

The Event of the Albanian Fall

By Organizata Politike, December 2013

Introductory note

The dismantlement of the Syrian chemical armaments, furthered by the US and Russian governments, found in the Albanian government, led by the Third-wayist social-democrat Edi Rama, its favored "partner" in leasing the Albanian territory to such a complicated and risky project. The current Albanian government, in the same habit of all previous Albanian governments being servile to superpower influences, especially the US, in the first days yielded to the US pressure and seemed to accept turning Albania in the sole toxic garbage can of Europe. Fearing this process' devastating ecological and economical outcomes, and offended by the neocolonial attitude of the US government, represented by the US Ambassador in Tirana, a large movement erupted spontaneously from November 12 to November 15, 2013. Self-organized groups, political activists etc gave way to a grass root movement, which countered for days the Albanian government's and US plan, and occupied for two days in a row the main square in front of the government's building. On November 15, in a speech full of servile idolatry to the US foreign policy, the Albanian Prime Minister yielded to the mounting pressure of the people and decided, reluctantly, to publicly say NO to the US proposal. The declaration-analysis below was written by Organizata Politike, a radical leftist political organization in Albania, which took part in the movement.

It is a rather bad habit, but evidently a necessary one, that of asserting the timely location and political stand of an organization partaking in events that open radically emancipatory opportunities. Incapable of fleeing this particular opportunity, we are dialectically condensing the time and political action in such a fashion so as to determine the specific role and position of Organizata Politike in what carries the possibility of being called ***The Event of the Albanian Fall.***

Before defining it as an Event, it would be discerning to chronologically lay down the chain of occurrences whose totality can amount to The Event through the fidelity of the subjects to the emancipatory message. Organizata Politike joined the call of the Alliance against the Import of Waste, acknowledging its past moral authority on such issues, in a

meeting held on November 9th in Black Box hall in Tirana, at a time when the import and dismantling of Syrian chemical weapons was casting its threatening shadow over society. Even though the meeting had a far from impressive attendance and the divergences between the organizers were openly displayed from time to time (who, for argument's sake we should note, composed a larger crowd in the podium than in the auditorium), it served as a decent synthesizer of the imminent danger posed to the Albanian people. We were also part of the first popular protest before the Council of Ministers right after the meeting. During the weekend, after a call for a massive protest before the Council of Ministers and the U.S. Embassy in Tirana, we discussed the matter within our organization and concluded that the imminent ecological threat, the political-symbolic humiliation and the need for an emancipatory movement detached from the established political spectrum, called not only for a symbolic solidarity with the protest and the movement against the import of toxic waste, but also for a concrete and coordinated action through spreading of leaflets and other forms of mass mobilization, which preceded the protest of November 12th. From that date until the twilight of November 16th, we were in the square, some of us moonlighting and occupying with other protesters.

The days of the protest, like any other spontaneous or poorly organized rally by a number of groups and organizations were characterized by a great variety of participants, ideas, perspectives, animosities etc. Nevertheless, the people protesting seemed to have found a common denominator, if only one, substantially important however, namely the categorical refusal of the import of chemical weapons and the vitriolic hostility towards the political elite of the country and the block of international pressures (publicly proclaimed by the U.S. Ambassador in an interview on November 15th). The latter sentiments were openly displayed in the protest of November 12th in front of the U.S. Embassy, the first of this kind in Albanian history, whose people are sometimes wrongly depicted as idiotic full-hearted pro-U.S. foreign policy admirers. The neocolonial servility of the Albanian political elite and their ideologically reproductive media were met by the expressed indignation of the people and their unyielding will, which was notoriously manifested in the way the leaders of the opposition party, the right-wing neoliberal Democratic Party, Berisha and Basha, were ousted from the square in loud shouts and rumbling drums of the crowd, whose fraction, we can proudly say, we were. The expulsion of the latter disenfranchised the governmental propagandists from the manipulative argument that the protest was

organized and supported by the Democratic Party, popularly ousted from power some months before, leaving the reins of power to a Third-wayist social-democratic coalition.



Protest in Tirana (Photo: Organizata Politike)

In the same spirit among the protesters, almost immediately echoed the shout "Secular protest", directed to a cleric and some of his followers who, in our view, had chosen the wrong way and the wrong place to make a charade of their popularity with their sermon-type preaching. The repudiation from the masses of such attempts was so strong that the followers of the cleric, cornered by these and other slogans were forced into sin by blasphemously announcing secular slogans. We contently note that against this spectacular attempt, a number of religious believers held a critical public stance, and constantly encouraged their fellow believers to be a vital part of the protesting multitude without conceitedly parading their religious symbols; thus as conscientious citizens.

