

Red and Black alliance as a new movement, its establishment process and its topic representation as a nationalist movement

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Abstract

This article aims to analyse Red and Black Alliance, a new nationalistic movement in Albania which was established in 2011. Considering its originality as a new social movement in the Albanian context, it is important to explore which were the main factors that made this movement happen. It will be analysed below that the Red and Black Alliance was initially shaped by concrete issues which had consequences for society and the nation. Specifically, the Red and Black Alliance was initially formed as a movement against concrete issues which were related to the possibility to change the nationality by a court decision and then by opposing the law on population census on ethnic and religious grounds. Regarding the law on population census it must be stated that there were a lot of public positions and articulated contrary to the law on the census on ethnic and religious grounds, a petition was drafted and the case was sent also to the constitutional court. The aforementioned new issues which were articulated concretely by the Red and Black Alliance served as the starting point for this movement. Then the identity of the movement was built on the basis of the national issue which according to the Red and Black Alliance was untreated and misused and in the framework of the national issue various initiatives and actions were proposed and undertaken. Also it was articulated the representation of the diaspora in the decision making and political processes. The methodology for this article is based on the qualitative approach and secondary data's, mainly data resources taken from the Red and Black alliance site and also on the primary resources taken by an interview with its founder and then the leader of Red and Black Alliance, Mr. Kreshnik Spahiu.

Keywords: Red and Black Alliance, nation, Albanian, opposition, diaspora.

Introduction

Red and Black alliance was established on 2011 in Albania. It continued its activity as a movement until 2012 in February when from Mr. Kreshnik Spahiu was announced the transformation of the Alliance in a political party. It participated as a political party in the elections of 2013 and didn't manage to take any mandate. But even though it didn't manage to success as a political party is important to study it, because until 2011 in the political context of Albania there has not been any movement with the same approaches like the Red and Black Alliance so from this point of view it is important to study its formation process as a movement and also its identity. Considering also that it served as a bridge to form a political party it is important to study it as a case study considering the political context of Albania where the parties are established as parties from the first moment and there are a few cases where the parties are created from the movements. Also the influence that it had on the political rhetoric of the other parties regarding the national issue make it an important subject to study.

Trying to explore the origin of this movement it was organized an interview with its founder, Mr. Kreshnik Spahiu which explained that the Red and Black Alliance was established from two main problems that turned into causes. One of the main problems which was the genesis and give arises to the Red and Black Alliance was the change of nationalities by a part of the Albanians living in the border cities with Greece: Saranda, Gjirokastra and Korça. Mr. Spahiu explicitly explained that *'in January 2011 in the capacity of Deputy Chairman of the High Council of Justice, I was conducting work analyses in the district courts of Saranda, Gjirokastra and Korça. During the analysis and statistics, I discovered that nearly 10,000 court decisions that in conditions of corruption had accepted requests of persons for change of nationality (from Albanian to Greek). Thousands of people converted to Greek and received a pension from the Greek government in order to receive a pension of 320 euros per month. As the Vice President of the High Council of Justice, I denounced these cases in the media and the issue became very sensitive. The founding nucleus of this movement was mostly with jurist'* (Interview with Kreshnik Spahiu, 2021).

Following the aforementioned factor, it can be added as a second factor the law on the registration of the population in Albania which contributed to the establishment of the Red and Black Alliance in 2011. So, the Red and Black Alliance started as an awareness movement and then as clarifying and denouncing of this census law. Regarding the census law it can be stated that from the analysis of the statements and actions of that time, this movement was not against the census as a whole, but was against only for the census on ethnic and religious grounds. According to Mr. Spahiu, the census should have been done as soon as possible, but it was important to make some legal changes in the two main laws. First in the law on civil status, which was first drafted and approved in 2003 by the then government and then consolidated in 2009. Mr. Spahiu stated that: *"There is no EU country where an Italian, French or German citizen goes to the Italian, French or German Court and asks to leave his nationality to obtain an Albanian, Turkish, Chinese or any other nationality. Nationality is created for centuries, decades and it cannot be changed by 300 euros, as Athens's policy has intended to achieve such a thing. And in this concept these provisions are unconstitutional and have been demanded by some court"*. Also Mr. Spahiu added that secondly, the law on the population census needs to be changed. According to Mr. Spahiu, the population census should not be done on the basis of self-declaration without objective criteria and only oriented on ethnic and religious grounds. According to him *"Self-declaration without objective criteria leads to a distortion and partial national assimilation, opening the way to damage to civil status registers, which have several decades in Albania and opens the light to abuse and lack of individual conscience, where for individual or political interests, different citizens can declare themselves with other nationalities"* (Bektashi, Newspaper no. 5, p. 3).

