

Musine Kokalari and Her Unfinished Intellectual and Scientific Mission



Political Science

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Prof. as. Shyqyri Hysi

Lagja Kodra e Shtufit, pallati, 1041, Gjirokastrer, Albania

Prof. as. Rudina Mita

Lagja: "Dyl-Haxhire Myzyri", Pallati: "Kinema Millenium", Elbasan, Albania

ABSTRACT

Musine Kokalari was born in Adana, Turkey on 10th February 1917. Musine was educated in the well known schools of the time; she finished the school « Liria » in Gjirokastra, 'N'an Mbretëresh' Institute in Tirana and the University for literature in Rome. There, she achieved the doctoral thesis. At the end of her studies, she graduated successfully, graded as 'excellent'. After her graduation, she was asked to be a professor in Rome, but she preferred to return in Albania.

Besides publications, upon her return, she kept in contact with patriots of the time like Lumo Skendo and others, and became involved in the current politics. Her sole aim was « the country needed the thoughts of women and of social democracy ». Consequently, on 6th November 1943, she became the founding protagonist of the Social Democratic party. After the war, in November 1945, this party was involved in anticommunist organizations like Albanian Democratic Union ».

In the arena where multidimensional Albanian events emerged, including political, cultural, military ones, during the years 1937 - 1945, among other prominent figures a girl from Gjirokastra was distinguished, who acted with the strength of a demon, the Olympic calmness, maturity of a politician and strong will. (Albanian State Archive 1946:12). She worked and acted with the sharpness of a proved diplomat, the prophecy and the determination of the apostles, with clear democratic conviction (Newspaper *Shtypi*”, nr. 120, 1937:2) and national character (Newspaper, *“Lajmi i Ditës”*, 12 february 1997). Musine Kokalari, with her work and activity (although lasting only eight years) could list her name and image, along with other prominent figures of Gjirokastra known nationwide, such as: Koto Hoxhi, Pandeli Sotiri, the brothers Topulli, Andon Zako Cajupi, Urani Rumbo, Rauf Fico, Xhevat Kallajxhi, Avni Rustemi (Akademia e Shkencave, Vol. I, II, 2008: 370 -371, 669; Vol. II :962, 1097-1098 ; Vol. III :267, 2269, 2372 -2373, 2729 -2730).

Musine was born in Adana, Turkey on 10 February 1917. When she was three years old and had taken the first steps in life, her father Reshat answered the call of their homeland and returned home, as did dozens of other Albanians who were in Turkey. He first settled in Palorto, Gjirokastra, near his father and the family of Kokalari (Newspaper, *“Rilindja Demokratike”*, 29 april 1995:5). In 1934, the family of Musine moved to Tirana, where they opened a private activity, the printing press «Mesagjirët shqiptarë» (Newspaper, *“Drita”*, 13 june 1999:4) and a bookshop, which were run by her three brothers Mutaz, Vesim and Hamit.

Musine was educated at the best schools in the country of the time: she graduated from “Liria” school in Gjirokastra, Institute «Nana Mbretëreshë» in Tirana and from the University of Rome (ASA, f. 837, 1938:5, 38, Dos. 7) with a degree in literature. Her studies were concluded with the highest grades. After graduation she was asked to work as a university teacher in Rome, but she preferred to return home. In collaboration with Lumo Skëndo and other patriots of the time, besides publishing, she engaged herself in the politics of the time for, as Musine put it «The country needed the opinion of the woman and of social democracy.»

Musine made a valuable contribution to the literature, (Newspaper, *“Rilindja”*, Tuesday, 16 may 1996: 5) she is not only considered as the first Albanian female writer, but also as the pioneer of the artistic processing of folklore for children (Newspaper, *“Drita”*, Sunday, 10 february 2002:5). Musine managed to dedicate herself to politics as well. One of her contributions to the politics of that time (1943) was establishing the Albanian Social Democratic Party (Newspaper, *“Zëri i Lirisë”*, january 1944:2). Although this party had a short lifespan and a limited activity, it remained as an alternative to the political spectrum of the time, a fact that quite frequently has gone unmentioned either in official sources, or historical and political books of that

period. The idea of establishing a political group, a democratic coalition, or the Social Democratic Party, had been put forth by Musine on more than one occasion:

