's future development on path which he defined as Western and democratic. British and American archival sources evince his efforts to have Albania officially recognised and admitted to the United Nations and to recognise the resistance and contribution of Albanian people towards the anti-Fascist cause. Zavalani attempted to collaborate with King Zog, by providing the solution of establishing a National Committee or a Joint Front against the threat of Italian Fascism and German Nazism. According to Kaba, this would have been a pragmatic and necessary arrangement to strengthen Albanian resistance against Axis armies, even though Zavalani did not support the post-war restoration of a Zog monarchy. "Zogu," wrote Zavalani in his autobiographical *Journal*, "cannot be the ideal for whom Albanians must fight and die", whilst he proposed a model that implied "a real democracy, where the sovereignty of the people is a reality and not a lie to deceive the world". Despite fostering and supporting an approach with a spirit of cooperation among the divided and torn exiled factions, Zavalani's efforts were not successful. Albanians, both inside and outside the country, remained divided. Hamit Kaba has uncovered documents that demonstrate how Tajar Zavalani, like no other Albanian abroad, endeavoured to make Albanian resistance against the Italian and German occupation known to London and Washington. His position at the BBC further helped him in this role. During the war, he carried out several official and unofficial meetings with UK Foreign Office diplomats and others interested in Albania. In that regard, in December 1943, Zavalani wrote the pamphlet titled 'Albania Under Nazi Oppression', which was published by the London office of the Free Albania organisation. In that pamphlet, he expressed his appreciation for the four Albanian Council of Regency members, beginning with Mehdi Frashëri, Lef Nosi, Father Anton Harapi and Fuad Dibra for their patriotism and honesty. He noted that had initially declined to serve as regent, but later they had accepted the office due to the strong instigation of Xhafer Deva.

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Zavalani's opinions of Albanian communists returning from exile in the 1930–40s were the harshest, although he does not mention himself. Nonetheless, Zavalani had clear concepts of parliamentary democracy, authoritarian republics, parliamentary monarchy, and fascist and communist dictatorships.

Tajar Zavalani

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Zavalani was greatly enthused upon learning that in October 1944, British commando troops would land in Albania, as he hoped that with their support Albania would follow the path of Western democracies. However, Albania took the path that Zavalani had abandoned: communism. After the war, during his work at the BBC, he never reconciled with the communist system, nor its Albanian form; on the contrary, he adopted a very harsh approach. To serve the anti-communist cause, he became a member of the Pen Club (European anti-authoritarian writers organisation), in whose newspaper he published several anti-communist articles. To that same end, in 1951, Zavalani published in London his first book *How Strong is Russia?*, to reveal what he referred to as ‘the good aims of Stalin and company’. According to Kaba, Zavalani’s several-year stay in the ‘Mecca’ of world communism, the theoretical knowledge acquired in the Marxist-Leninist school, the experience gained at the Moscow Agricultural Institute and the Stalinist practice of the 1930s, helped him write a unique book well-received by readers. His stay in Russia had coincided with one of the most significant periods in Soviet Union history, precisely when a particular part of the Soviet Union’s development model was being implemented. During the 1930s, the process of collectivisation of agriculture and industrialisation of the economy intensified. Zavalani knew quite well that agricultural and farm production had decreased, and he also knew that millions of peasants had died from famine, from death sentences and at the infamous gulags. Zavalani had attempted to tear the veil of propaganda placed by the Muscovite leadership. And whilst the world believed in the unchallenged image of the Soviet Union, the Albanian Zavalani, showed the world what it could not see; what he himself had not seen when he used to believe in that system. This was the shatter of the world, which had preceded his own shatter.

However, Zavalani’s most valuable work is *Historia e Shqipnis* [The History of Albania] which he had started writing during the war and would complete late in life. According to Kaba, that book expressed Zavalani’s final opinion of Albania. Kaba draws the conclusion that Tajar Zavalani’s political views in the post-war period evolved into that of a liberal democrat and uncompromising anti-communist. He was very critical of the Stalinist regime in Albania and past Albanian communists. When comparing his original opinion reflected in the *Journal (1942-1944)* during the war period, with what he wrote in *Historia e Shqipnis*, Kaba observes not a mere reflection but complete rebuttal. Zavalani’s opinions of Albanian communists returning from exile in the 1930-40s were the harshest, although he does not mention himself. Nonetheless, Zavalani had clear concepts of parliamentary democracy, authoritarian republics, parliamentary monarchy, and fascist and communist dictatorships. His political thought by then showed him to be a pure patriot and nationalist. In the post-war period, the internationalism of the 1930s and the idea of establishing a Balkan Federation that would include Albania had already disappeared.

Zavalani, dissatisfied with Albania’s underdeveloped state and King Zog’s rule, initially sought another governing model in Moscow’s communism. Gradually he became disenchanted and embraced social-democratic ideas which he found embodied by Western democracies. Kaba believes that it is hard to find another who sought as far for the best governing model for the future of their country as to Tajar Zavalani. At the same time, it is hard to find one like him to have gone through a real metamorphosis of political beliefs. The Albanian translator of the *Communist Manifesto* transformed into a denouncer of the communism established in Albania and through Eastern Europe. He was able to reconcile with those of divergent views and reformulate his convictions and beliefs when he recognised his idols as false. Zavalani’s life took big turns: a young man with leftist views who then became a communist in the Soviet Union; returning to Albania he was gradually disillusioned by Bolshevik communism, transforming into a social democrat during WWII, and finally becoming an anti-communist at the end of the war. Even with regards to his faith, Zavalani went through drastic changes: born into a Bektashi Muslim family, he then became an atheist, only to convert to Catholicism in 1958, even adopting a new name, Thomas-Henry Zavalani. Despite the many turns in his life, two characteristics defined him as a person: his broad cultural background and his commitment to his country. Zavalani was never able to return Albania after the war. He died on the morning of 19 August 1966 in London. There are two versions for his cause of death: the first alleges that he died of a heart attack, whilst the second in a car accident. His name was almost never mentioned in communist Albania. His wife Selma Zavalani continued to engage with the “Free Albania” organisation.

Musine Kokalari



The lost social-democratic alternative

Musine, who had studied in Rome, the daughter of a renowned family, the sister of two executed brothers, demanded agrarian reforms, a social security system, pluralism and political freedom, social justice languished in internal exile in a small town. She had once supported the notion of a Balkan confederation, but was regarded a threat to the monopoly of communist power.

The granddaughter of a Muslim theologian and daughter of a law graduate, Musine Kokalari was born in Adana in the south of Turkey, to an intellectual family from Gjirokastra. She had three brothers, Mumtaz, Vesim and Hamit; all three of them would later study law and French. She was only three years old, in 1921, when she returned to Albania as the Kokalari family re-settled in Gjirokastra, where Musine received her first years of schooling. In 1930, the family moved to Tirana, where her brother Vesim opened a bookshop that turned into social hub in the new capital. She attended the Queen Mother Pedagogical Institute (Instituti Femëror “Nana Mbretëreshë”) in Tirana, which in the 1930s marked an important step in the modernisation of Albanian society. Musine began to publish press reports, where she highlighted social ills such as poverty, discrimination, illiteracy and the struggles and slave-like treatment of women at the time.

It is unclear which to which current she belonged in those years; however, in her memoir written in 1972, *How the Social Democratic Party was Born* [*Si lindi Partia Social-Demokrate*], Musine highlighted the generational political conflicts in the 1930s. Her position towards rapid progress contradicted that of the old Turkish-educated elite, who were nostalgic towards their past privileges. In addition to the ideas of the Albanian philosopher Ismet Toto and the neo-Albanianism of Branko Merxhani (which pretended a western development for Albania) her family also greatly influenced her intellectual upbringing. Two of Musine’s brothers were part of the Vlora organisation, which in 1932 attempted to overthrow the monarchy and establish a republican system. Many of the activists were arrested, including Vesim. During their prison meetings,

she came to know his intellectual circle, with whom she would later found the Social Democratic Party. According to the research of Dorian Koçi, upon which this article relies, her association with them eventually defined Musine's worldview, characterised by anti-feudal ideals, secular culture and women's rights, social progress, political freedom, social equality, and economic reforms. Her political consciousness becomes evident in her writing at the time, under the pseudonyms *Muza* or *Tacita*.

In 1937, she graduated from the Women's Institute and left for Rome, where in 1941, she completed her Bachelor degree with a thesis on Naim Frashëri. In Italy, she discovered herself and had her first encounters with Western Europe. In Rome just before Italy occupied Albania, she departed on the last ship from Bari, arriving on 6 April 1941. The next day, the country had surrendered to Italy. In "Jeta ime Universitare" [My university life] (1940-1942), she wrote, "I arrived at a moment when the sky was covered with Italian aeroplanes. Everywhere reigned a state of mind that one can easily imagine. In those moments the most intimate feelings awake and the soul experiences a terrible commotion".

Archival sources do not reveal any evidence of Musine Kokalari being part of any Albanian fascist youth organisations at university. Apparently, until 1941 she did not engage with any direct political activity, rather intending to focus on her writing. She even stated to her friend, writer Ali Asllani, "I want to write, to write and only write literature and have nothing to do with politics". However, war muddied the waters. Intellectuals, like everyone else, were divided into political groups: collaborationists, anti-fascists, neutral, nationalists, "individuals and cells with republican, monarchist and communist convictions".

Inertia was replaced with extreme polarisation. On one side of the resistance stood the "young" communists, with Yugoslav and Soviet assistance, and on the other, the "old" nationalists of Balli Kombëtar [National Front], some of whom held republican and reformatory views. Because King Zog had not permitted the establishment of parties, Albania did not have a tradition of political representation. Musine established contacts with both sides of the resistance and took part in anti-fascist activities. However, "Musine was too lucid and was convinced that there was no difference between communism and fascism, as they both kill the individual", as recalled her friend Selfixhe Ciu. When she saw Selfixhe in the prison courtyard along with tens of arrested young women after the demonstrates against the invader, Musine's face was in dismay and her eyes could tell the pain. Her entry into the resistance represented a novelty in educated women's involvement with the war. She embodied Albania's political legacy with the liberal democratic principles she found embodied by Great Britain and France. In her recollections she clearly explained her ideas for Albania's development versus what were considered those of the "extreme" left, when she stated that "the October Revolution brought new revolutionary ideals that found their way into Albania, and communists' groups were established, albeit not at a national level, scantily, with unclear and diverse principles".

Besides the previously mentioned influences, Kokalari's intellectual formation had gone through the evolutionist school of Albanian political thought. Even though an unaffirmed school with rigid ideologues, it embodied republican and liberal ideas from the National Awakening throughout the end of 19-the century, up to the 1940s. It was represented by Sami Frashëri, a linguist and philosopher. His political tract had become the "bible" of the Albanian liberal elite. She had defended her thesis on Sami's brother, Naim, whilst his nephew Mit'hat Frashëri opened a bookshop in Tirana where these Sami Frashëri's were being spread. "I knew this place from my childhood" wrote Musine about Mit'hat Frashëri's bookshop, where she met notable intellectuals like Sotir Koleka, Aleksandër Xhuvani and Mati Logoreci. She recalled how she "relied on the deep enlightenment understanding and the reformism and parliamentarism that Sami Frashëri instilled in us since the school years". In 1943, in this bookshop, together with Skënder Muço, Isuf Luzaj and Selman Riza she founded the Social Democratic Party of Albania and printed its newspaper "Zëri i Lirisë" [Voice of Freedom], as "an evolutionist alternative and middle path to connect the uncrystallised forces, by aligning in alliance with the Communist Party in the National Liberation Front".



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Nonetheless, Musine was well aware with whom she was entering into alliance. In 1943 she met Nexhmije Xhuglini (the future wife of dictator Hoxha) and engaged with the Anti-Fascist Woman Organisation of Tirana and its steering bodies. Following the failure of the Mukje Conference (a treaty between the nationalist party of Balli Kombëtar and National Liberation Movement that would be Communist Party) held to bring together and the exacerbation of relations between the two political organisations in Albania, Musine resigned from her position. In a letter, dated 22 September 1943, that Xhuglini addressed to Hoxha, she stated "Musine and her friends want to establish the social-democratic party, even though she is 'apolitical'". This is affirmed in Musine's memoir, as she recalled having told Nexhmije "to enter the National Liberation Front, not as separate individuals, but as a democratic group, or better yet as a (social-democratic) party". Musine Kokalari's efforts to find a middle path of armed resistance fell on deaf ears, both of CPA representatives and the leaders of Balli. But the occupation had to be fought, despite the differences. Although Balli's programme, known as the "Decalogue" shared common ideas with the Social Democratic Party programme, drafted by Musine Kokalari and Isuf Luzaj, the Balli leaders Mit'hat Frashëri and Hasan Dosti did not support the alternative of establishing this new political alliance on the grounds that it would divide their organisation. The LANÇ press provided October 1943 as the foundation date, however, the official SDP newspaper, "Zëri i Lirisë" was firstly printed on 1 January 1944. It rolled out the Social Democratic Party programme and several aspects of its statute (which was not published in the newspaper, and is not extant in our archives).

Aware that her political faction would not succeed, she insisted on publishing the newspaper with her own salary and assistance by Skënder Muço. Bearing in mind only one visionary goal, she wrote "I printed those six issues with only one purpose: It outlined a course, a party programme. After liberation, if Albania were to become democratic, it should follow that course and keep going". The writing, entitled "Misioni i Partisë Sociademokrate" [Mission of the Social Democratic Party], broke down its programme into two stages: first, "independence and ethnic borders, instalment of a democratic



Photo of primary school, Musine Kokalari is in the second row, fourth from the right. (Archive of Arjeta Kokalari)

government” and second, “establishing social justice”. The newspaper addressed the challenges of social democracy and trade union issues, and the headline carried the motto “Social justice and political freedom”. The communists viewed the Social Democratic Party as an appendix or continuation of Balli, in its discredited form. Musine’s insistence on unity was not heeded, which led to her disappointingly stating that “Balli leaders were not inspired by democracy...”.

After the Winter Offensive, where part of Balli collaborated with the Germans, the social-democratic alternative disintegrated despite its intellectual support in Tirana and Vlora; whilst the communists had set up a provisional government. Afterwards, she stopped printing the newspaper, and upon realising that her efforts were futile, she focused only on literature. She published two books, “Sa u tunt jeta” [How life quivered] and “Rreth Vatrës” [Around the Hearth].

The social-democrat writer established contacts with the British Military Mission in Albania in June 1945, as did many other anti-communists, “legalists” (monarchists) and resisters, including Hoxha’s former minister, Gjergj Kokoshi, who had been expelled from the NLF. In a joint memorandum that is believed to have been written by Musine, they asked the Allies to postpone the December elections and to admit other parties outside of just the NLF, which was dominated by the communists. Under the name of Democratic Union, their memorandum further asked for a democratic government and respect of human rights, a solution to the Kosovo question, respect of minority rights, and fighting of fascist elements and war criminals, among other things. It reflected elements of the social-democratic programme, which offered a moderate course for the Albanian left, and sought the development of the society without undertaking what were considered the extreme measures of the Soviet system.

“*The war of Tirana* has begun,” recalls Musine Kokalari in *How the Social Democratic Party was Born*. “On 12 November, my brothers were taken away and many others in the neighbourhood were killed by the



Thus began the tragedy of the democratic individual under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus ended the age of Awakening and the humanist democratic tendency to defend the common people”

Musine Kokalari

‘liberating soldiers’. On 13 November, I was arrested”. She was released on 28 November, conscious that freedom had reached its end. “Thus began the tragedy of the democratic individual under the dictatorship of the proletariat. Thus ended the age of Awakening and the humanist democratic tendency to defend the common people, to save the working man from physical and spiritual slavery and give him human dignity. Violence and bloodshed came to destroy democracy, with the cruel joy for bloodshed, with force and contempt”, she wrote.