Also it can be stated that there were other arguments and statements in opposition to this law which was the core of the Red and Black Alliance identity. Another representative of the Red and Black Alliance, Mr. Redi Ramaj in a press release said that this census law was imposed from outside. According to Mr. Ramaj declaration of that time, *the population census on the basis of self-declaration is outside any kind of objective criteria, as it is not applied in any of the countries of the European Union, including Greece.* (Kosova, 2011, p. 2). Also, contrary to this law in one of the statements of

another representative of the Red and Black Alliance, Mr. Endri Shabani in 2011 was stated the problem with the gathered data as is stated from him that *'this registration of nationality and religion, according to this infamous law drafted by Mr. Pollo can create problems in the reliability of the data, as long as it is not clear whether the data is verifiable and if so, what will happen to the data, which does not correspond to a real situation'*. (Kosova, 2011, p. 2). Another argument according to the Red and Black Alliance contrary to this law, was a lack of transparency to conduct a unilateral constitutional process without obtaining legal and public opinion on an issue involving some four million inhabitants, and added that the promise should be kept to listen to all groups in society (Bektashi, 2011, p. 3).

Based on the above arguments the Red and Black Alliance took a petition initiative to terminate the registration and collected 40,000 signatures within a few days. (Boçka, 2012). This grouping for the petition contrary to the law for the registration of the population in Albania was called Red and Black Alliance (Interview with Mr. Spahiu, 2021). The Red and Black Alliance with its representatives submitted on 22.06.2011 in the offices of the Albanian Parliament the petition signed by thousands of citizens who expressed against the self-declaration of nationality and ethnicity. (Kosova, 2011, p. 2). In its report, the Red and Black Alliance demanded the amendment of two articles in the law on population and housing registration. This alliance proposed that in Article 3 to add the sentence: *"In any case, when there is a discrepancy between the data as a result of registration with the data reflected in the civil status acts, the latter have priority"*; Meanwhile, in Article 4 of the law it proposed the following content: *"In order to preserve the secularism of the Albanian state, as well as the spirit of tolerance and coexistence, the census data under this law would not include ethnicity and religion."* (Kosova, 2011, p. 2).

Their opposition to the law for the registration of the population in Albania continued also regarding its approval and implementation procedure. After the adoption of the law on population census on July 7, 2011, it should be noted that the Red and Black Alliance continued with public positions and statements on this law not only in terms of content but also in terms of the manner of approval where two deputies according to them voted twice. In an article in the newspaper of the Red and Black Alliance, it is stated that based on these facts, the Red and Black Alliance sees sending the case to the constitutional court as the only solution to this issue, requesting the unconstitutionality of the Voting Law on population registration due to abuse of duty. As is stated in the article, *although miles away, these two deputies 'managed' to vote for the shameful draft law for the census of Minister Pollo!* (Kosova, 2011, p. 2). The way in which the population census was conducted and implemented as a process, which took place from October 1-21, 2011, was also a subject of denunciation by the Red and Black Alliance. In an article, the representative of the Red and Black Alliance, Mr. Redi Ramaj said that *hundreds of cases have been reported to the Red and Black Alliance where specialists employed by INSTAT in all cities of Albania have falsified citizens' data, as the working group in many cases has been composed of a whole family, thus the Supervisor, the Controller and the Surveyors have been part of the same family. He also added that citizens have arrived, declaring that CENSUS has not arrived at the doors of their home, just as INSTAT employees themselves have arrived to ask the citizens, who with despair*

and disappointment have denounced the violations and manipulations, which are ordered to perform during the registration process (Ramaj, 2011).