In the house of the teacher Razie Hallulli, in which were gathered Razia, Mefarete Frashëri, Musine, Aferdita Asllani, Aferdita Gjokoreci and Nexhmije Hoxha. This gathering of intellectual women enabled the publication of a magazine titled «Gruaja shqiptare» (The Albanian woman) (Marko, Petro, 2000:175).

which was published by Musine three times. Nexhmija sought to run the group and demanded that the members followed her orders, while Musine suggested «*joining the Albanian National Liberation Front, not as individuals but as a group, as the Social Democratic Party «which should» represent the middle road that could attract undecided forces.»*

b) Musine discussed with Skender Muço, Selman Riza, Jusuf Luzi the idea of forming a democratic coalition. This coalition was to rely on the Front Decalogue in order to form the Social Democratic Party.

c) To achieve a treaty with the National Front (Balli Kombëtar), Musine spoke with Hasan Dosti (Deputy of National Front Party), who refused to sign a treaty for the recognition of PSD. Skënder Muço was in charge of organizing the first meeting which was to announce the formation of Social Democratic Party of Albania. The latter was formed on November 6, 1943 in a house in Elbasan Street, attended by its 60 representatives of various political convictions (Newspaper, *“Ndryshe”*, Thursday, 9 august 2007:20). Skender Muço addressed many issues such as the actual situation, the in-fighting that had taken place in the district of Vlora, the unity of the people, efforts to reach an agreement with the Front, and the creation of the Social Democratic Party of Albania. Musine read aloud the program (ASA, F. 837, 1946:6, Dos. 7):

The party also approved the publication of its newspaper «Zëri i Lirisë» (The Voice of Freedom), which came only in six numbers.

The program of the Social Democratic Party was published in the newspaper «Zëri i Lirisë», on 1 January 1944 (Newspaper, *“Zëri i Lirisë”*, 1 january 1944:1)

1. A primary objective of the Social Democratic Party is to ensure social justice and political freedom.
2. The Social Democratic Party takes an evolutionist stance as regards economic collectivism.
3. Other primary objectives of the Social Democratic Party are to ensure enough land for the farmers to work on, and to eliminate exploitation, speculation and parasitism. It also aims at providing food, housing and other needs for the working class to make their lives liveable. Agrarian reform – initial steps will be taken to divide up the land. The Party

will endeavour to implement a social security scheme to afford protection to all classes of society.

4. Political freedom means ensuring the right of every citizen to freedom of speech, freedom of thought, freedom of the press, freedom of private initiative and freedom to vote (parliamentary opposition). The Party will endeavour to lay foundations to contribute to the education of all classes of Albanian society democratically and to prepare them for the coming regime under which social justice and political freedom will reign. The main reason for restrictions on political freedoms is (the lack of) social justice.
5. With regard to relations with other nations, the Party will not be led by narrow egotistical nationalism, but by simple patriotism that concords with feelings of respect and affection for other nations, and it will support the idea of creating a Balkan confederation as soon as possible.
6. Another objective of the Party is to fight against all occupiers for the independence of a united Albania within its own ethnic borders (Shehu, N. *Musine Kokalari*, 2009:435,436).

After the murder of her two brothers end 2 December 1945 elections, Musine wrote: "Thus began the tragedy of a democratic living under the dictatorship of the proletariat. It marked the end of the Rilindja period and of democratic endeavours by humane individuals who wanted to defend the poor, to protect the workers in order to save them from physical and intellectual slavery, to protect their human dignity".

Musine declared the mission of the Social Democratic Party in her first article in the newspaper «Zëri i Lirisë»: «*the Social-Democratic Party*» she wrote "aims to educate the Albanian people on social-democracy, prepare and convince the public opinion for evolutionary and progressive reforms and will aim at lifting the Albanian people politically, morally, and intellectually and providing the bases for economic financial improvement and social progress» (Newspaper, «Zëri i Lirisë», 1 kallnor 1944: 2, 4).