The December elections were not postponed, hence paving the way for the instalment of dictatorship. The communists under the NLF won the majority of the seats in the Constitutional Assembly, which was recognised by the US and British governments. The Democratic Union was the only opposition; thus, the communists took immediate measures against it. A total of 75 opponents of the government were arrested, nearly all of them were part of the Democratic Union, beginning with Gjergj Kokoshi, Musine Kokalari, Sami Çeribashi, Ali Kavaja, Qenan Dibra, among others. For quite some time they had been under the surveillance of Defence of People agents (Later Sigurimi i Shtetit - Intelligence and Surveillance Agency). Following a violent and cruel prosecution process, whereby they were accused of collaborating with war criminals, nine of them were sentenced to death, thus beginning a series of cases against the leading opposing figures.

Musine Kokalari was arrested on 23 January 1946. The partisan prosecutors accused her that by being a social democrat she caused division during the war. Ballists had made the same accusations when she announced the establishment of the Social Democratic Party. She was held in jail for 17 days. In court, she presented herself defiantly in the face of the regime, testifying to the moral strength shown by some intellectuals against totalitarianism. She didn’t want to get a lawyer, she defended herself, and is widely known for her famous statement: “I do not need to be a communist to love my country. I think differently from you, but I love my country. You are punishing me for my ideals!”.

On 2 July 1946, Musine was sentenced to 20 years in prison by the Military Court of Tirana, as a saboteur and enemy of the people. Thus the ordeal of her internment began, which would have sent her from Tirana to Burrel, Shkodra and Rrëshen, until the end of her life. During her long stint in prisons,



Musine's personal belongings, preserved by Bibika Kokalari.

she was mocked by those in power, some of whom would later suffer a similar fate: Beqir Balluku, who had arrested her in November 1944, during an inspection in the Shkodra prison in 1957 asked her: “How is it going, social democrat?” (Beqir would later be executed for treason). On 8 October 1961, Musine was released from prison and internally exiled to Rrëshen, where she was continuously monitored by State Security, as revealed by her file in the AIDSSH archive.

Musine, who had studied in Rome, the daughter of a renowned family, the sister of two executed brothers, demanded agrarian reforms, a social security system, pluralism and political freedom, social justice languished in internal exile in a small town. She had once supported the notion of a Balkan confederation, but was regarded a threat to the monopoly of communist power, because the social democrat stood for an active parliamentary life and the existence of a political opposition.

Musine was employed as a streetsweeper in a construction enterprise in Rrëshen, among bricks, mortar and concrete. When her internal exile was over in 1979, she was told to that she could move to Gjirokastra. But since she was not allowed to go to Tirana, she remained in Rrëshen, where on 13 August 1983, she passed away alone from an untreated cancer. She was buried by graveyard staff. When in 1991, her relatives undug her, they found her hands tied with barbed wire. Her moral and intellectual resistance left an indelible impression on Albanian intellectual thinking, but her theoretical works were disregarded after 1990. The predecessor Social Democratic Party later joined as a collaborator the right-wing opposition, albeit ideologically remaining on the centre-left. Today, her remains lie in Tirana and she is regarded by many as Albania's first female writer and politician, a powerful woman who never gave up in the face of grave challenges.

Isuf
Luzaj



The philosopher and social democrat

In a signed memorandum of May 1944, Luzaj stated that when the Germans left, communism would rule the south “with its red terror”, whilst the north “would fall prey to its greed”. He foretold the elimination of intellectuals and the bourgeoisie, and “any other sign of civilisation, by the red knife under the censorship of proletarian revolutionary justice”.

The son of a Vlora imam, who in 1912 had blessed Albania’s independence, had just returned from Paris in 1936, where he had studied and graduated in literature and philosophy from Sorbonne, when he barged to the office of the minister of the king, looking for a job. A brief biography (property of AIDSSH) prepared by the surveillance agents during the communist regime, describes him as “about 1.80 m tall, with a brown slender face, black straight hair, black eyes, black joint eyebrows, long beard, can speak and write French and Italian, a very prominent man, fond of language and literature, capricious, passionate, man of trust and authority”.

In 1937, he was assigned the position of French professor in the Normal School of Elbasan, where he stood out in intellectual circles, as well as by those in power. He was removed from the city because he refused to kiss the hand of Shefqet BejVërlaci, the local feudal lord. He was then assigned the position of French professor in the Lyceum of Korça, where he reconnected with his former friend Enver Hoxha, whom the philosopher had met in Paris.

Meanwhile, he published the poem collection “Rrëfime” [Recollections], which were confiscated without before the first 100 copies were sold. In the office of the Ministry of the Interior, the 24-year old poet learned that the government had interpreted the character of the notorious Roman emperor Nero in his poem “Neroni” as a reference to King Zog. He denied the charges, but was nonetheless held for 49 days.

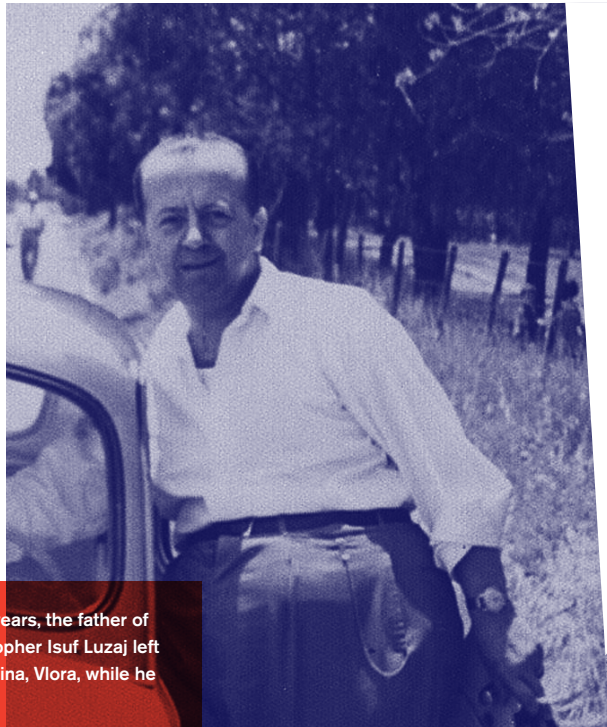
In the moment of the Italian disembarkation in Albania on 7 April 1939, Luzaj was a professor at the Commercial School of Vlora, where he encouraged his 120 students to rise up with arms, although, given the lack of arms or organisation, it was impossible. A few months later, on 28 November 1939, when the fascists administration in Albania made

preparation to celebrate the anniversary of Albania's independence, in the country's main cities, professors and students turned the celebration into a protest. Isuf Luzaj, already 26 years old, protested in Vlora beside 1000 other young men, singing the Albanian national hymn and holding the Albanian traditional national flag without the lictor's signs that were recently added by Italians. Due to nationalist and antifascist character of the protests, occupiers immediately called for numerous arrests, and Luzaj's name was among the most prominent ones. He was arrested under the pretext of killing an Italian policeman, and after spending a few months in prison in Vlora and Durrës, he was sent to Brindisi, Italy, which he would later recall as the worst prison he spent time in, and then to Gaeta and finally, to Ventotene. Upon learning of his Vlora War (Albanian-Italian war in 1920) poems against the Italians, he was isolated in a castle, where he met Ali Këlcyra, who had founded Balli Kombëtar together with Mit'hat Frashëri, Lef Nosi. Every Sunday, Këlcyra and Luzaj met with each other to discuss and to try to find a solution about situation in Albania. Not to rise the carabinieri's suspicions they would visit the castle's graveyards and just as the locals did they would hold flowers in their hands. In those Sundays meetings they drafted the statute of Balli Kombëtar (National Front). "That is where we wrote the code of Balli Kombëtar. Ali Këlcyra would speak, and I would write it down. I proposed to add the seventh point to the code: The National Front Organisation shall uncover the true values, shall educate the people without taking into consideration their belief, region or political party".

After three years, in 1942, with the intervention of the Minister of Education, Ernest Koliqi, Luzaj was released from internment and returned to Albania, where he found an established Communist Party which had formed and was then leading the Anti-Fascist Liberation Front. By this time, the Balli Kombëtar had also announced its activity and organised armed bands in the fight against the Italians. Alongside the communists headed by Hysni Lepenica, the social democrats Isuf Luzaj and Skënder Muço fought in the Vlora area, where among the most well-known from the five battles mentioned by Luzaj is that of Selenica, in April 1943, which lasted for three hours resulted in dozens killed by the enemy and included several prisoners of war. Ilir Kalemaj, upon whose research work this article relies, identifies Luzaj's immense contribution to Balli. He was an organiser of the anti-fascist resistance, the proponent of social democracy principles in Balli's 10-point programme, known in Albanian as the *Dekalog*, the founder and commander of Balli's bands in Vlora, as well as one of the conceivers of the pan-national idea of this party, "we could definitely say that Luzaj was one of the pioneers in intertwining the nationalistic idea of national union with social-democratic ideas, whilst at the same time differentiating [himself] from the communists who preached the revolutionary path and class struggle, but [he was] also syncretic and original in his ideas", highlights Kalemaj.

A few months later, at the Mukje Conference in 2 August 1943, which was held to align the military strategy of the communists and Ballists, revealed the conflict of the two parties about Kosovo. Ballists wanted to struggle for Kosovo's union with Albania, whilst the communists, influenced by the Yugoslav emissaries, opposed. During that conference, Luzaj insisted on the territorial unification, whilst the leftists viewed the philosophy professor as an anti-communist who posed a threat to them. In Ymer Dishnica's confidential letter to Enver Hoxha on the proceedings of the conference, he wrote: "The debate tenors were Skënder and Isuf, the former, a conciliator and the latter, an accuser (breeding hate against us – a pseudo anti-Zogist and democrat".

The autumn of that same year brought about the capitulation of the Italians and the arrival of Germans. As the conflict between the communists and Ballists reached its peak, from a fight against a common enemy to a near civil war, Balli's passivity towards and sometimes collaboration with the new occupiers did not sit well with the revolutionary and rebellious Luzaj. He would express his disappointment by stating that the leadership of Balli Kombëtar was in the hands of the feudalists (whom he despised because of Vërlaci, the feudal lord who's hand he refused to kiss, who also served as Prime Minister under the Italian fascist regime), whilst regretfully added that "Mit'hat (Frashëri) was a very honest man. A real and sincere patriot. A democrat in theory, an aristocrat in practice. Theoretically he wanted democracy, but in practice he sided with the Toptani *bey*s [feudal lords], because of his kinship... Those *bey*s were the enemy of the people, as for 500 years they kept the Albanian people suppressed under Turkish rule".

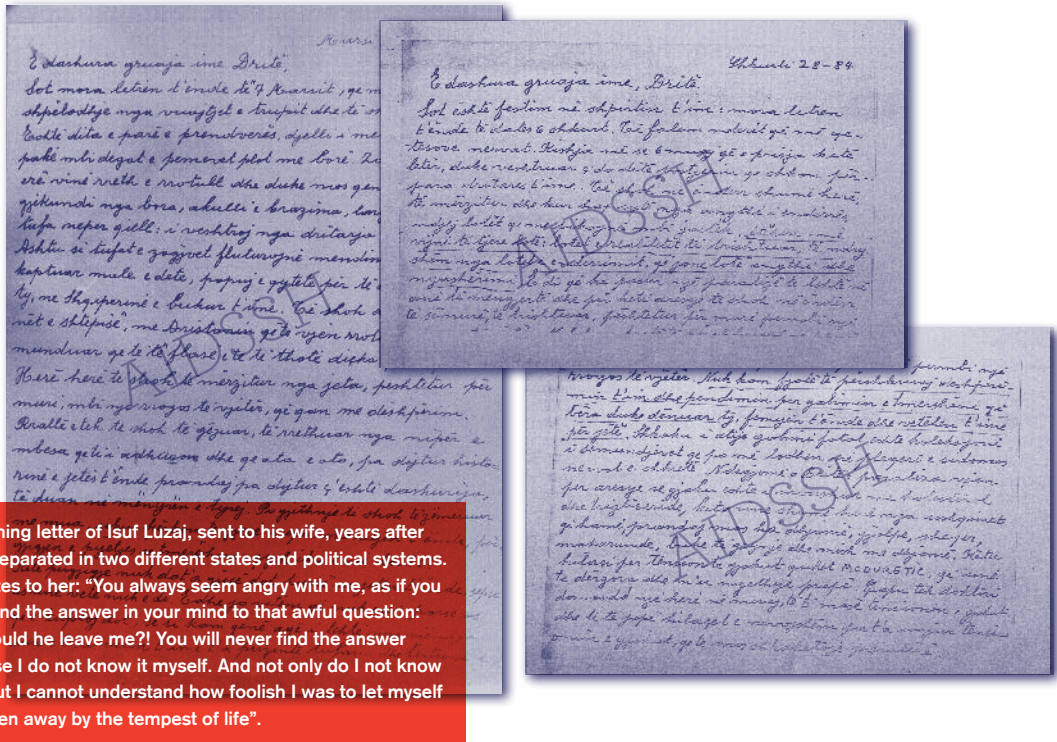


In October 1944, at 31 years, the father of five children, the philosopher Isuf Luzaj left his family behind in Kanina, Vlorë, while he headed for Italy.

Perhaps it was due to such discontent that in October 1943 Isuf Luzaj, Musine Kokalari, Skënder Muço and other intellectuals founded the Social Democratic Party within a house in Tirana. Its programme aimed “to fight against any occupier for the independence of an Albania within its ethnic borders”. By ensuring social justice, it guaranteed fundamental human rights, which foremost included “political freedom”, private economic initiative, secret voting, periodic elections and explicitly mentioned the existence of parliamentary opposition. The first article provided for “an evolutionist party with regards to social collectivisation”, unlike the Bolshevik concept held by the communists. The researcher Kalemaj highlights that this party was a forerunner of political liberalism and a considerable step in the history of the left of Albania. The announcement of the SDP statute caused great concern among the high leadership of the Communist Party, which initiated a campaign of denigrating its political opponents, with propaganda and armed attacks in between. Enver Hoxha demanded that “Zëri i Popullit” denounce figures, among them Luzaj, of whom it was mentioned that he remained uncompromised when in the ranks of Balli Kombëtar.

In a signed memorandum of May 1944, Luzaj stated that when the Germans left, communism would rule the south “with its red terror”, whilst the north “would fall prey to its greed”. He foretold the elimination of intellectuals and the bourgeoisie, and “any other sign of civilisation, by the red knife under the censorship of proletarian revolutionary justice”. Addressing several parties, he stated “with all the modesty of the signer, (this) aims to be a foreboding warning, a plea”. This memorandum, which has been preserved by the AIDSSH, must have also been known to the CPA at the time.

Luzaj had been clear when he stated “Communism is an anti-natural life philosophy, against the laws of nature, doomed to fail, because it rests upon false logical premises, wrong and ungrounded in the architecture of ideas, and has a sick vision and imagination”. He noted that “communism, Marxism, Leninism were denounced as a utopia by all heroes of 19th and 20th century thinking” and therefore insisted that social democracy was the most appropriate and natural evolution of the left which guaranteed a social state and economic redistribution. According to Kalemaj’s research work, the philosopher Luzaj could without a doubt be described as one of the most illustrious exponents of Albanian social democracy.



A touching letter of Isuf Luzaj, sent to his wife, years after living separated in two different states and political systems. He writes to her: "You always seem angry with me, as if you try to find the answer in your mind to that awful question: how could he leave me?! You will never find the answer because I do not know it myself. And not only do I not know why, but I cannot understand how foolish I was to let myself be driven away by the tempest of life".

Social democrats became a separate political group within Balli Kombëtar, and for the last months of the Nazi occupation, Luzaj would be in Vlora, further intensifying hostility with the communists. Thus, when the war was over, his association with Hoxha from Paris and later in the Korça Lyceum would not save the philosopher. During an interview in 1992, Luzaj would state, "we were friends in Paris and friends in the homeland ... he was very devious".