However, the chain of occurrences, as a result of the aforementioned incidents, cannot be viewed as a heaven-sent blessing. Popular enthusiasm and perseverance, especially from the youth, was awe-inspiring. The

creative spirit too. Nonetheless, as any other movement, it suffered from the propagation of certain clichés, a critical view of which will help us emancipate and organize in the future.

First and foremost, although the political establishment poisonous attempt to steal the protest was successfully avoided, the presence of certain notorious characters of the discredited "NGO's civil society" and their petty attempt to privatize the protest and movement should be put in evidence. It is actually the same people who following the events of January 21st, where four protesters were killed in front of the governmental building during a massive anti-governmental demonstration, were transformed into the boot-licking tools of government propaganda of the time against the legitimate popular demonstration of that fatal day of 2011. On January 21st we were in the square against that rightist neoliberal government, just like we were in that same square gathered against this so-called leftist pro-market government. And most importantly, we will always be there, against all governments, sold to no one and influenced by nothing but our beliefs and commitment to emancipatory causes. Inevitably however, a mass movement of such dimensions could not be privatized or owned, even less so by the aforementioned scoundrels who in those days were faced with the anger and contempt of the protesters even more so than their masters, Berisha and Basha, but have simply been far too shameless to walk off.

The exemplary expulsion of Basha's and Berisha's attempt to interfere, on the one hand generated enthusiasm and confidence among the protesters, but on the other hand, as a result of the misinterpretation and the ideological conditioning of the term 'politics', the anti-party and antiestablishment stance would be frequently falsely identified with a anti-political or apolitical one. Such an approach, "blameless" considering the actual situation, would give the protest folklorist, ethno-nationalist and sometimes pathetic undertones. The group chanting of "Xhamadani vija-vija", a nationalist folk song, and other unfortunate slogans were symptoms of such an approach, which at times turned the protest from a space inciting collective debate and exchange of ideas, of the Occupy Wall Street or Indignados kind, into a semi-gathering of Red-Black football fans.

The activists of Organizata Politike ventured to avoid such an approach, redirecting their attention towards the substance and the emancipatory symbolism of what we have the opportunity to call *The Event of the Albanian Fall*. To begin with, on the content aspect, by spreading among the protesters and forming small groups of discussions of a few dozen people. The purpose was not merely to find a way of expressing the

collective frustration towards the situation we were in, but also to critically assess the emancipatory process in which we were consciously or unconsciously partaking, and to determine the structural and political causes of the situation, the need for ideas, new chants and new slogans; and more importantly, whatever the outcome of the protest, the movement of the multitude had to be kept in motion and proliferate into further pressing issues and new struggles. Furthermore, together with some and in defiance of others, we laid down the discussion about the burning issue of the disparagement of a small and badly-governed country by the world superpowers, whose interests and rights do not always converge. That is the reason why, even symbolically, we considered it of crucial importance to protest before the U.S. Embassy, and on the last day also before the Russian Federation Embassy, an attempt that failed only due to understandable mischief in orientation of such a large crowd.



Protest in Tirana (Photo: Organizata Politike)

On the other side, we tried to raise awareness and avoid the clichés in the writing and jeering of symbolic slogans. With a lack of modesty, hoping to sound understandable, we take authorship of some of the catchiest written

banners like, "Yes we can...say Noooo," "Import some balls instead! Rebel!," "I have a nightmare," the readopted verses of the poet Ali Prodimja "Land to portion out I don't have/ Fuck the imperial powers / To oppose we must learn/like dogs we can live no more."; or the ones shouted in a chorus throughout the crowd like, "Colony, not today, not ever," "We're a sovereign country, we aren't a colony," "Dare to accept them!" etc. The above mentioned banners, which emerged from the unusual imagination of our activists, didn't aim at aesthetizing or attracting the attention or the self-confident hilarity of the multitude in action. Above all, our goal was raising political awareness that the problem of the importation of chemical residues is already a knot where many other issues are connected to; from civil dignity, the solemnity and independence of the people, to the myriad forms of exploitation, humiliation, segregation which strike all of us, and above all the weakest among us.