The liberation of Albania in November 1944 did not meet the expectations of Musine and other intellectuals. Communists and the ideology they represented through the Democratic Front were consolidating their political power. They took the credit for the achievements of the war and were preparing to legitimate their power (Newspaper, «Panorama», Saturday, 14 July 2007:14) through December 2, 1945 elections (Newspaper, «Rilindja Demokratike», Thursday, 10 february 2000:10).

The democratic circles of the time put forth the idea that «*people who were against communism*» should join the parliament. To fulfill this objective Musine initiated the organization of a political group who would run for this election. This required the sensibilisation of the allies. The idea of meeting with allies to seek moral support from them and to ask them to act as an intermediary with the government to get the elections postponed so as to allow «*other parties to participate in elections*», was conducted by Musine.

On 6 November 1945 (Newspaper, «*Ndryshe*», Friday, 14 september 2007:18) the first anticommunist opposition group «Albanian Democratic Union» was established in Tirana which was an alliance of the Social Democratic Party, led by Musine Kokalari, the Resistance Front led by Sami Qeribashi (which consisted of : Kavaja, Çoku, Balla) and The Monarchist Group led by Qenam Dibra (which consisted of Hasho, Leskoviku, Beshiri). This group according to Musine's ideas «will fight with democratic means for a different Albania.»

To accomplish its mission the group addressed a note to the Western Allies. It was Musine who formulated it and it was signed by: our Zogists, four members of the Resistance, Musine, Musa Dizdari and a leader of the PSD, whose name was not mentioned by Musine while being interrogated (Newspaper, «Rilindja Demokratike», Sunday, 2 november 2002). Musine confirmed: «*I had myself the occasion to speak with the British officer Palmyra*». Once handing him a «note», as she called it, Musine said to him: «*We are a democratic coalition and we want many parties to participate in the elections.*»

Philosophical ideas and concepts of Musine

- « It is the environment that moulds people and the circumstances that toughen them up.»(ASA, F. 837, 1937, date. 7)
- « The most important power of the prudent man is controlling one's own.» (Newspaper, «*Korrieri*», Thursday, 29 January 2002:12).

As for her life she said: «I want to live, I do not want to depart this life before those who brought about this tragic situation in my country, which is facing complicated, strange and vague conditions.»

- « The prosperity of Albania depends on the country's stability and mutual understanding. It is evolution that causes it and not Stalin revolution.» (Newspaper, «*Drita*», Sunday, 2 november 2003).
- « Violence and hatred are disastrous phenomena.»
- « No one was born perfect, but hard work and persistent efforts can help one progress in life, a process that might involve pain and sacrifice. Hardly ever can one work his/her way to the top without zeal and strong will.»
- « School is the magic key that will unlock the doors to a better future of Albania.»
- « Faith, hope, love. These build us up. Division and insanity humiliate and impoverish us.» (Newspaper 55, Wednesday, 10 february 1998:16).
- « The book is an overview of the developing world.
- » «We should embrace European humanism which made people free and equal. The liberation of people does not come from God, but from perfectly moral and physical heroes.» (Newspaper 55, 11 february 2000:12 - 13)
- « Nations advance if they are guided by enlightened, good, fair leaders and not by leaders who have corrupted conscience.» (ASA F. 837, dos.7)
- « The young generation always looks further away than the older generation, but it takes secular educated youth.» (Newspaper «*Bota Social Demokratike*», Thursday 23 march 1995:5 - 6)

Evaluations of Musine's work by different personalities

The creativity, work, political and social activity of Musine have been evaluated by many personalities during 1930 - 1940 and after 1990 such as: M. Lambretz, Ernest Koliqi, Branko Merxhani, Xhevad Kallajxhi, Lasgush Poradeci, Lumo Skendo, (Newspaper 55, saturday, 15 april 2000:22). Eqrem Çabej, Ismail Kadare, Pjetër Arbërori, Bedri Dedja, Roland Qafoku, Mevlan Shaplllo, Astrit Bishqemi, Petraq Risto, Novruz Shehu, Englantina Mandia to mention but a few.