In October 1944, at 31 years, the father of five children, the philosopher Isuf Luzaj left his family behind in Kanina, Vlora while he headed for Italy, where he was arrested for the attempted murder of General Zanini. He was sentenced to life in prison and then pardoned. With the recommendation of his friend Sandro Pertini (the future president of Italy), Luzaj would work in the Vatican Library for two years, and then taught Latin in Brescia. In 1948, he moved to Argentina, where he worked for 15 years as a translator of several languages and advisor at the Ministry of Education, as well as a lecturer at the University of Buenos Aires, where he was highly recognised. He published a series of books, including *Lumenjtë rrjedhin të kuq* [Rivers Flow Red], making him an authority of social-democratic philosophy and anti-communist thought. His name gained recognition as he published poems and philosophical works; he received letters from Jorge Luis Borges, Pablo Neruda, Jean Paul Sartre, Alcide de Gasperi, Palmiro Togliatti, Sandro Pertini and Charles de Gaulle. Following the death of Ali Këlcyra (1963), he was invited to the USA to lead Balli Kombëtar in exile.

Despite being distinguished in both Americas, in Albania, where he had left behind his children and wife, Drita, the totalitarian regime had placed him in the list of war criminals and called him a "notorious traitor". No one mentioned his name back home, and because of him, his family was persecuted. They were interned and his one-year-old daughter died of tuberculosis in an internment camp in Fushë-Kruja due to a lack of medicine. Whilst his family was persecuted in Albania, Luzaj, perhaps without his knowledge, was monitored in the USA by Albanian secret police agents. In 1979, he was appointed department chair at a university in Illinois, given numerous awards. But his achievements in the USA did not reach Albania, only the reports of spies for the Albanian government, who also regularly read the letters Luzaj sent to his family.



Communism is an anti-natural life philosophy, against the laws of nature, doomed to fail, because it rests upon false logical premises, wrong and ungrounded in the architecture of ideas, and has a sick vision and imagination”

Isuf Luzaj

This son of an imam, who worked in the Vatican library, who valued the “Liberty of the 1789, which was [his] temperament” as he used to say, named Isuf but known as Joseph in America, in one of his letters to Drita, talked about his 40 years of loneliness, despair, longing and the dream he shared with his wife when they were young. Regretting leaving, he used to stare at the window waiting for the letter carrier to bring her letters. “The regret of leaving you weighs me down”, he wrote in 1984. In many of his letters, it seemed as he had recently left, when he asked whether she had any problems with her eyes or whether she measured her blood pressure. In one of them he stated: “You always seem angry with me, as if you try to find the answer in your mind to that awful question: how could he leave me?! You will never find the answer because I do not know it myself. And not only do I not know why, but I cannot understand how foolish I was to let myself be driven away by the tempest of life”. He re-joined his family only after 1990, the time when his books first became available to Albanian readers, including *Gloria e çmendur* [*Gloria of Madness*] (1995), *Lamtumira e yjeve* [*Goodbye of the Stars*] (1995), *Ekzistenca dhe boshësia* [*Existence and Emptiness*] (1996), *Sëmundjet e shekullit tonë* [*The Sicknesses of our Century*] (philosophical essays, 1999), *Topografi labçe* [*Labçe Topography*] (2001), *Përtej së mirës dhe së ligës* [*Beyond Good and Evil*] (2003), *Rindërtimi i fuqive shpirtërore* [*Reconstruction of Spiritual Power*] (2005), *Filozofia e bukurisë* [*The Philosophy of Beauty*] (2009).

He returned to his homeland after 50 years to be buried in his place of birth. He believed that “a man cannot be sometimes free and sometimes a prisoner; either he is always and completely free, or he is never, never, ever free” and thus this philosopher of freedom remained eternally rejected. Tracing the roots of the leftist tradition of Sami Frashëri, the researcher Kalemaj uncovers other redistributive elements in Luzaj’s desire for Albanians’ basic well-being, including a political left philosophy where the duality of the social-democratic left and nationalistic one is clearly distinguished. As the founder of Balli Kombëtar as well as of the Social Democratic Party, he left behind consist philosophical-political thought, where systematic anti-communism was intertwined with the goal of social equality achieved through an interventionist state, but without relinquishing private property. He was considered by many commentators as the lost opposition figure, a version of the left that was banned for five decades behind Albania’s iron curtain.

Skänder Luarasi



The patriot, democrat and tireless opponent

In 1937, when, somewhere near Mallorca, Porcel was born and “Spain was devouring Spain” through civil war, in a small town between Valencia and Barcelona a man from faraway Albania volunteered with the International Brigades. Idealist, patriot, professor, publicist, translator, playwright, stubborn and... communist.

“This revolution is ending, just like all the others: far from its purposes and erecting a new power pyramid. At the beginning of the revolution people were singing, hugging, and drinking; now they are insulted and executed. At first, they were opened to life; now they believe in repression”. The author Baltasar Porcel’s description in *The Emperor or the Eye of the Wind* attests to the worldwide feelings of those who had believed in but were disappointed by revolutions and revolutionaries. In 1937, when, somewhere near Mallorca, Porcel was born and “Spain was devouring Spain” through civil war, in a small town between Valencia and Barcelona a man from faraway Albania volunteered with the International Brigades. Idealist, patriot, professor, publicist, translator, playwright, stubborn and... communist. The pomade of his pitch-dark hair was covered in the dust of the long road, but the spirit of the dream who took him that far, could still be felt in the air. Months earlier, in the autumn of 1936, while sitting in Kursal café, the 37-year-old Skënder Luarasi was attacked for being a Bolshevik by Adem Karapici. Imprisoned thrice for his anti-monarchical and anti-feudal positions, the professor feared another arrest, which the Kursal attack only seemed foretell. Thus as the radio’s report on the situation in Spain echoing in his ears, he was tempted to travel there, which he confessed to his brother-in-law. Upon receiving permission from the Minister of Education under the pretext of completing his doctoral degree in Vienna, he left Tirana in the cold of December. He arrived in Lyon where he met the Albanian leftists Ymer Dishnica, Kolë Tromara, Kostandin (Kostë) Çekrezi and Llazar (Zai) Fundo. Even though the latter tried to stop him by reasoning that “You can fight Zog better in Albania”, in early January 1937, Luarasi travelled clandestinely from Paris to Barcelona and on to Albacete to join the International Brigades. This fugitive from King Zog’s regime, who dreamt of an order where justice and social equality ensured individuals’ dignity, was then one of the only well-



Although not committed to a particular leftist party in Albania, he would return from Spain as a member of the Spanish communist party. He spent five years during WWII in internment camps in France, where “together with Mehmet Shehu, we stayed connected to the world outside the camp”, as he recalled.”

Skënder Luarasi

known intellectuals not known to be associated with any leftist group in Albania, and he went to Spain on his own initiative. He believed in revolution, equality and anti-fascism, and until the end of his life, he would proudly recount his participation in the Spanish Civil War.

The 37 years prior to that war, which he considered his war, had not been easy. As the son of Petro Nini Luarasi, one of the most renowned activists of Albanian nationalism, Skënder became an orphan when his father was murdered by Greek nationalists. With the assistance of his mother's family, the Sevos, who were one of the founders of “Vatra”, and of his brother, at a very young age Skënder attended Robert College in Istanbul. He later continued his studies in the USA in Easton Pennsylvania in 1916 and at the American International College in Springfield, Massachusetts, in 1918. In 1920, he returned to Albania and served at the Red Cross in Elbasan. He continued his secondary and higher education at intervals in Vienna, and at the Freistadt Gymnasium (1922–1926) and graduated from the Faculty of Philology in Vienna University (1930). Spending his youth between the USA and Austria shaped his political identity, including what he considered American democratic principles, which he found fostered in him being an engaged and responsive citizen. Sonila Boçi, upon whose work this article relies, highlights that as a teacher, Luarasi would teach his students that “the worst slave is the one who desires to be a slave” and that “a man is free when he forms and freely expresses his opinions”.

As King Zog consolidated his power, and Marxist ideas spread in opposition, Luarasi rewrote his first nationalist articles. He identified himself as a revolutionary, without pinpointing a specific part of the left spectrum; however, many of his former students considered him a Marxist. The genesis of Luarasi's Marxism, like many of his contemporaries, were related to Lenin's denouncement of the secret Treaty



Luarasi with his family.

of London, which partitioned Albania. Furthermore, at the time, many who would be considered Albanian heroes identified themselves as “socialists” or “Bolshevik”; however, as Kristo Frashëri argues, they belonged to the non-Marxist left current. According to historian Sonila Boçi, this also applied to Skënder Luarasi, as evidenced by his own recollections: “me too, like the Americans demanded reforms... my desire for reforms and freedom has been named ‘heresy’, ‘anarchism’, and even ‘communism’”. His “clash” with King Zog began when in the articles published in “Djalëria” [Boyhood], Luarasi supported the June Revolution. This would cost him not only his Vienna scholarship, but also led to three months of prison, after his sister’s wedding in 1928. In the early 1930s, Luarasi had become a professor of Albanian, English and German at the Technical School of Tirana, without ceasing his anti-Zogu activity. “On 12 January,” writes Luarasi, “I was imprisoned for three months because of anonymous *letters* [to Ministry of Interior Affairs] in Tirana and posters in Korça”. One year later he was transferred to the Commercial School of Vlora. Labelled a problematic professor, he returned to Tirana only after intervention by the Minister of Education, Mirash Ivanaj, an old family friend. However, he maintained contacts with revolutionaries; the teachers who addressed King Zog’s nephews as “Your Highness”, he referred to as “lackeys”; and he expelled the sons of feudalists. “I helped in democratising the school by recommending scholarships only to poor boys with revolutionary souls”, he recalled.

In 1934–1935, Minister of Education Hilë Mosi asked him to teach in Shkodra. However, in addition to improving the educational system in Shkoder and settling religious differences, Luarasi distributed pamphlets and revolutionary literature, introducing Gorky’s novel *Mother*, translated by Tajar Zavalani, into the curriculum. His students Lazër Radi, Arshi Pipa, Ramiz Xhabija, Andrea Varfi remembered their literature teacher fondly, recalling how he lectured on the left and the need for radical changes in the organisation of

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One year later, Luarasi's "rebellion" appeared again in defence of Sejfulla Malëshova, despite the two having previously clashed. Both Luarasi and Malëshova opposed the Communist Party's division of historical writers into progressive and reactionary camps, for example that important figures of the Albanian Renaissance such as Gjergj Fishta, Ndre Mjeda, Fan.S. Noli and Faik Konica should be divided as such.

Skënder Luarasi

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the country's society and politics. Among students' essays on the subject "What is old collapses, times change, and new life blossoms among the ruins", he included an excerpt from his translation of *William Tell* by Friedrich Schiller, hoping to instil new leftist ideas in his students. In front of the class, Luarasi read the essay of his student Qemal Stafa, which represented a manifesto of the contemporary Albanian communist left. It was thus all this "parenthesis" that led him towards Spain. In 1937, from Madrid, where he felt like a "new life was blossoming among the ruins", Luarasi wrote an article "Ahmet Zogu hangs his own friends", following the execution of Ismet Toto. Luarasi took a distinctive approach towards political opponents, which, as Sonila Boçi observes, unlike the Albanian Stalinists, whose culture demanded condemning opponents as sworn enemies, Luarasi not only did not denigrate them, he did not refrain from showing sympathy for Toto's intellect. Through researching various documents, memoranda and articles, Boçi discerns that Luarasi's experience in Spain and contact with Marxists radicalised his political positions. Without turning into a fixation, one can note the signs of an ideological colour blindness in the fighter of Spain. Some scholars consider that Albanians need to be free from oppressive ruled and to seek justice made Marxist-Leninist communism appear to be the only solution in their quest for equality in the political and social system. However, oftentimes, due to the resulting injustices, the revolt against some systems led to even harsher political systems. This was also the case in Luarasi's life. In him, Boçi sees the symbiosis of two ideologies, the patriotic and the anti-fascist left. Although not committed to a particular leftist party in Albania, he would return from Spain as a member of the Spanish communist party. He spent five years during WWII in internment camps in France, where "together with Mehmet Shehu, we stayed connected to the world outside the camp", as he recalled. After refusing Kostandin "Kostë" Çekrezi's proposal to move to the USA, he escaped from the camp and taught private lessons in France until he was returned to Albania.

On 13 June 1945, Skënder Luarasi returned with the enthusiasm of the one who had realised his political dream: victory against fascism and victory of a system he believed in. In 1945, he ran in the elections for the Kolonja area and was a leading actor in establishing the League of Writers. However, cracks soon appeared. Both his public speeches and articles published during 1945 made it clear that his dreams for the country differed from CPA policies. Luarasi considered as allies those countries that had recognised Albania in November 1945, including the Western allies, and talked about Albania's political unity as a shared homeland for the LANÇ fighters and Ballists, whereas the Political Bureau (of the Communist Party) declared its alliance with the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, and began polemics the USA and UK. By February 1946 it also officially sanctioned class struggle as the core. The elimination of collaborationists, some of which Balli members, was followed by the elimination of certain LANÇ leftists. It is difficult to discern Luarasi's political thought at that time. His writings decreased in number and the until now expressive man seems to have remained silent during the sessions of the Albanian Parliament (People's Covenant (Kuvendi Popullor), which he was a member, as Kolonja district's representative. Some of his contradictory positions as a member of People's Covenant (Kuvendi Popullor) on 1946 seemed to affirm his ambivalence, to that point that he was in favour of terminating the mandate of the Shkodra representative, and his former student, Kolë Prela. The nearly two-year silence was replaced by a belligerent Luarasi in April 1948. He criticised the ministry's educational policies and discriminatory behaviour towards professors: "Our leaders sit comfortably in the ministry's armchairs and issue orders; they even had the audacity to attack professors. I have requested that I be able to lecture about Faik Konica, in line with the programme, but they have refused. I have found Faik Konica's works in warehouses, in the grocers of Tirana, used for wrapping paper. Why? Because they call him a feudalist".

One year later, Luarasi's "rebellion" appeared again in defence of Sejfulla Malëshova, despite the two having previously clashed. Both Luarasi and Malëshova opposed the Communist Party's division of historical writers into progressive and reactionary camps, for example that important figures of the Albanian Renaissance such as Gjergj Fishta, Ndre Mjeda, Fan.S. Noli and Faik Konica should be divided as such. Similar to Malëshova, Luarasi opposed the political imposition that literature be interpreted only through current themes or be placed only in historical contexts on the National Liberation War. Because of this position, he was expelled from the League of Writers. However, the professor's reactions

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" Topar sekret "

À provoset
Shefi Seksionit të Veprave
Majior
(Format Katonit)
Tirana, më 24.11.51

V e r d i m
(me transferimin e dosjes formulare 2/A.)
te Skender Luarasi.

Ura Funtori Operativ Major Qiriako Frokopi i Drejtorise i te mbasi pas materialit qe mendohej ujen formulare 2/A te Skender Luarasi t,

G e j t a

se Skender Luarasi, per aktivitet kurdis qashte perqendruar te agitacion e propagande, eshte marrë r nia qesh ne vitin 1951.

As gane se sektori Inteligjences dimes (Un ti) i kalon si objekt Drejtorias P. Nbrendeshme Tirane bequr nga instruktori zbi mbajtjen evidencave opera

V e n d o r a

transferimin e dosjes formulare 2/A. nepermet kart Drejtorias P. Nbrendeshme Tirane per te vazhduar me t niman e tij.-

Funtori Operativ
Majior (Qiriako Frokopi

u-shityp 1 kop.
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The file on Luarasi, The Authority for Information on Former State Security Documents.