Now we arrive at the Event. Of course not in the sense of a series of occurrences, nor in the sense of the diverse interpretations on what happened; but through the investigation inside the multitude and in finding there the traces of the Albanian Fall which would turn it into an emancipatory point of reference in the History of the Albanian people, and maybe inspiring for other people too, which are in the same socio-political troubles like us. The Event needs several conditions: it requires a universality of purpose; the division of society into two, where one part, although it is just one of the parts, yet represents the political totality; the exit from the anonymity of the excluded on the shoulders of which stands the hierarchical social structure; and in the end, the politico-social bodies that identify and express fidelity to its emancipatory proclamation. And, of course, all of the above are not simply related to what happened, but to the retroactive political and discursive reproduction of all that synthesized in that particular situation.

Is the purpose universal? Of course, this question cannot be directed as a questionnaire to the individuals who participated, who like in every other Event, are motivated by a variety of incentives and ideas. The universal purpose can be captured in the collective mobilization in the name, not only of life in bio-political terms (which belongs to all), but above all, in the dignity and equality against the humiliating demands that derive outside of us and are implemented obsequiously by our governors. Nevertheless, this does not suffice for the universality of the purpose, because completed it can be produced only in the future, from the development of a movement that identifies itself with the emancipatory spirit of those days and lays its aims in the mobilization and in the giving voice to all the voiceless and the

excluded, from the workers, the unemployed, the students who aren't anymore just students, but employed in conditions as worse as it can get in the least qualified forms of labor, women, identitarian minorities, etc. Therefore as Event, like every other Event, from the French Revolution onwards, it cannot be spotted in the immediacy of the present, but it can only become in the ongoing future political process.

Secondly, did society divide into two and did one of the sides represent the voice of the voiceless? Undoubtedly so, which became obvious in the days that followed, when mysterious voices of the official propaganda machine were spreading the miraculous news, similar to those of the 'white check', where Albanians appear to have kicked their luck away; to the point where it is not rare in the recent days to hear people making calculations of the imaginary promised billions and count the thousands of dollars per capita slipped from their hands. This diversion reconstitutes the division of society into two, which could be noticed in the least apparent forms in those days, especially between the multitude in the square and the non-chalant, the indifferent, the cynics. There is an emphasis being put, cynically as it is, on the fact that the devastating majority of the participants were young students, in order to underline their immaturity and their being spoilt, as typical for their age. Even empirically this is not true, because although the young dominated in numbers, Second World War veterans, former political prisoners, villagers, and unemployed, were present too. Of course you had to live in the square during those days to notice closely what the distance of TV cameras cannot capture. On the other hand, the young who abandoned school, and not just because of the 'freedom' given from the new government, represent a social category just as much excluded from consideration; exploited in the majority of them as students from the high tuition fees, the necessity to work on unqualified and alienating labor and the grim future of unemployment and poverty. So the society was divided into two, and one of the sides undertook the task of speaking in the name of the whole on one issue. And in this case also, only the future reorganization and the extension of causes touching the nerves of a deeply excluding and class-divided system would fulfill the condition of its transformation into an Event.

And the last condition, the loyalty of the new socio-political bodies that will identify themselves and will promise faithfulness to the Event of the Albanian Fall with the abovementioned elements. One of these bodies could be us, Organizata Politike, which in our three years of existence have had the will and have identified ourselves with emancipatory causes, from the workers to the students, from Gërdeci (the killing of 26 people, mostly

workers in an accident provoked by the corruptive arrangement of governmental officials and greedy private firms dealing with dismantling military weapons and ammunitions in 2008) to 21st of January, etc, where, despite the lack of overcrowded squares, we have managed to leave traces on the public consciousness and cause disturbance in the hegemonic political and social bodies. But alone we do not suffice, neither numerically, nor in ideas. Despite our attempts, the multitude, which has the need of an organizational knot, is overwhelming in power and in ideas compared to us. Thus we have to open ourselves to the multitude, to inspire self-organizing forms, primarily among the youth, among students, and eventually among workers and the unemployed. This network, organized horizontally, with a variety of nuances, but zealous on the abovementioned causes, can potentially produce political bodies with fidelity towards the Event of the Albanian Fall. These conditions would transform the chain of occurrences into an Event.

Hearts together, minds together! The future belongs to all of us!

Organizata politike is a emancipator radical left group in Tirana (Albania)

<http://opolitike.org/>

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