Quotations about Musine:

Endowed with a versatile talent Kokalari has given us a scenic picture of a language with vivid wonderful colors. (M. Lambretz)

Musine Kokalari directly penetrates into the psychological core . Soon she coexists with what surrounds us. (Lasgush Poradeci) (Newspaper «Rilindja Demokratike», Sunday, 2 november 2003: 7)

A talented woman in literature, but life was not very generous to her. (Roland Qafoku) Musine is the pioneer of artistic elaboration of Albanian folklore for children. (Astrit Bisqemi) I dare not call her an Albanian Andersen, but she is the kind of writer that tries to make it known to everyone people's grievances. (Bedri Dedja)

Musine Kokalari, Bubulina of the twentieth century began her political activity early in school. (Agim Musta)

The city of Gjirokastra unlike any other city in Balkan, has given birth, has produced citizens and among them the remarkable writer persecuted over half of the twentieth century, whom I strongly appreciate. (Ismail Kadare)

Musine Kokalari was a great woman for a small country like Albania. She lit a light to illuminate the darkness of ignorance. She worked for the unity of the people when they were divided. She

sacrificed her life in the war against communism for freedom and democracy. (*Jenla Gödel*).

Musine is the first Albanian female writer, she is like a fresh lila water, a glass-veiled bride, she can only utter sweet words. (*Petra Risto*)

Institutions that bear the name of Musine

Former 8-year school 50th Anniversary in Tirana today 9-year old school was named after Musine Kokalari.

There is a cultural foundation named «Musine Kokalari» whose leader is Mr. Agim Musta. Because of her patriotic and political activity and intellectual values (Kokalari, M.1995:5-64) she possessed Musine was arrested on January 23, 1946 and was sentenced to 20 years in prison (ASA, F. 837, 1946:230, Dos. 7). based on decision no. 5, July 2, 1946 (ASA, F. 837, year 1957:84, dos. 6).

She was released from prison on October 7, 1961. She was interned at Rrëshen for 22 years. She died on August 14, 1983 (*"Gazeta Shqiptare"*, Thursday, 3 february 2000:13 - 14) in Rrëshen. However, Albanians will always remember her ideal *Political freedom, social justice, in a society run by laws and inspired by European humanism.*»

Musineja was awarded «**Martyr of Democracy**» (*"Gazeta Shqiptare"*, 16 february 2000) by the President of the Republic Mr. Sali Berisha based on the Decree no. 517, Tirana on 22 April 1993 with the following motivation: «*Distinguished for her strong patriotic conviction and for her uncompromising attitude to the end of her life.*» (Newspaper 55, Wednesday, 10 february 1998:16).

The Municipal Council of Gjirokastra awarded her «**Honor of Gjirokastra**» in a ceremony held on 14 february 2000 in Gjirokastra (Newspaper "55", Sunday, 21 may 2000:13)

Musine Kokalari was posthumously awarded the «**Honor of the Nation**» by the President of Albania Mr. Bamir Topi, on 22 february 2008.

Musine also bears the epithets: «*hurricane girl*», «*symbol of Gjirokastra and Albanian woman*», «*first Albanian female writer*» (Newspaper "Koha Jonë", Tuesday, 8 april 2003:13), «*invincible girl*» (Newspaper "Wednesday, 14 august 1996:6), «*martyr of democracy*», «*eagle-eyed girl*» (Newspaper "Bota Social Demokratike", Thursday 23 march 1995:5), «*sparrowhawk-eyed girl*» (Newspaper "Rilindja Demokratike", 29 april 1995:5), «*renowned Albanian intellectual*» (Newspaper "Shekulli", 19 november 1999:12), «*she was a prophetic flower that was unfairly trampled*, (Newspaper "Rilindja Demokratike", Sunday, 2 november 2002:6) «*one of the national heroes*» (Newspaper "Republika", sunday, 11 october 1998:15), «*Jean d'Ark of Albania*» (Newspaper "55", Wednesday, 17 may 2000:20) , «*iron lady*» (Newspaper "55", Sunday, 2 november 2003:10), «*a rebel flower*» (Newspaper "Shekulli", 2 november 2003:16), etc.

The moon itself can give witness to the values, work, sacrifice, and ideal of Musine. Whenever we bring her to mind, her fragile portrait will appear, in front of which every Albanian should confess and swear that will carry on those intellectual and patriotic values, democratic ideal for which Musine was sacrificed.

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