Set 5 (177)

Karte P. On. P. Nbrendes
These b.p. "Kosovjenti"
me bazen "MikroFoni"

P A P O R T

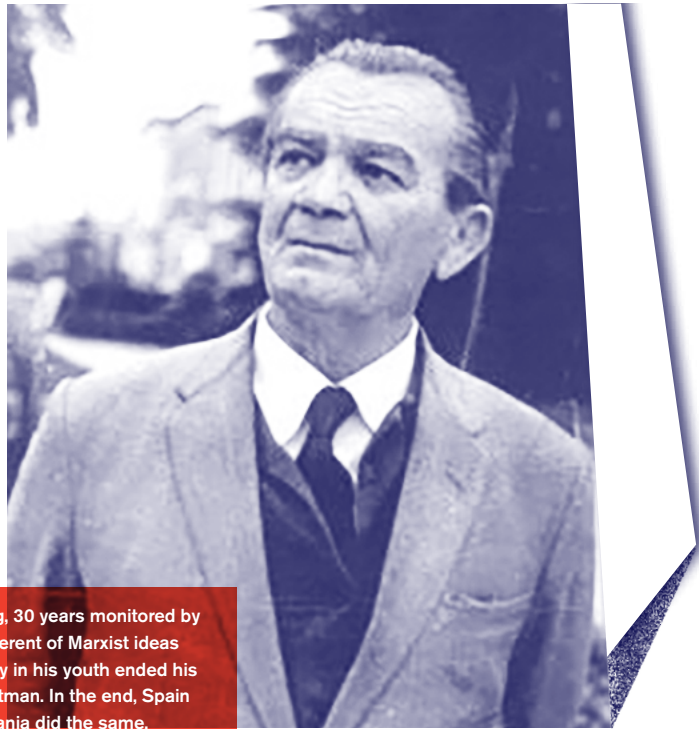
1) Ne Qytet ... 1970 ud e kazoje me Andrea Dibrin me Er. Zent'e Posen. Se dy tek shkrua ne qyte e komuniste shpesh si kishte vevoje per te lyster qashtes, po' mepasesi i komunistes mangonte. Andrea duke mare shkas nga shqesia e komuniste, thus

"Ua nuk ka rrezull, mak ka ne drejtesi, kam takuar dita dite me pare Skender Luarasi. Skenderi me tise se keta eshte diktatura e te pa paneve, kster-pene vota rrasje nje qjori, p-sh-vine tek une ofice ra te sigurimit, stivile, qe te marrin vesh se qjore them une per kete ose ate qashtje. Pse'qaspe zeta mak liron qashte dhe legjete e botoa se qashtje, rrethoje jone nuk ep ato die qashte nje qjori po te komenteje ndonje qjori nga keta lajme, q'ndre qashte. Ne qaste se do si laje nje gazetate e jashtme dhe rrethoje q'ndre qashte, shetere edhe po ti thoshin qjorit mak do te dille vevoje qe te shqesia. Skenderi tha qe keta le te shkasin q'ndre q'ndre, po' le te lene edhe lajmet e shqipta e huaj.-

Keshtu ishte puna prandaj se nuk shkruajtes qe ne bte ndermond te shkruaj, po qe te shkruaj dimes te shkruaj sig eshte jeta ne te vartese, po keta se ten dot se keta duhet shkruajtur ne nje drej-tiu.-

Prandaj Andrea tha se ishte keqshilluar me Skenderin per te qyte ne korrespondence me shkakun e tij (te Adresa) se Sh. I. A., mbasi shume here i ka shkruar se sies adresa ne New-York, por mak kishte marre pergjigje. Atehere Skenderi i tha qe Andrea ti shkruante te vellejt te Skenderi n'Amertke (i dhe dhe adresa). Skenderi e keshillot qe ne leter shkruante per mendotin per qashtien qe s'kishte marre pergjigje dhe te asse i kerkonte qje, se mak bente dhe repse letrat per jashte kontrollohen nje per nje. Skenderi i kishte thase qe te shkruante vete Andrea, se mak bente qe per kete pune ti shkruante vete Skenderi te vellejt te tij.-

and his friendship with the representatives sentenced in the infamous trial of the members of parliament led State Security to begin monitoring him in 1951. Conversations he shared with collaborator friends, reported to State Security, shed light on Luarasi's political thought. He referred to himself as a communist in past tense. The disappointment and discontent about the general state of the country and what he saw as a government of mediocre and visionless people, oftentimes, taking quite personal notes, can be discerned from his State Security file. Reports provided by State Security collaborators reveal his criticism of nepotism, treatment of intellectuals and imposition of literary model choosed by the government. Believing that a writer should be free to choose their own topics, philosophical approach and writing method, he criticised what he referred to as the lynching of writers, such as in the case of the Kasëm Trebeshina's sentencing, when Luarasi stated "this is not literature of socialist realism, but of socialist hypocrisy". The stubborn professor did not give much regard for class struggle, because to him, an individual should be assessed by their talents not their political beliefs. Hence, in 1956, when Arshi Pipa, newly released from political imprisonment, knocked on the door of the state publishing house in Tirana, Skënder Luarasi intervened to have his former student hired, whom he valued as a translator. His criticism also targeted Enver Hoxha, such as in 1957, when he did not hesitate in drawing a parallel between Hoxha and Stalin: "Now, we also must tell comrade Enver that he too should be more connected with the masses". The State Security collaborator codenamed "Dragon" reported that Luarasi had stated to Nasho Jorgaqi that "I did not want to discuss about (several historic matters) it , but when I thought over how history is the temple of a nation, I went ahead and spoke... If they would not have let me speak, I would have gone directly to Enver Hoxha and would have demanded my right". In fact, Enver Hoxha had been harsh of Luarasi's opinions, referring to him "the bourgeois historian" who used "anti-Albanian and anti-scientific" reasoning. By the mid-1950s he was readmitted to the League of Writers and in 1960–1961, he established the English department at the University of Tirana. The loss of his wife, Olga, marked a difficult period in his life. After a quiet period in his professional



Thrice imprisoned by Zog, 30 years monitored by the communists, the adherent of Marxist ideas who lectured about Gorky in his youth ended his life as a translator of Whitman. In the end, Spain devoured Spain, and Albania did the same.

life, on 26 October 1964, when Ismail Kadare's novel *Gjenerali i ushtrisë së vdekur* [The General of the Dead Army] was criticised by the League of Writers for ideological reasons, Luarasi highly praised the work and compared Kadare to Hemingway, leading to a serious confrontation with the Party of Labour of Albania's Central Committee delegate to the League. He was expelled again and was increasingly monitored, in addition due to his marriage to the Soviet professor, Maya Polyakova.

In the following years, Skënder Luarasi endured Albania's Stalinist totalitarian rule by taking refuge in his studies on important figures of the National Awakening and rendering texts of Shakespeare, Goethe, Byron, Longfellow and Whitman into Albanian. He lived as a disillusioned revolutionary, raising his voice as he could. According to State Security officers, he was "dissatisfied and would never change", whilst he endeavoured to educate the "free man" instead of "the new man". His strong character, often expressed as loud opinions, forced to live without free spaces, might have forced him to make compromises, but he maintained the conviction that culture was the only way towards progress. He lived believing in freedom, even though he endured the watchful eyes of State Security until his death on 27 April 1982. He remained, as Lasgush Poradeci described him "a dear friend, great patriot, great democrat, great 'brawler'". Thrice imprisoned by Zog, 30 years monitored by the communists, the adherent of Marxist ideas who lectured about Gorky in his youth ended his life as a translator of Whitman. In the end, Spain devoured Spain, and Albania did the same. However, Porcel and Luarasi would both show, at different times and places, the individual's need for dignity and freedom.

"I wanted the people of my homeland to live a kind life, one of justice and social equality, where everyone enjoyed the fruit of their labour, and was honoured as a full citizen, and that no one would live on the back of the others. I put it this way to avoid the word 'socialism', as it has given rise to numerous speculations" - Skënder Luarasi.

Petro Marko



A volunteer from outside the ranks

“I wrote as a poet, a journalist, and a writer... I was harshly criticised, and sentenced not to be published Worse than if I had died: indeed, I was living, but... I had been destroyed as a creator” recalled Marko. Even until the end of his autobiographical notes, he did not abandon the ideals of his communist youth, drawing a line between his early ideology experience and his ordeal through the regime.

“Long live life! Life on the rocks, life on the sea waves, life when it was hard to live, hard to love, hard to dream and hard to die”. This excerpt from Petro Marko’s novel *Një emër në katër rrugë* [A name at the crossroads], which was “cursed” by the communist regime, forms succinct metaphor for his life. The year was 1972 when he wrote it. He had lived through escape and trial during the monarchy, opposition based on republicanism, the Spanish War and internment in fascist Italy; he had been an early follower of communism and had come to resent the form it took when assuming power; had known the cold cells of Albanian prisons, had married and become a father, and had coped with numerous burdens. Like an omen, this phrase preceded his expulsion from the League of Writers, his book being turned into cardboard², and his only son being arrested; he would know quite well how much it hurt “when it was hard to live and hard to die”. And he lived through much, including the last breath of communist rule, perhaps without losing the faith in the idealism of the ideology.

A man with grey, curly hair, with a cigarette in the corner of his lips, and his stare affixed to the ground. When this image was captured in a photograph, his dreams had already been killed, one after the other, endlessly. He lost his father quite early, and spent his childhood as an orphan in Dhërmi near Himara, under his grandmother’s care. After elementary school, he attended the Commercial School in Vlora, where he became acquainted with Kolë Kamsi and Ernest Koliqi, as well as early communist literature. In 1932, he arrived in Tirana, but was then

2. Translator’s note: during the communist period, extant copies of books not conforming to the Party line were recycled into cardboard. Hence, saying that a book was turned into cardboard or was “for cardboard” [për karton] implied that it had been removed from circulation.


assigned to teach in Dhërmi and then Dropull. Edon Qesari, upon whose research work this article relies, notes that rather than using a Marxist framework, it appears that Marko followed a political current rather based on radical republicanism. He spoke with the people of Dropull about injustice, pointing out how the village elder was elected every year, while the king remained the same. Occasionally, he would read from the Greek communist youth organ “I protopori”. The Fier rebellion in 1935 changed this, and Marko left for Greece. It is unclear whether he left when prompted by his friend, Asim Vokshi (who, as part of the Albanian army, warned him of the danger he may face, as he had been perceived as a communist propagandiser by the authorities) or with the aim of continuing his university studies in Athens, as he later recounted. The government of Tirana depicted the rebellion as a Bolshevik plot; hence, anti-Zogism took on a leftist form, and Marko himself recollected that the rebellion “aimed at freeing the people from tyranny and the danger of Italian occupation”.

While in Greece, where he was acquainted with the likes of Spiro Koleka, also from Himara, and Omer Nishani, his opposition to and discontent with the Albanian monarchy began to merge with a militant leftism. According to Edon Qesari, the opposition of the mid-1930s did not come as a result of a particular intellectual formation; Marko himself would later note in his memoirs that “we all loved communism, without knowing what communism meant”.

By 1935, he had returned from Greece and had started writing for the “Illyria” magazine, under the pseudonym DEMO-KOTI (Democrat Communist). Mehdi Frashëri’s government under King Zog in late 1935 provided a small opening for press freedom. As requested by Vangjel Koça and Branko Merxhani, Marko came to Tirana. This moment irrevocably marked his shift from an intellectual indifferent towards political events, to one whose oppositional views were enshrined in the press. Subsequent developments only pushed Marko’s political worldview even further to the left, which he shared with other factions in Tirana. In April 1936, he co-founded the short-lived magazine “ABC”, which also included prominent names later associated with the cultural policies of the Hoxha’s period, such as Dhimitër Shuteriqi and Shevqet Musaraj. Qesari notes that the tone of the articles resembled that of a declamation from the pulpit of a people’s tribunal, in which Marko’s class struggle approach anticipated “a rebellion of the soul and gut”. According to Qesari, such an extreme editorial approach, harshly criticised the country’s social state, which paled in comparison to Dante’s Hell, and disparaging trade policies between Albania and Italy, greatly impressed both Branko Merxhani and Millosh Gjergj Nikolla (a famous Albanian writer known as Migjeni).

After only one month, without having published its second issue, “ABC” was forced to close. Ethem Toto, the Minister of Interior of the Frashëri government called it a “Bolshevik” organ. However, its material continued to circulate illegally. Marko would even personally lodge a protest with the Prime Minister, but this did not save him from being sentenced to six months’ internment. However, this did not keep him away from Tirana, which was drowning in controversy, as the internment order was not enforced. By the end of summer 1936, he took on the role of managing the journal “Përpjekja shqiptare” [Albanian Endeavour], established by Branko Merxhani.

With the fall of Mehdi Frashëri’s government, the brief period of press freedom also came to an end. “Përpjekja shqiptare” was required to publicly declare that it was not a communist journal. Merxhani, without any leftist leanings, obliged, whilst Marko moved to Korça, where he contributed to other publications, such as “Vatra”, “Arbëria”, “Shtypi” [The Press] and “Bota e re” [New World]. He carried with him resentment, which found its way into a research article on contemporary literature, where, according to Aurel Plasari, Marko attacked Ernest Koliqi and Vangjo Nirvana, denouncing the political-futurism of the “demagogue writers”. This marked a sign of the further politicisation of Marko’s writing. The journal “Bota e Re”, headquartered in Korça, which may have served as a platform for the deliberation of ideas within the city’s communist cell, would also only publish for a short period (from April 1936 to February 1937). Even though Marko’s intellectual contribution to its pages remained



Although still in his twenties, wherever he worked, Marko clearly demonstrated his leftist ideological leanings, despite knowing quite well that the left and right had their own shades.

modest, what is worth emphasising, according to Qesari, is the influence that the atmosphere exerted on his formation as a militant of a left who did not particularly excel in leftist theory.

Although still in his twenties, wherever he worked, Marko clearly demonstrated his leftist ideological leanings, despite knowing quite well that the left and right had their own shades. Regarding Albanian anti-Zogists in Paris such as Ali Këlcyra, Beqir Valteri and Rexhep Mitrovica, Marko said “these politicians dreamed that the Great Powers would remove Zog... only then would they return... and run the government, and be in power”, while back in Albania, the communists faced other dilemmas.

Prominent names like Lllazar Fundo, Sejfulla Malëshova, Ali Kelmendi and, especially, Tajar Zavalani, whom Marko considered an energetic activist, directly shaped the maturing of his political thought. As Qesari observes, the time these activists spent in Moscow gave them a sort of holy status as communists in the eyes of the youth, but in reality, there was a gap between their political militancy and their view of the Soviet Union. In his recollections, Petro Marko would state that they had known a very poverty-stricken Soviet Union in the 1920s, but did not talk about it: “They were not enthusiasts, they were happy that they had left that country and had returned... When they saw how enthusiastic and hopeful of communism we were, they could not disagree with us; otherwise, they would be called traitors and renegades”. Such silence on their experience of communism, unlike that of the ideals in text, would have later ramifications for them and their country. The time spent in Korça gave Marko the opportunity to establish direct relationships with the Albanian leftist group Puna [Labour], a forerunner of the Korça communist cell. This group maintained vital relations with the Albanian Communist Representation in Paris that acted as a *plénipotentiaire* office of the Comintern for the recruitment of Albanian volunteers to the Spanish Civil War. Qesari believes that Marko’s time in Korça led to his eventual conversion to communism, and this same environment would eventually compel him go in the Spanish Civil War. Under the auspices of Lllazar Fundo, in the summer of 1937, Petro Marko made his way to Spain, following the footsteps of Asim Vokshi and Skënder Luarasi. The departure from Albania had not been



(From the left to the right) Petro Marko, Sejfulla Malëshova and Safo Marko, Petro's wife.

“

Listen carefully! You have been a militant in the Spanish party, in the French party, in the Italian party... The one in here is not like them. This is a party founded by two Serbs and is a party of terrorists. Thus, listen to me: you should keep silent for at least a year about what you see and hear. Otherwise, you'll suffer...

Marko remembered Sejfulla Malëshova having warned him.

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easy, as Tirana had officially declared its neutrality with regard to a Spanish domestic conflict which was taking on an unprecedented international nature. In his memoirs, Marko revealed that before departure, Omer Nishani asked him to provide a briefing of the situation in Albania to Fundo in Paris. Marko took the role as a mediator in the political current that aimed to unite communist and other anti-Zogist elements. Throughout the world, the clash between Trotskyists and pro-Soviets would grow increasingly fatal, whilst Albanian communism would orient itself towards Moscow, excepting Fundo. In this great war of factions, Petro Marko would be a mere volunteer soldier, but through which he obtained, for the first time, membership in a communist party in France.