One other reason for the further development of the Red and Black alliance was the nationalistic issue. In one of the articles published at the red and black newspaper from the activist Mr. Kurtishi, is stated among others that not ignoring the rampant corruption in the executive, judiciary or health, nepotism in public administration, the pronounced lack of progress on the path to European integration, it seems that the national issue has been the most overlooked, misused and misunderstood in these 20 years of pseudo Albanian democracy. He added that every state and nation at a certain moment of its historical development needs a movement, a grouping, an alternative mental stream, which will shake the fossilized social relations towards national progress (Kurtishi, 2011). Also in another article of the Red and Black Alliance it is written that the nationalistic issue is not represented also from the civil society and as is stated in the newspaper of the Red and Black Alliance civil society is in hibernation and trumpets only cosmopolitan ideas (not coincidentally the Red and Black Alliance, which is the only active organization, is led by the national spirit). Also from the Red and Black alliance it is added the anti-establishment character led by the national interest like it is stated in an article of its activist Mr. Prifti which states that the Red and Black Alliance can be seen as a reaction of the fragmented Albanian body, as a metaphysical will of the nation to rise to its feet, to regain the lost dignity and revive the state turned into a corpse around which the ravens revolve.(Prifti, 2011, Kozmopolitizmi 'shqiptar' ose streha e shqiptarofobisë). In another event in Prizren, Mr. Spahiu expressed also the idea of a national platform because for him '*finally the time has come for the Albanian politics, but in any case the Albanian society to conclude on a platform for the future of the nation and national interests inside and outside the Albanian states and that this issue cannot wait and cannot be postponed*'. In another activity in Pogradec, the activist Mr. Spahiu declared the main intention of the movement that was the enhancing of the national identity and he expressed that '*Your presence here clearly shows that the Red and Black Alliance is above all parties and is only for the purpose that we are all together today and forever in defence of national identity*' (Qiraxhi, Newspaper No. 7, 2011, p. 3).

The Red and Black Alliance, in the context of dealing with national issues, made other legal denunciations which had consequences for the Albanian nation according to them. *There were denunciations from the Red and Black Alliance regarding the intergovernmental agreement on the demarcation of the maritime border between Albania and Greece, signed in Tirana on April 27, 2009, by the Foreign Ministers of Albania and Greece, in the presence of the two Prime Ministers, who according to the Red and Black Alliance, it was an unconstitutional and treacherous act for the entire Albanian nation. According to them, the decision of the Constitutional Court, on March 1, 2010, which overturned the agreement did not "shake the hearts of Albanians" but the amoral traders of the oldest Balkan nation, a decision that will remain in the history of our nation as a monument in defence of legitimate national interests.* (Dauti, 2011, p. 3). Also, the Red and Black Alliance through one of its activists, Mr. Myslym Pashaj, has also denounced Law no. 9861 dated 24.01.2008, because according to him there has been a legal deletion of state and maritime borders that was done only half a year before the infamous maritime border agreement between Albania and Greece that was overturned by the Constitutional

Court of Albania. (Pashaj, 2011, Na kanë fshirë kufijtë! Parlamenti të riplotësojë urgjent bazën ligjore). Through one of its activists, Mr. Ardit Çollaku, the Red and Black Alliance also opposed the work of the Parliamentary Committee on Laws, regarding the visa liberalization agreement between the Republic of Albania and that of Serbia, which according to the Red and Black alliance should have conditions in favour of Kosovo (Çollaku, 2011). In a meeting of the Red and Black alliance in Pogradec, the new initiative of the Red and Black Alliance to give Albanian names to towns and villages which have Slavic and Hellenic names arose. An initiative presented by Mr. Kreshnik Spahiu which in his speech said *that a law on toponyms will be proposed in order to change the names of cities of Slavic origin. He added that Albania needs to strengthen its identity in a country which for years has lost its symbols, for years have lost its values.* (Qiraxhi, newspaper no. 7, 2011, p. 3). Red and Black alliance also intended to expose the falsifications that had been made regarding the change of nationalities, where in an activity held in July 2011 in Gjirokastra, from the Red and Black alliance was expressed the position that *'Gjirokastra will say no to registration on religious and ethnic grounds, while the state will expose the falsifications of nationality'* (Bragjeci, 2011, newspaper no. 6, p.3).