Among many other Albanians in Spain, like Asim Vokshi or Mehmet Shehu, Marko fought with the Garibaldi Brigade, headed by socialist and communist Italians, including Randolfo Paciardi and Luigi Longo. The latter would grant Marko permission to publish the International Brigades' informative journal "Volunteer of Freedom" in Albanian. Regarding this journal, which exalted the Soviet Union, Ali Kelmendi would write to Longo from Paris that they had not sent "Petro Marko there to write poems, but to fight in the front". In his memoirs, Petro Marko revealed that the Paris communist group was divided; Llazar Fundo was denounced as a heretic by the Comintern and pro-Stalinist Albanians. Ali Kelmendi, who had found himself falling out of favour with Albanian communists in Paris, would call Fundo a Trotskyist and would be expelled together with Tajar Zavalani. According to Qesari, either due to those circumstances or by his own consideration Marko distanced himself from these conflicts, a silence later seen as a political choice. However, he remained faithful to the Comintern's official line, and as a battalion commissar, he declared his Stalinist allegiance, causing a final break with Kelmendi. As with the rest of anti-fascist brigades at the end of the conflict, as a volunteer with the International Brigades, Marko's would also withdraw from Spain.

Marko found himself in the French town of Grenoble, where the French Communist Party member enrolled in university. Kelmendi called him an "adventurer", whilst Marko noted that none of the communists visited the Albanians in the camps or others left without any support, unlike the nationalists. Although this was written in his 1970s memoirs, according to Qesari, this clearly reveals a divergence: on one side, the establishment of a unifying political entity of Albanian communists, including activists completely bound to the Comintern's will; on the other stood loosely organised individuals, unsecure without a fixed political home. Apparently, Petro Marko, who had never been part of any of the poorly organised Albanian leftist groups (besides his connections with some well-known individuals), belonged to that cluster of militants who did not adhere to a group. Comintern had ordered the volunteers of the Spanish War to return to their homelands, and thus Marko returned to Albania in April 1940. Fairly soon, his name appeared on a list of individuals accused of agitating against the authorities of Italian-occupied Albania. Between May 1940 and March 1942, he remained in prison without facing trial. Upon his release, he was listed again due to uprisings in Himara. Thus, as a French Communist Party member who has fought in the Spanish War, unable to establish a solid relationship with the newly united communists in Tirana, besides a brief encounter with Koço Tashko and Koçi Xoxe, was interned in Italy until 1943. There, he joined the Italian communist partisans and following his arrest by the fascists, his life was saved by the (collaborationist) Albanian Minister of Education, Ernest Koliqi. As attested by the AIDSSH files, he was repatriated in October 1944.

Petro Marko was a militant whose political orientation could not easily be fixed among the currents and developments of Albanian communist left, had already been clear before the war, when his political and intellectual profile never definitively fell into to any of the factions which crystallised prior to the founding of the CPA, as argued by Qesari. From 1939 onwards, Marko had several experiences with the parties of Comintern states, where ideological disagreements and the prevailing mindsets of top communist leaders were evident. Marko remembered Sejfulla Malëshova having warned him: "Listen carefully! You have been a militant in the Spanish party, in the French party, in the Italian party... The one in here is not like them. This is a party founded by two Serbs and is a party of terrorists. Thus, listen to me: you should keep silent for at least a year about what you see and hear. Otherwise, you'll suffer...".

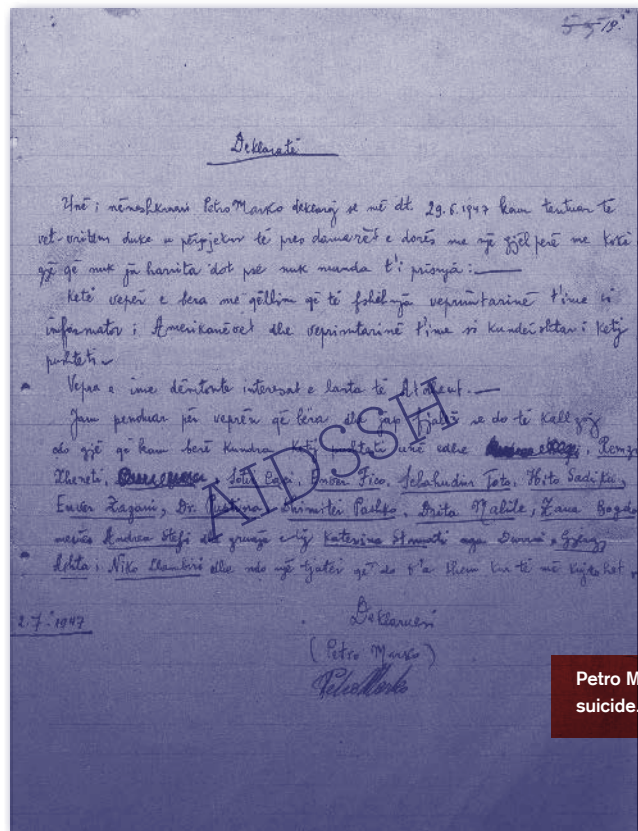


Petro Marko and the poet Fatos Arapi.



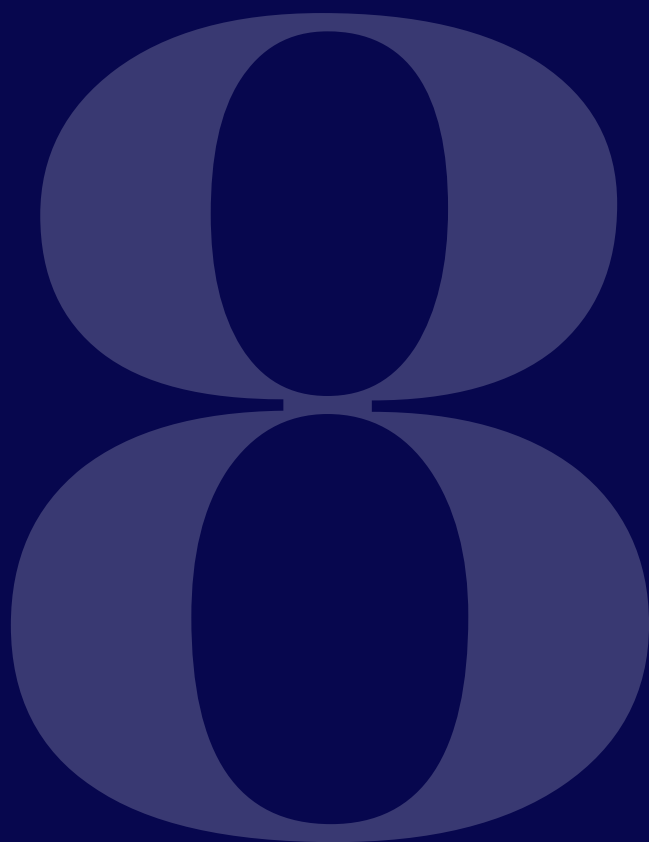
Petro Marko with his daughter.

This note found among the writer’s memoirs, speaks volumes about his relation with the new regime. Marko was assigned to be the editor-in-chief of the newspaper “Bashkimi” [Unity] where, despite being critical of Albanian–Yugoslav relations, he depicted it idyllically. But his friendship with Sejfulla Malëshova after the latter’s downfall, his nationalist tendencies, and his militant experience forebode an exacerbation of his relationship with the regime. In the spring of 1947, he was accused of “criminal acts against the people and the state”. Marko believed that this was prompted by actors defending Yugoslav interests, and by autumn of that year, the accusations were expanded. According to a statement where he accepted to detail “my activity at the service of the Americans” (in Albania), signed after months of torture in jail, Marko admitted to have provided the American government with “biographical information on various persons in power and whether they were communist party members, something which was critical to the Americans, e.g., the Commander Hoxha, Sejfulla Malëshova, Ymer Dishnica, Ymer Nishani, Nako Spiro, Spiro Koleka”. The accusations alleged that Marko had engaged in political debates with a group of MPs at Dajti Hotel and their homes, and to have had connections with the American professor Harry Fultz (which for the communist government had been serving to the American Military Mission in Albania); it was also stated that he was “one of the active agents of American espionage in Albania” and to have collaborated with the puppet government during 1943–44 in Italy. He did not accept the charges, testifying to his previous relationship with the communists, but was nonetheless found guilty and sentenced to three years in prison by the High Military Court. Life in prison did not seem to have shaken his ideological convictions, though he was becoming aware of the system which had come to power. Having been active prior to the war, now he became apolitical; he kept quiet and withdrew. He maintained some relations with those he had met before 1945, such as Mehmet Shehu (whom he had met in Spain), whom he even called his “saviour”, although he wrote that “he was no longer the Mehmet that I knew”. Edon Qesari draws



the conclusion that Marko being the protégé of the second most powerful man in the People's Republic of Albania allowed him to continue to write and be published for a long time. Books like *Qyteti i fundit* [*The Last City*] were published uncensored, although this was not always the case. Even the friendship between Marko and Shehu would come to an end, and the writer's books would be turned into cardboard. When the Prime Minister raised his shoulders as if delivering Marko to the “executioners”, Marko was expelled from the League of Writers. Everything he had seen and felt made Marko follow a new path. “Then I found the key and picked topics dear to me, the wars of the brave, of my people for freedom, independence and liberation”. These books, on topics far from those he wished to write about, led him to receive official recognition from the state. It is interesting to read what Marko wrote of himself, which is similar to what the English author Julian Barnes wrote about Shostakovich in the Soviet Union, that by letting him live, they had actually killed him. “I wrote as a poet, a journalist, and a writer... I was harshly criticised, and sentenced not to be published Worse than if I had died: indeed, I was living, but... I had been destroyed as a creator” recalled Marko. Even until the end of his autobiographical notes, he did not abandon the ideals of his communist youth, drawing a line between his early ideology experience and his ordeal through the regime. He insisted upon the inconsistency he had distinguished between communism and the Albanian-Yugoslav condominium of 1944–1948. Until the end, Marko saw continuity between his leftist militancy and a sort of patriotic romanticism that had characterised him as an activist and writer. Petro Marko passed away on 23 December 1991. He did not live to see the Christmas Eve that would bring freedom to his country. If we were to ask how he lived, we could quote from his novel *Hasta la vista*, “Enter for a moment into the soul of a man who remained alone, without feelings, covered in dirt... While his friends have all been killed and the living few have withdrawn and the raging enemy has set his foot on the land of Catalonia! That's how I lingered ...”

Zef Mala



The repentant Leninist who could not keep silent

He said of communists that “they mainly are people guided by anger, not reason, and instead of elevating the people to the level of the aristocracy, they have lowered the aristocracy to the misery of the poor and call it class struggle”. The dithyrambs for the communism of the youth had faded, now that the western chalice enticed him.

“When they brought him to the Ballsh [internment] Camp, he was nearly blind; he could see light, but could not distinguish people or objects. His friends would always be ready to help”. In his memoir *Rrmo për me tregue* [*Live to Tell*], among the portraits of the prisoners he met in various penitentiary institutions, Father Zef Pllumi depicted Zef Mala, as “one of the most renowned names in the Albania of the new era, because he was the first to organise a ‘communist party’ countrywide, ‘the youth disease’ of the times”. The noble Shkodra youth, who began his studies at the Saverian College, would joke with the priest upon being expelled from school, and the priest would jokingly reply that they probably should have employed classic “Inquisition methods” to save the country from communism. With regards to the latter, both Zefs, the priest and the political activist, would have agreed, as they both served sentences as opponents of the regime.

A few months before he passed away in a prison hospital, Zef Mala, who had long been bed bound, would leave the priest Zef Pllumi his notes as his last will, as Pllumi writes, attesting that the former Leninist had transformed into a classic social democrat. Alas, the priest could not carry out his will. Those notes, which today resemble the “apocryphal disciples” were never uncovered, thus forever losing a potential treatise on freedom by a supposed former communist. However, the same communism that erased Zef Mala’s structured thoughts, “transcribed” them in the form of his prosecution file, preserved at the AIDSSH. One of the informants reported Mala having said, “I have renounced Marxism. Socialism has failed; there isn’t a bit of socialism or communism, only empty words, bare feet and an empty stomach”. Further shedding light on this transformation, during a conversation with the also imprisoned writer Kasëm Trebeshina, as they spoke softly and looked around for anyone passing by, the informant heard Mala state: “I do not write anymore, I read a little and think... humankind will advance through the great ideas of 1) Greek philosophy, 2) Christian morals and 3) Anglo-Saxon ideas of state and rights. The French Revolution

was the one that gave... values to humankind, whilst the one in Russia was a coup d'état, capable of destroying everything...". But it was too late for Mala; he had spent most of his life in the prisons of the monarchy, of the fascists and of his own communists; of a 60-year sentence, he served 25. As he neared his death, he described imperfect political system for which he had given over his youth.

It remains unclear when the Shkodran, educated in a Catholic school, had his first contact with communism. Edon Qesari, upon whose research, this article relies, mentions his acquaintance with some Italians in Shkodra in 1929–30, based on Zef Mala's *Promemoria* [Memorandum] written in prison (1948). "I learned why the oppression of life was only one form of social oppression and besides that, existed an even greater one, class oppression... I first read books and pamphlets on socialism, communism, and the Italian union movement, as well as on the Russian revolution... the aforementioned factors dictated my path and pushed me towards Communism, but we still did not know anything about real Marxism". He was only 15 years old at the time. At 19, four years later he had moved to Tirana, and after winning a scholarship from the Albanian government, he went to study at the Faculty of Philosophy in the University of Vienna. At the same time, Mala appeared in the press of Tirana writing articles on literature. Then, during his stay in Vienna, in 1934–36, the short trips to his homeland would be limited to the capital and his hometown; it is mostly likely this time when he established contact with Albanian radicals. However, Qesari notes that some consider Mala's engagement with leftist ideas to be linked to his stay in the Austrian capital, where Marxist-inspired social democrats had been in power for more than two decades, giving it the nickname "Red Vienna".

The Albanian authorities under the monarchy cancelled his scholarship because he had displayed Marxist ideas on the premises of the University of Vienna. Interrupting his studies in 1937, Mala returned to Tirana and became part of the "Arbënia" newspaper and had contacts with a leftist circle which included names later to become famous in Albanian politics, including Tuk Jakova, Vasil Shanto and Qemal Stafa. Among scholars in Shkodra, they had become well-known by the mid-1930s for promoting radical books. This was thus an important step in Mala's political journey, and only one year later, he would lead the Shkodra communist group. He was only 22 years old when he began translating pamphlets by classical Marxist authors, from Marx to Lenin, Stalin and Dimitrov; such an accomplishment demonstrates how Mala, who only 7 years prior had first learned only the concepts of class oppression, now clearly had a broad ideological understanding. In July 1937, Koço Tashko, one of the few Albanians with direct connections to Moscow, returned with the aim of unifying the "anarchic" domestic communist groups. This mission would mark the first steps of Mala's downfall.

In the context of the Spanish War, the Comintern encouraged temporary peace between Albanian communists and nationalists. This new tactical approach, which softened Comintern's position towards its opponents, was rejected by Mala. Since this was an initiative of Tashko, it was regarded by Mala and others communists in Shkodra as dictated by the interests of the Korça communist group, leading to animosity with that of Shkodra. Zef Mala, as the head of the Shkodra communist group, had made it clear that the relation of Shkodra communists with Comintern would not pass through "Korça", but through the Communist Party of Yugoslavia. The clash of the two groups became public through their respective publications: Shkodra's "Buletini jeshil" [The Green Bulletin] versus Korça's "Buletini i bardhë" [The White Bulletin]. Agreeing to communist unity, the authors of The Green Bulletin strongly objected to Korça's communists questioning their doctrinal purity and Leninist approach, stating that "Uncontrolled, even destructive, elements have infiltrated the communist movement (...) this destructive movement is speculating with the name of communism and the trust of the comrades not well-versed in Marxist works". According to Edon Qesari, if assuming that Zef Mala had a say in the document's authorship, then his political worldview becomes more evident regarding the divergences of the Korça and Shkodra groups, followers of two different schools of thought: Whilst those in Korça had fully adopted the line proposed by Dimitrov, the head of Comintern, to cooperate with other social-democratic, liberal and even nationalist parties, Mala's followers' rhetoric supported the official Comintern policy prior to Dimitrov's new approach. According

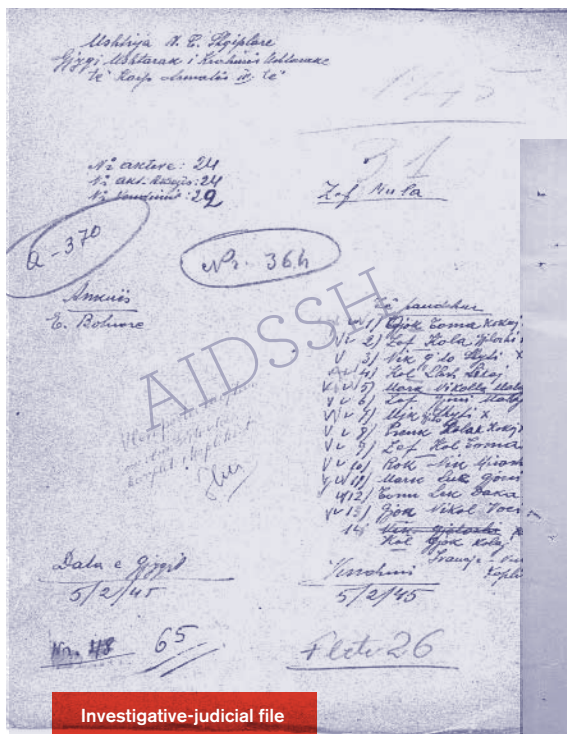


He was only 22 years old when he began translating pamphlets by classical Marxist authors, from Marx to Lenin, Stalin and Dimitrov; such an accomplishment demonstrates how Mala, who only 7 years prior had first learned only the concepts of class oppression, now clearly had a broad ideological understanding.

to accusations made by the Korça group, the divergences between the two Albanian communist cells began with semantics, from the notion of “dictatorship of the proletariat”, unsuitable to Albanian conditions, to a “social-fascist” theoretical approach. According to Qesari, notes of Leninist puritanism, calling for efforts to raise class consciousness in the lower strata of society, for party discipline and for international alignment were also quite evident. Qesari regards Mala’s statement that the communists of Shkodra had chosen to align itself with the Communist Party of Yugoslavia as problematic, since the party to which Mala referred would fall under Tito’s sway with Soviet blessing.

In January 1939, the Shkodra group leaders, including Zef Mala, and some Korça group members, would be arrested. The ad hoc trial nearly ended the Shkodra group’s activity. Qesari’s research indicates that the process focused on those in Shkodra, as the Korça group held more moderate views. The puritan line followed by the Shkodra group further complicated their position. Furthermore, at the brink of occupation, the monarch sought to pacify the country, which he felt he would not find in the radical approach of Mala’s followers, who, among others, regarded the occupation as an accelerator of poor socio-economic conditions and an opportunity for the break out of a socialist revolution. King Zog thus appears to have cooperated with the “communists” from Korça, as he not only spared them from being sentenced, but also cleared the political terrain from unruly and sectarian “fellow comrades”. Zef Mala was sentenced to 12 years in prison, and along with Qemal Stafa and Vasil Shanto, was sent to a labour camp. The invasion caused the prisons to open on 6 April 1939. Together with Vasil Shanto, Zef Mala would escape to Yugoslavia, where they were expelled and forced to return to Albania.

From then on, Zef Mala’s political fate would be distanced from that of the Shkodra communist group, although it remained an important chapter in his life. Arrested as an anti-fascist, Mala was interned in Ventotene, Italy, where he met anti-fascists and declared anti-Stalinists such as Llazar Fundo. Until the summer of 1943, when he returned to his homeland, settling in Peza, Mala’s political activity was interrupted and he remained



Investigative-judicial file no. 370, Zef Mala.



Security File no. 2505 for Zef Mala.

completely isolated from political developments in Albania. Upon his return, following the Italian capitulation, Mala found established a Communist Party with a firm hierarchy, very close to the Yugoslav party, which served as the link between Albanian communists and Moscow. “Most importantly, Mala face[d] ... a direct expression of the Stalinist will to rule out any kind of internal opposition”, Qesari notes. While he had been away, the groups had joined and he had been left out; in fact, his name was mentioned with contempt due to past disagreements with the Korça group. As evident by his Security file, the period of pre-party group clashes would lead to Mala being stigmatised after the war as “having anti-party tendencies, even after the Party’s establishment”. Apparently, in absentia, the burden of all “sectarian” wrongs had been placed on him, or this is what he would come to believe. He must have been made aware of this, as in 1943 he wrote a “self-critique” from prison addressed to the Communist Party’s Central Committee. “In the past, I have worked much, but also made mistakes; we made many friends, but also enemies...”, Mala recalls in his “Promemoria”. The reply of Enver Hoxha, who rule the party with an iron fist and a deadly smile, seemed to foretell Mala’s future: it oscillated between a reconciliatory and accusatory tone, stating, “The mistakes made by the different former communist groups have seriously impaired our movement... the consequences of the old work of groups... are felt...” but also “as you know that every punishment given by the Party has an educative aspect, and it helps those who have erred to realise them so that they can grow and find the right path”. But Mala’s “right path” would cross the Party’s path once again. Sensing alienation from the centre of political power, as he was not even a Party member, he found work as a department head in the National Library. Hoxha’s disdain, elicited when stating that there were some who regarded Mala as a “great theoretician”, would soon be quite evident. Later reports indicate that the job at the National Library would not be easy, not only because he had to deal with collections confiscated from the Hoxha regime’s opponents, but also because he would be arrested and charged for “failure to clear” “harmful books” in 1947.

With Tuk Jakova's intervention he was released two years later. Surprisingly, in 1949 he was appointed as director of the State Archive. But by 1952, Mala was closely monitored. Under the highest level of surveillance, agents found that he was openly opposing the regime and Enver Hoxha himself, for whom he scornfully said that "he was in Brussels when the rest worked for communism".

He must have believed that he had avoided prison in order to speak so freely and it is likely that he did not even know that he was being monitored. State Security reports revealed his comments on international and national issues, as well as his association with opponents of the regime, whilst the transcripts of his interrogation demonstrated a very cautious person. "Perhaps weary of the abandonment I found myself, my soul became corrupted and began to have and manifest thoughts that I never had before. They consist in commenting on great events and daily issues of power", would he state in 1955.

To the office charged with his interrogation, Zef Mala's danger consisted in the fact that he "sowed panic about the uncertainty of the country". He accepted the charges, but stated that "at the time when I have carried out this opposing agitation and propaganda activity, I did not think of it as such". In October 1955, he was sentenced to 5 years imprisonment in Burrel. He was constantly monitored, and according to the informants, he talked about communist groups prior to the founding of the Party, he supported the socialists of the West, and had not "repented". He was released in 1959 and continued to be monitored. Edon Qesari emphasises that the State Security reports of this time, the veracity of which should be viewed with some suspicion, also give us an idea about the evolution of Mala's Marxist thought. It is important to note, as Qesari argues, that he expressed it under the weight of Albania's political reality. The reports clearly reveal that he had gone through an ideological transformation, from a Leninist to a classical social democrat.

As reported by an informant, Mala is supposed to have stated that "We, the social democrats, hold the true mirror of justice and a real Marxist democracy... The masses should rise through evolution and have the full rights of freedom, and not fear the guns, as is customary nowadays". He knew that his name had become irrelevant. His close circles had either disappeared or been imprisoned. His illness and near-blindness might have made the loss of social relationships easier for him, as is evidenced in surveillance reports. He was moved from Tirana to Shkodra, interned in Zvërnec and then brought back to Tirana. It is interesting to note that despite being isolated, he was still being monitored and reported on. Mala stated that Albania's leadership did not offer a viable political path, but destroyed other options, especially in comparison to Khrushchev's evolutionism, which fought against those he considered "fanatics". Through a life lived under oppression and in prisons, he carried his burden of guilt and did not refrain from offering a *mea culpa*. According to a 1964 report, he stated "This is a totalitarian, police system, where terror is its principle, but I shouldn't complain, as I asked for this system". Such statements can be interpreted as a book an unpublished book on his political thinking. He had not been able to see the dream of his youth of a political system that at least would be less oppressive than the monarchy. He said of communists that "they mainly are people guided by anger, not reason, and instead of elevating the people to the level of the aristocracy, they have lowered the aristocracy to the misery of the poor and call it class struggle".

In 1968, the 53-year-old Zef Mala married a woman from Himara who came from a family persecuted by the regime. For three or four years, it appeared that his life had somewhat eased, despite being monitored and incited to speak by Security informers. Zef Mala did not give up his sincerity against the regime's policies. But sincerity was not part of social realism. In 1971, due to his isolation, his eye-illness and utter abandonment, he believed that "the devil" needed him any longer. Freedom of expression, prohibited at the time, was highly valuable to him. In summer 1978, Zef Mala was interned together with his family in Labovë e Madhe of Gjirokastra, where he is arrested following a letter to Mehmet Shehu, where he had written his political testament. He criticised the line of the Communist Party as unreconcilable "with the ideal of that freedom which had inspired my former work and thought". He was sentenced to 10 years in prison. He decided to defy the regime one last time. A few months later, on 26 December, Zef Mala would pass away, thus "refusing" to serve his sentence.

Isuf Keçi

9

The Youth Group communist under the totalitarian regime

Much of his life, including making important decisions, were closely linking to his brother, Hamit. Hamit was two years older than him, a former student of Naples military school. They invested their connections and wealth, including their residence (for meetings, demonstrations, and other activities) to further the movement. Isuf and Hamit, taking leadership positions in guerrilla units, were declared fugitives.

Isuf Keçi was born in 1917 in the official residence *konak* of one of Tirana's founding merchant families, dating back to the 17th century. He was the second offspring of the highly renowned national heroes, Ibrahim and Hafsa. The city was enjoying its freedom when the secondary school youth, amidst progressive notions, was first introduced to communism. In the 1930s, the ideological current was documented by the circulars of the Ministry of Internal Affairs addressed to the Ministry of Education; these circulars - perfect evidence of what they considered "socialist ideas threatening the nationalistic spirit".

The secret reports of His Majesty's Gendarmerie wrote of the communist ideology spreading in schools and trade unions. The report General Commander Shefki Shatku handed to King Zog classified what he considered "boyhood" into three groups: real communists, youth acting like communist for material purposes and boys claiming to be communists for the sake of appearing fashionable and intellectual (self-promoting). According to Dorian Koçi, upon whose research work this article relies, Isuf Keçi belonged to the third group.

Many years later, sitting in the defendant's table, Keçi would confess "I've laid hands and eyes on socialist texts ever since attending secondary school. They were given me by Faik Miraku and Qemal Stafa in a few instances." His assertion is indicative of far-left ideas which were popular among the youth of the time. However, what impelled the youth to embrace these ideas, like a vast number of intellectuals before them, was Lenin's condemnation of the secret Treaty of London, which called for the partition of Albania to its neighbouring countries. Moreover,

the long-standing desire for quick modernisation was to Bolshevik revolutionary change. Albania was first introduced to communism following the Seventh World Congress of the Communist International (Comintern) (1935) by Koço Tashko in 1937 and the Korça communist group started organising.

Isuf Keçi was in his final year of secondary schooling when 73 communists, i.e. most of Shkodra communist group, were arrested. The January Trial in 1939 and resulting sentences of up to 10 years' imprisonment caused a panic among the youth. In the interrogation record during the communism, many years later Isuf described that two months before the Italian invasion, he had been fearful and had not read or distributed any communist literature about the end of the bourgeois, proletariat, Moscow trials, Soviet success in life and society or the causes of the class struggle. In the aftermath of the invasion, Keçi went on to study at the Polytechnic University of Torino. He left his studies and came to Albania, in the late 1940 because he was unwilling to stay in Italy. Although there were many Albanians at the Polytechnic, including Qemal Stafa, there is no evidence that Isuf Keçi took part in distributing socialist literature during his stay.

Much of his life, including making important decisions, were closely linking to his brother, Hamit. Hamit was two years older than him, a former student of Naples military school, who had refused to graduate and serve the Italian army, eventually leading the Italian fascist government to intern him. By the end of 1939 and through the early 1940s, the Albanian left turned more radical; the Korça and Shkodra groups contained youth of all communist colours, be them Stalinists or Trotskyites. Isuf and his brother Hamit were early members of the Communist Youth Group, which started operating in 1935 under the leadership of Sadik Premte and Anastas Lula. Other notable names such as Sadik Stavaleci, Kristo Frashëri, Jusuf Kambo, Agron Çorati, Hysni Kapo, Ramadan Çitaku stood beside the Keçi brothers. Before the Italian invasion, their activity centred around translating and disseminating communist literature, but 1940 marked the first effort of the groups to come into union.

In November 1940, Isuf travelled to Italy to meet his interned brother, and to following Anastas Lula's "task" from Communist Group of Korca to meet "the comrades of the Italian Communist Party" through his brother. Hamit introduced Isuf to one of them, who gave Isuf instructions on how to make contact with the party, but apparently the Italians were not interested in meeting. Isuf returned to Albania after six days; the refusal of the Italian Communist Party to meet led Albanian Communist's turn towards the Yugoslavian Communist Party. The Communist Youth Group was labelled as "a zealot group of action, ready to jump into dangerous ventures" from other communists. In order to show their strength to competing communist groups, they took to breaking Yugoslavian communist Miladin Popović from his internment in Peqin, although the latter would later become the group's enemy. In any case, the war made the parties set aside their differences, coming together to found the Communist Party of Albania (*Partia Komuniste e Shqipërisë*) on 8 November 1941. Although they were founders of the Youth Group, the Keçi brothers did not attend the first meeting of the Communist Party of Albania, but would make significant contributions to the group and the guerrilla warfare in Tirana. They invested their connections and wealth, including their residence (for meetings, demonstrations, and other activities) to further the movement. Isuf and Hamit, taking leadership positions in guerrilla units, were declared fugitives. Despite their active engagement, the brothers, as was the case with other members of the Communist Youth group, were frequently looked down upon; this was especially true of Yugoslavian emissaries who had grown suspicious, perhaps because the youth were not inclined to party discipline – they were labelled as anarchists, complacent and bookish.

In May 1942, Popović denounced the Communist Youth Group as a "Trotskyist Group", writing to Tito that the "cleansing of intruders" had begun. The differences between members of the CPA and Youth Group became more visible after two months, at the Extraordinary CPA Conference held in Tirana in June. The youth were labelled as a "factionist" group, therefore they would be subject to "thorough cleansing", an indication of first appearance of Stalinist techniques and language on the Albanian left. Blind obedience to the party was deemed essential, especially for Yugoslavian emissaries. Anastas Lula, Sadik Premtja, Halit Petrela, Sandër Jorgoni, Mërkur Çela and Shaban Jegeni were banned from the Communist



Although Isuf was entrusted with party tasks on occasion (such as organising the demonstration of 7 April 1942), some considered him to have had “intruded on” and “domineer” the party. The historian Kristo Frashëri, would later recall that Enver Hoxha asked him in a meeting whether he was keeping in touch with Youth Group members, especially with Isuf. Kristo Frashëri’s positive response made the future dictator frown with disappointment.

Party indefinitely. Isuf Keçi, nicknamed *Biverik*, Shyrete Turkeshi and Kristo Frashëri (later to become a well-known Albanian historian) were banned for three months. According to Dorian Koçi, upon whose research work this article relies, the youth noticed an attempt to erase the origins of the organisations that gave rise to the CPA, which to them was like “mixing bran with flour”; that is, members of the Youth Group found that they were being forced to dilute their “educated” background by being forced to mix with ordinary CPA members who “knew nothing about Marxism–Leninism”.