In the framework of the national issues represented by the Red and Black Alliance and taking into account several events, where at their centre were Albanians from the territory outside the Republic of Albania, the Red and Black Alliance made public its second initiative by expanding the range of national issues it intended to represent: A Nation a Passport, which required that all persons of Albanian origin outside the borders of Albania be provided with an Albanian passport. In an article in the newspaper of the Red and Black Alliance was stated that *'If you think about the solution and understand, that only the removal or adjustment of a paragraph of the Constitution is needed, that only the will of the eighty-four elected representatives of the people is needed, the question arises: Where is that will? What prevents it? Well, if they will not reflect now to lend a hand to Albanians everywhere, it seems that Red and Black Alliance has started its way and will not stop without giving freedom to its brothers'* (Sokoli, 2011, p.2). Also the case for the law of citizenship was elaborated by Mr. Kreshnik Spahiu, which requested legal changes in the law for the Albanian citizenship as is stated explicitly in the below paragraph of the article *'We request a vote of 84 votes, 3/5 of the votes in the Albanian Parliament to amend the legal provision in Article 9, the last paragraph of the law 'For citizenship', where the application for three years for residence in Albania to be provided with a passport is removed'*. Also, following the treatment of the national issue, the thesis for national unity was being articulated and on July 28, 2011 one of its activists, Mr. Abdi Baleta stressed that *'European integration is a process that goes through after the existence and consolidation of national unity'* (Bektashi, newspaper no. 7, 2011, p. 2). Also the national unification thesis was elaborated further and from its activists like Mr. Kreshnik Spahiu was requested a national platform because according to him *"Issues closely related to national identity affect the feelings and interests of the entire Albanian Nation, inside and outside the borders of the Albanian state, therefore it cannot be resolved without a transparent debate and a national strategy."* (Sokoli, 2011, p. 3).

Another thesis in its rhetoric and action of Red and Black Alliance was also the

inclusion of the diaspora in the political processes and decision-making. According to Red and Black Alliance, it is time for 10 million Albanians to gather towards this movement as an opportunity to determine a common future'. (Alinj, 2011, p.2). In another declaration done in 25th of December 2011, Red and Black Alliance denounced the scandal of the Albanian government and state reflected in the open violation of Article 8 of the Constitution of the Republic of Albania which obliged it to "Protect the Rights and interests of Albanians which are also outside the borders. In this declaration was added also that for 21 years there has been a lack of a strategy for Albanian emigrants which is a big flaw that differentiates Albania compared to other European countries. Following this situation in the declaration Red and Black alliance called the Albanian government to draft a strategy that consists on:

1. *To draft a long-term strategy for Albanian emigrants returning to their homeland, supporting them with social assistance until their full integration into society.*
 2. *To compile an official register of data on citizens who left for emigration and those who returned to their homeland.*
 3. *To guarantee the rights of Albanian citizens living in emigration and their children who no longer speak any Albanian words.*
 4. *To reform diplomatic missions by drafting a concrete strategy to help and support Albanian emigrants at any time and in any case.*
 5. *Radical reform in the structures of the Albanian diplomatic corps.*
 6. *To enable at all conditions and forms for the right to vote for Albanian emigrants.*
- (Esi Qafoku, 21.12.2011).

As a conclusion it must be stated that Red and Black Alliance was established to address two concrete issues respectively the changing of the nationality by a court decision and law on registration of the population on ethnic and religious grounds. These were the initial phases for Red and Black Alliance. Its public denunciations and initiatives were developed through the year 2011 and represented the further denunciations for the approval of the registration of population law and its execution. Meanwhile the Red and Black Alliance articulated the national issue. On this issue it articulated some other legal denunciations and some original new initiatives regarding the national issue. Also it articulated as one of its main intentions the involvement of the diaspora in the political processes.

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