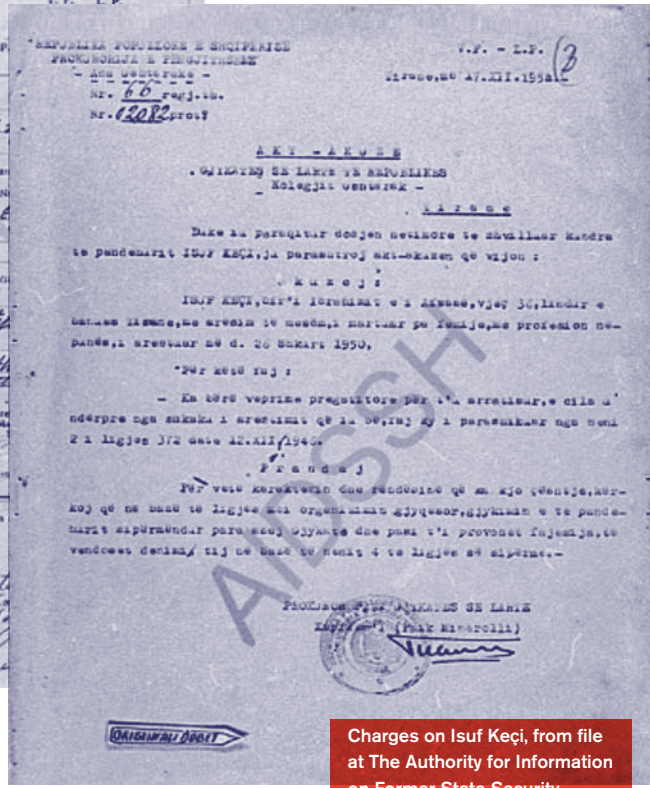
Written testimonies from the time are indicative of both Isuf’s character and the forms of violence that had penetrated the Albanian communist movement. The Yugoslav Dušan Mugoša, who was sent by the Yugoslavian Community Party to organize Albanian Communist Party wrote about Keçi brothers that “they tried to disrupt the meeting and the resolution of the Party Conference. Jusuf [Isuf] was the most stubborn. Left with no arguments and not knowing what to do, he asked: ‘So, the party favours war, that is murdering the spies... Well then, would this Party we are speaking of let me kill Mustafa Kruja, the prime minister of the puppet government?’ I instantly responded: That would be an important undertaking...”

Although Isuf was entrusted with party tasks on occasion (such as organising the demonstration of 7 April 1942), some considered him to have had “intruded on” and “domineer” the party. The historian Kristo Frashëri, a boy at the time, would later recall that Enver Hoxha asked Isuf in a meeting whether he was keeping in touch with Youth Group members, especially with Isuf. Kristo Frashëri’s positive response made the future dictator frown with disappointment. After his first expulsion in September 1942, Isuf Keçi was finally banned from the party on grounds that he intended to kidnap the daughter of the commander of the collaborationist gendarmerie, in order to exchange her for an arrested communist militant. He was not being condemned for such an act in itself, but rather that he was showing solidarity with a former Communist Youth Group member, Shyqyri Ishmi, for whom the kidnappee would be exchanged.

Isuf is also mentioned in a letter Hoxha and Popovi wrote to Nako Spiro in March 1944 regarding issues among the different communist groups. “Isuf Keçi was there and instructed by Kristo Frashëri to meet



Arrest warrant for Isuf Keçi from his file at The Authority for Information on Former State Security Documents.



Charges on Isuf Keçi, from file at The Authority for Information on Former State Security.

Uncle Nezi and Xhepi (Sadik Premte). I am more than convinced that...all the trash, both who are in the Party, or are not in the Party, met in there”. Regardless, Isuf Keçi was readmitted to the CPA on 8 April 1944 and given high-ranking positions such as brigade commander and division commissar. On 28 November 1944 he was appointed commander of the XI Assault Brigade, in March 1945, commander of Area III operating in the rearward of Shkodra, and in April 1945 commissar of Division VI in Vuçiterna. By no means did Albania’s liberation from the German army end the tension between Keçi and the CPA, but nonetheless he was entrusted by the new government with the position of Accumulation Director at the Ministry of Commerce.

Isuf Keçi would later declare that the State Security started to persecute and haunt him when Albania moved closer to Yugoslavia, i.e. in 1944–1948. In a letter he wrote to the prosecutor Josif Pashko while imprisoned, Isuf blamed the Minister of Interior Koçi Xoxe for his persecution. The historian Dorian Koçi however, believed that persecution was actually a by-product of the hostility both the Yugoslavs and Hoxha shared for the Korça Communist Group. It is also worth mentioning that after liberation, the most important state institutions fell under Yugoslavian tutelage and guidance. Departments as high as the Prime Minister’s Office and the State Security Directorate were bound to report to Belgrade, thus seemingly continuing the tradition established during the war, of Albania look like a state under protectorate.

Once Albania discontinued its relations with Yugoslavia in 1948, operations to “cleanse” the country of Tito supporters commenced. The new pro-Soviet course of CPA was also endorsed by the Keçi brothers. On 13 December 1948, Isuf Keçi was appointed Chairman of Tirana Executive Committee. However, the relations between Isuf Keçi and the leaders of the regime deteriorated again only two years later (1950).

Upon finishing his studies at the Voroshilov Higher Military Academy in Moscow, his brother Hamit was appointed as Director of the Political Intelligence Directorate at the Ministry of Defence and soon after promoted to colonel. On 1 August 1949, Hamit clashed with pro-Soviet leaders, the Commander-in-Chief of the Military Headquarters, Beqir Balluku, and the Director of the Albanian Army Political Directorate, Hysni Kapo. He upheld that the army's training plans were inappropriate and designed by traitors. On 2 August 1949, Hamit Keçi was arrested, laying the ground for the search for "hostiles" among his relatives. The shadow of the Communist Youth Group re-emerged, 8 years after the CPA was founded. During a conversation with the Soviet Ambassador Dmitry Chuvakhin, Enver Hoxha himself declared that "the group has is trying, like had previously done after the liberation, to sneak into the party leadership". He named Hamit and Isuf Keçi, Njazi Islami, Abedin Shehu (Minister of Public Affairs), Shukri Këllezi (deputy minister and then director of the Kuçova Oil Combine) as members.

The documents found in archives in Moscow depict Hamit Keçi as mentally ill. In this particular case however, they "reveal" and "condemn" the "party-hostile activity of the group", also mentioning his brother-in-law Njazi Islami. On 29 February 1950, as implied in the files at Authority for Information on Documents of the Former State Security, Isuf was arrested six months after his brother and put in pre-trial detention in Tirana. A communique of the Central Committee of the CPA referenced the detainees' communist past and their connections with the "Trotskyites" Anastas Lula and Sadik Premte, highlighting that this faction of the Communist Youth Group "sharing party-hostile notions, had always been looking forward to crises disrupting the Party in order to take advantage of the situation". They were labelled as a clique, an organisation plotting conspiracies against the government. In the CPA's eyes, from a "[CPA] party-friendly" Youth Group, this grouping turned "party-hostile", mirroring the organisational, political and moral features of the former Communist Youth Group, and thus were considered to be fighting against the CPA, and not with it.

Isuf Keçi's State Security interrogation file reads as follows "he's attended several meetings. At first, they were seemingly "gatherings", but they eventually lead to the establishment of a group which came to include Hamit Keçi, (his brother-in-law) Naizi Islami and several others". Isuf testified to the interrogator that they discussed everything from making a living to political orientation, Europe, the Red Army, kulaks, railway and mines. These "hostiles" had moreover discussed how impossible it was for the country to build three factories, an oil refinery and an hydropower plant within 5 years. Another topic of discussion was what they saw as the ineptitude of state officials, from lowest ranks all the way up to the ministers. The topics mirrored their concerns and perceptions regarding state propaganda in terms of the country's economic development. They further criticised the Communist Youth Group for their intellectualism and that Enver Hoxha perpetually promoted "half-educated" fellow fighters who had sworn allegiance to him. The Fifth CPA Central Committee Plenum passed harsh decrees against this so-called "party-hostile" grouping. Abedin Shehu, Njazi Islami and CC candidate Shyqyri Këllezi were banned from the CC. Even Niazi Islami's suicide was condemned by the communists in power as another hostile act, therefore he was banned after death from the party. The Keçi brothers were also banned from the Party and eventually arrested for "misdoings against the people and the state".

To Dorian Koçi, the Communist Youth Group had left its own legacy on how the issues regarding the country's developments were tackled. After being jailed for anti-party activity in 1951, for ten years until 1961, Isuf Keçi never again managed to be politically rehabilitated or take part in the communist life. The words of his childhood friend, the professor Kristo Frashëri, also a member of the Communist Youth Group, is revealing. Frashëri recalls that Keçi managed to escape a worse fate "by paying 25 lekë, the cost of a... padlock", that is, by keeping his mouth shut, common practice among the surviving former members of the Communist Youth Group. Isuf Keçi died in 1984. His political thinking and activity were only given attention after the 1990s, thanks to the work of his brother Hamit. Hamit Keçi would later go on to found the United War Veterans Organisation (Organizata e Bashkuar të Veteranëve të Luftës së Popullit Shqiptar), consisting of "non-dogmatic" veterans, which painstaking reviews the ANLW and the history of the Albanian left.

*Xhavid
Qesja*

10

The tragic fighter

His entire life was “documented” by his persecutors, among which his “inmate friends”, is indicative of a great moral strength, unwavering and unflagging character shocked by the gross distortion of Marxist belief. His letters, recorded conversations, the reports of agents or “repentant” informants, paint a portrait of a man who had lost nearly everything over 30 years in prison, including his family, but not his dignity and authority.

“I have already told you”, said Xhavid to Ngjela in the Burrel prison, “I didn’t become a communist reading Gorky’s *Mother* but Marx’s *Das Kapital* when just a secondary school student.”

This photo shows a thin 45-year-old man with a V-shaped face and prominent low cheekbones. For 9 years, he was a father, yet without children, and a husband without a wife. Tired and silenced, he gave up his hopes for a life beyond the barbed wires, but deep down his unyielding subconsciousness, Marx had never lost his appeal. His philosophy sprung from a desire to see the establishment of what was seen as a fine ideology, which had eventually enchanted much of the world, but which also led to despair and dictatorship in countless countries. With one single phrase, he was able to make the distinction between his superior conviction and the one shared by those who adhered to “a romantic communism”, which in his view was (far from their understanding) unlike the doctrine Xhavid had first been enticed by as a child. It was a “paper empire” where everyone had noted down their own modalities, thus turning idealistic dreams into distorted realities. Aged 50, with a hunched back but open mindedness, he was fully aware that the ideal of his youth beaming with hope had suddenly turned into a nightmare. The records of his proceeding in jail, archived with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and recently transferred under the administration of the Albanian Authority on Access to Information on the Former State Security Service (AIDSSH) reports him saying: “communism at present, that found in all the countries throughout the world, would earn the hatred even of Marx, Engels and Lenin. “This communism is worse than fascism and Nazism, as even they refrained from terrorising their own people in times of war”. His entire life was “documented” by his persecutors, among which his “inmate friends”, is indicative of a great moral strength, unwavering and unflagging character shocked by the gross distortion of Marxist belief. His letters, recorded conversations, the reports of agents or “repentant”

informants, paint a portrait of a man who had lost nearly everything over 30 years in prison, including his family, but not his dignity and authority. His journey started the year he was born, 1922, in a house on Kruja's cobbled streets, to a wealthy family, a large landowner and owner of shops. He would eventually turn away from his family and close relatives because of his communist convictions, when the regime took nearly everything from them through imposing taxes.

It was 1941 when the 19-year-old came into contact with communism for the first time. According to historian Ana Lalaj, upon whose research work this article relies, Qesja was an exceptional and tragic individual, who mixed his exaltation for the doctrine with hate for the authorities that abused the doctrine they preached. Upon completing secondary school in his hometown, moved to Durrës, Shkodra and Tirana, but it was his hometown Kruja where he first learned about the communist movement, which though it has spread throughout the town, had until then remained beyond his touch. He got acquainted with the communist ideology through books, when attending high school in Tirana, but first met communists in person in the summer of 1941 when in his final year. He was invited to join one of the communist cells of the city and after two or three meetings, in November, he was admitted in the newly established Communist Party of Albania. He participated in demonstrations against the invasion and illegally spread communist propaganda. Two years later, he became a member of Kruja partisan unit, and later on was promoted to commissar of the battalion under Beqir Balluku's command. He became a brigade commissar in 1944, a member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Albania (renamed the Labour Party of Albania) from 1945 to 1951, and was a member of parliament until 1954. His future was promising, just like his fellows who had managed to strengthen their suppressive power. But later his path took a turn for the worse. It was 1956, Albania had parted ways with the Yugoslavs, while the communist block had already committed to divide and destroy the idols alongside Stalin. In June, the Poznań protests, followed by Polish October, paralleled the Hungarian Uprising, where people rose up against their regimes. Many communists witnessed their ideals being crushed by Soviet tanks in the squares in Budapest. They demanded a better communism, and Xhavid Qesja was one of them. He was attending the Higher Party School in Moscow then. The dilemmas facing the Albanian government with regards to the new Soviet course were further enhanced by leadership concerns about what Albanian students thought of the developments throughout the Eastern Bloc. 10 years later when in prison, Qesja would write to the Political Bureau he once chaired "I will be eternally grateful to those events, for they shook me from my lethargic and naive sleep and made me seriously and critically think like a communist". These events propelled many to reflect and draw some conclusions. I drew mine and that's why I detached from you. I am happy and serene now."

Xhavid Qesja parting ways with the leadership was not a surprise, nor a sensation. It is still unclear however when this "awakening" started – during or after the course of events. Similarly, it's still disputable if his detachment from the party was actually a by-product of political developments within the communist camp or a direct consequence of punishment. The scholar Ana Lalaj points out that the Party's frustration with Qesja began with free conversations with fellow students tackling developments within the communist camp. His comments were noted down and labelled during the two meetings held by the Communist Party in Moscow in 1957, where Qesja was targeted. Sul Baholli, a member of the CPA CC had given mixed hints on Qesja's thoughts over Poznan events, and therefore was held accountable for many things, starting from Qesja's statement that "Bolshevik parties make no room for the freedom of thought, similar to the Stalinist era". Some students defended him; others were silent, distancing themselves from the chorus of critics. The party organisation in Moscow's division into two camps, in addition to Qesja's changing opinion, who was a party official back then, was alarming to the CPA leadership. Qesja was ordered to return to Tirana to provide explanations. Two Central Committee secretaries asked him about his recent ideological deviations and demanded an explanation, and the same was asked on March 23 when called in front of the Central Committee secretariat. Hysni Kapo, chairing the meeting, noted to Qesja's that 1956 had been quite a difficult year, as much as regarding relations with Yugoslavia and events in Poland and Hungary. Since his "deviances" were related to these three events, he was offered "help", but they

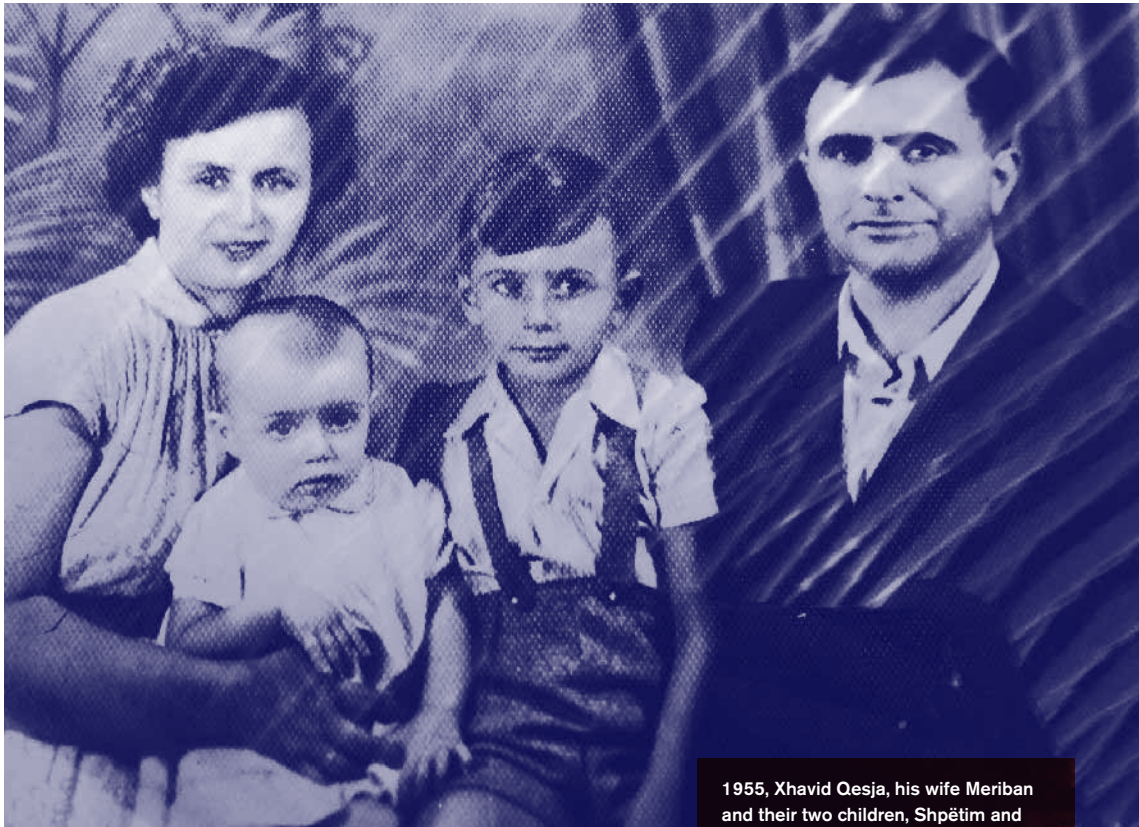


Forced towards isolation, the only thing that really concerned him was saving his family, while keeping his dignity intact. He advised his friends, even his spies, to do the same. “You know they are not truthful”, he told the interrogator. “... You are perfectly aware of all the wrongdoings, but still you remained silent... You don’t speak up! You are too afraid to share the fate of Tuk Jakova and Bedri Spahiu. [One] should speak up, have principles, be courageous.”

needed “to know the underlying reasons first”. Qesja didn’t accept their criticism over his thought on East communist events. However, he was given a week to reflect and then report back to the party. After three days, he had nothing else to add. In response, the CC prevented Qesja from continuing his studies. Enver Hoxha wrote to the Albanian Student Party Organisation in Moscow in order to confirm Qesja falling outside the Party’s lines and reprimanded those who had defended him in speech or who remained silent. Hoxha advised its members to “stick to the party’s critical and self-critical spirit, and to stay vigilance in defending the Party”.

Branded as he was, Qesja was first appointed at the Executive Committee of Elbasan. He was a party member and member of parliament, but this didn’t stop State Security from observing him for his “hostile actions”, recording everything from discussions he was involved in to the radio stations he favoured the most. That’s when the 30 year-long form hundreds of pages. Qesja had understood he was being followed and had been courageous enough to tell the informer “Parashtruesi”. When Qesja was asked from the informer whether he had met Hysni Kapo in person, he responded negatively, but when asked what he would say to him, he responded he wanted to thank him for placing him under the surveillance of Shim Kolli, a colonel working at State Security. His dismissal from the Committee and demotion to the communal level were the first signs of his downfall. Forced towards isolation, the only thing that really concerned him was saving his family, while keeping his dignity intact. He advised his friends, even his spies, to do the same. “You know they are not truthful”, he told the interrogator. “...You are perfectly aware of all the wrongdoings, but still you remained silent...You don’t speak up! You are too afraid to share the fate of Tuk Jakova and Bedri Spahiu. [One] should speak up, have principles, be courageous.”

On 1 July 1958, Xhavid Qesja was sent to the internment camp in Zvërnec. He telegraphed his family only three words upon arrival: “I’m in Vlora”. According to records, the other internees who had seen the



1955, Xhavid Qesja, his wife Meriban and their two children, Shpëtim and Mira, before Xhavid was arrested.

text thought it was coded. By not providing his exact location he was basically messaging his wife to never mind him but to take care of herself and their children. His wife, Meriban Najdeni, cut all links with her husband and their children almost “forgot” they had a father. When coming of age, they traded in their father’s last name for their mother’s. Lalaj infers that Qesja might have agreed with the last measure in order to save his family from persecution: he may have himself even ordered his children to go to such extremes.

Qesja had just turned 36 when transferred to the island of Zvërnec and another 30 years would pass since then. Lalaj infers that Qesja had eventually buried his best half on that island, in the monastery used as a prison, to live in the shadow of the man of his youth.

All the records about Xhavid Qesja point out his two indispensable and inseparable qualities. The first concerns his character, the second, his intellectual background. The first quality stands for his resistance to the regime’s attempt to dehumanise, which became a long and harsh struggle against the power he fought so fiercely. Agents depicted him as “coldblooded and discrete” or a “taciturn and attentive listener”. One of them describes in detail the survival techniques he used in Zvërnec: “One day he was looking for a piece of wire. ‘What do you need it for?’ asked one of the inmates. ‘To seal my lips’ he replied”.

The second quality, his political, cultural and intellectual background, is also worth noting. He scrutinised and notated 37 texts by Marx and Engel. Those notations caused him trouble, for they fuelled the efforts of the security staff assigned to him to discern codified messages between the lines, which Qesja is supposed to have used to send messages from the camp. He was equally passionate about creative literature and the classics.

OFFICE "Agjenti "Soni"
 Nr. 1. Op. ESAT LATA
 Burrel, nr. 02/1573

X A P O R I D E T I C / 4 / 1973.

... Ai rrepton se Xhavit Qesja thotë me gëzimin, se do të bëjë që të rritet reaksioni i inteligjencës dhe do të shprehë detyrën të reaguar në mënyrë aktive ndaj diktaturës.

" D E T Y R A "

Vlerësim i të dhënave:
 - E dhëna të vlerësuesit ky i dëshmohet i qendrueshëm nëse që cilën do të shprehë detyrën që ndër do të bëjë në protestuesit.

Shprehja e gjendjes: Ja detyra që të shprehë me të vërtetë reaksionin që ka marrë Partia dhe e rëndësishme të kësaj.

MASAT OPERATIVE:
 Më shumë shprehje në rrethet e tjera në të cilat i jalo për Xhavit Qesja.

PUNEN / E

SHEKULLI:
 E dhëna e kësaj rëndësishme dhe përgjegjësi plotësisht se me të vërtetë të O.G.

Ei rrethojë Dega në TIRANË
 Kuvendi për 200 lekë shprehim.
 E kësaj rrethi me kryetarin që të jepin libër se zyrë Xhavit dhe Benit.

11/4/1973. Shefi i Seksionit / R. Hoxha /

U P A nga Sr. Kretvari / I. Masha /
 11/4/1973.

Khavid Qesja predicts youth reaction against dictatorship, 1973, document from his file.

43. 44

Mare nga Puntori Operative Kapiten (Avni Memeti)

Dhane nga M.F. *V. J. J. J. J.*
 Elbasan me 19/6/1973.-

R E S H E R T I -

Burimi njofton se gjatë këtyre ditëve mbi Xhavit Qesja kam konstatuar këto gjera: Në Xhavit Qesja shof që të vinte dia persona që neve nuk i njohim dhe as këmbë mundur të shpallim të tani. Kur këmbë pyetur se mënyrë indirekte thuhet se ka qenë ikunabi. Në fillim i vinte një gojë që pa të vinte se zyre për dia here, gjoja se ajo vinte nga shkollat dhe i binte lajmet prej shkollës që ky ishte në shkollë. Deri tani nuk kam mundur të gjeja gjendjen e sajë. Këtë nga Elbasani shof që ti vij shumë shpesh i planit Kom. Ekse. Rrethi Angji Fabri, byrdalja me zyrë të mbijetës së zyrë të vet bac se Selman Diden, zyrever Zeisim, Tashë Zhan, Zhan Daklin dhe Dhimitër Hamnikollon, me gjithë se me të vjetër këtu të fundit ka dhe lidhje ja punë mbasi janë përgjegjës sektorësh dhe si vete i ka në patro mbashë, eshikoj që mëkret të vjetër i shpesh shumë dhe i bane rrugë këtu me duket se të vjetër të vjetër se te, por kushedi se çfarë mendon ai. - shprehjet për të nxjerrë punë vete për të shkuar në durrës. Këtë shpesh shumë rrugëve dhe i pelqen të shetisi në mungjes dhe natën qëndron shumë kohë në zyrë për të lexuar gjoja, por si mbas me ditat time ky hap radjen që ka në zyrë dhe shikon situacione të just tme-

X H A V I T Q E S J A

D E T Y R A :

SHEKULLI : Detyra nuk ju dhane.-

Puntori Operative Kapiten (Avni Memeti)

Informative report on Xhavit Qesja that tells he listens to the radio, document from his Sigurimi file.

However, Zvërnec had no study centre or scientific library. It was rather a camp to isolate the Party's foes and Party's leaders were fearful of such foes being left alone, instead keeping them under constant duress. The leadership used his weaknesses to torment him. His first weakness was his mother Bije, his only supporter during the war and throughout his interment and imprisonment. However, she was constantly preventing from seeing her son, which Qesja complained about whenever he could. His other weakness was books. His sensitivity about books caused him to go on hunger strike twice because of restrictions in terms of reading materials. However, he was never broken, instead he was defiant against their methods of interrogation. He grappled with the authorities by denouncing their violations of human rights. "Keep in mind that books are my life" he warned the authorities of another hunger strike. He asked with indignation to be let out of the country upon serving his sentence because he had "no love for a blind, dumb and deaf homeland". This gave the authorities easy cause to accuse Qesja of further "hostile actions".

Even why he was in prison, he was again arrested and brought before court in September 1967, where a number of letters he sent to the Political Bureau were shown. He refused to deal with interrogators and judges and messaged the Political Bureau as follows: "I am a communist and the Political Bureau is the only body I shall deal with, for my issues are party issues. I do not deny that my viewpoints counter yours... I won't withdraw [my claims]." On 23 October 1967 he was sentenced to 10 years' imprisonment. After spending several months in Tirana, hospitalised most of the time, Qesja was transferred to Burrel. The authorities continued to monitor him, in order to gather evidence to try again, which he apparently understood. He asked to be locked up in a single cell, which led to another interrogation. On 7 April 1970, Qesja wrote to the only person (he found) responsible, Enver Hoxha; "I'm asking you, for I haven't anyone else to ask. Hasn't everyone had enough with Xhavid Qesja?" Receiving no reply, he sent another letter on

“

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Xhavid Qesja

”



Xhavid Qesja's watch, a gift from a British soldier during the war. From the archive of Xhavid Qesja's son, Shpëtim Qesja.

7 May: “You have no right to turn a deaf ear. It’s not about Xhavid Qesja, the individual...it’s rather about Xhavid Qesja, a citizen of the PRA [People’s Republic of Albania]... it’s about the PRA Constitution. You are not turning a deaf ear to an individual, but to a citizen and to the Constitution”. He didn’t get a reply. He underwent another interrogation session by mid-June and was sentenced to another 10 years. Locked up for 30 years, detached, and constantly under distress, he was declared an enemy of the state for daring to think differently. He could have had completely another life, he could have asked for forgiveness, which he considered to be pathetic and self-denigrating. He did not fall in line, however, because his thoughts were his life, and for him, it would be his moral downfall. “Schiller taught us”, Qesja recalled, “it’s better to drag yourself through dust than throw yourself down before the throne.”

The distress Xhavid Qesja was forced to endure as an internee on Zvërnec and during the 20 years of incarceration were all part of a standard “protocol” of the state, tailored according to an individual’s “dangerousness”, and thus designed to strike at their weaknesses. Qesja’s reactions were rich and numerous, worth of being considered a guide to political resistance. They were carefully thought out and tactical. He stuck to the reasoning that his viewpoints had not aligned with the party’s since 1956. For him, his persecution was about his viewpoints and therefore no one, an individual or a body, should get between him and the Political Bureau, where he addressed all of his letters, complaints, and protests. Indeed, all additional charges came about only from this correspondence, and thus he never agreed to provide any statements to interrogators, prosecutors or judges. He labelled unlawful all of the criminal decisions against him: two decisions sentencing him to five years of internment and three rulings of 10 years of imprisonment. He condemned these decisions politically, not judicially, because he never acknowledged the court’s right to engage with party disputes, and thus never asked for the courts’ decisions to be reviewed or reduced.

When arrested in Zvërnec, the interrogation team were reported to have seized 74 notebooks with writings on his books. He had been studying Marx and Engel’s full works for eight and a half years. “I studied them all at once, critically thinking of all the life experiences I’ve been through”. It was an attempt to find himself, to compare the system Marx depicted in his books with the system so-called Marxists were erecting in real life. As Qesja puts it however, it was very burdensome: “the study has been pressuring my consciousness all this time through. Oh, what a pressure! Once I finished the 39 volumes, I told myself: I finally found serenity! I did a higher good for myself detaching myself from you [the Albanian authorities]!” These letters and recorded telephone conversations shed light upon his convictions about communism as a theory and the abuses of the doctrine. Ana Lalaj holds that Qesja believed in communism until the very end. To the communists in power, Qesja was an “enraged anti-communist”, but he restlessly identified himself as an “obedient communist”. This identification of Qesja as an anti-communist was rather a reflection of his hostility to the party, while Qesja considered his relations not with the party, but with the doctrine, and the moment he decided to part ways with the party, he joined some of the first dissidents.

* * *

On 20 January 1987, just a few months before serving his 30-year sentence, Xhavid Qesja was transferred from Burrel to exile in Shijak, where he was given a room. State Security would monitor him near a crossroad, and they were to follow after the subject, codenamed “Gorilla” from 7 in the morning to 9 at night. Relatives Qesja had not seen in 30 years were reported to have visited him. He wrote another letter to the leadership which caused him to be sentenced for the third time on 9 October 1987 to 8 years of incarceration. He was transferred to Spaç prison, but was pardoned within a year. Qesja was set free on November 1988, 66 years old, allowed to join his wife, Meriban, after three long decades. At the time that the student protests erupted, foretelling the fall of the communist regime, he was a free man. According to reports, he had made a prophecy in 1973: “The youth will grow more resistant... and this will bring closer the day [they] revolt against the proletariat dictatorship”. To Ana Lalaj, Xhavid Qesja is a unique character among the histories of communist persecution in Albania. He embodied both a fierce proponent of Marxism and an uncompromised anti-authoritarian.

Albanians appear to have embraced Marxist and/or social-democratic left-wing principles quite early. The research in this publication demonstrates that the history of the Albanian Left goes far back, undoubtedly preceding the totalitarian communist left; this is clear despite the 47 years that the Stalinist regime claiming that it began with the founding of the CPA.

The Albanian Left, like that throughout the world, was never entirely monolithic. From the beginning, at least six different currents could be distinguished. The romantic left (1) comprised individuals of different left-wing ideologies who were active up until the onset of World War I. Adherents of the utopic (communist) left (2) participated in Albania's National Liberation War, but did not live to see the instalment of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. Followers of the Trotskyist left (3) were labelled as such only to be attacked as political opponents of the regime. The socialist left (4) included those with a sound ideological distance from Leninism as a superposition of traditional Marxism. The social-democratic left (5) was represented by prominent ideologues who shared ideas of social justice, redistribution of income, the fight against social inequalities, political liberalisation, etc. The nationalist left (6), including the likes of Tajar Zavalani, Kosta Çekrezi, Fan Noli, Skënder Luarasi, unified the ideas of a left-wing economic program with the nationalist ideas of an Albania united with Kosovo and other Albanian-inhabited lands.

Once the system was installed, the diverse colours began to fade. Who comprised the non-Stalinist left a totalitarian regime? It is difficult to talk about leftist political thought under such a system, which for the sake of ideological unification, mercilessly fought every individual or faction that dared to express non-conforming idea. Prominent left-wing names who understood well what they were championing, were to be silenced forever...