



Prishtina Insight

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Issue No. 10

FREE COPY!

City

All Aboard! Prishtina Train Station



page 6

BUSINESS

Kosovo Telecom Still Uses Serbia Prefix, Free



page 5

ARTE

Kosovo Awaits its Cultural Revolution



page 7

FEATURE

Kosovo Celebrates First, Sombre Birthday Party



page 9

FOOD & DRINK

The Art of Selection



page 10

Kosovars Denounce Milutinovic's 'Unjust' Acquittal

Victims of Serbia's brutal offensive express their dismay as ex-Serbian president walks free, while five others are jailed.

By Vjosa Musliu in Prishtina

The UN war crimes court in The Hague has found five senior Serb officials guilty of orchestrating the murder, torture and deportation of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo, at the same time acquitting the former Serbian president, Milan Milutinovic.

Former Yugoslav deputy prime minister Nikola Sainovic, former Serbian police public security service chief Sreten Lukic and ex-Yugoslav army general Nebojsa Pavkovic, were each sentenced to 22 years in prison in the February 26 judgment.

Former Yugoslav army chief of staff and defence minister Dragoljub Ojdanic and former general Vladimir Lazarevic received lighter sentences of 15 years each.

"The trial chamber finds you not guilty of counts one to five of the indictment," Judge Ian Bonomy told Milutinovic as he ordered his release.

Milutinovic was acquitted on the grounds that he was largely a figure-head during the conflict in Kosovo, while real power stayed in the hands of Slobodan Milosevic, the then-president of Yugoslavia.

Despite the weighty sentences given to five others over the crimes in Kosovo, many Kosovars said they were bitterly unhappy with the verdict.

Watching the live transmission of the first international trial for war crimes committed against Kosovo Albanians, Kosovo's Minister of Justice, Nekibe Kelmendi, described the verdict as no more than a "symbolic conviction".

"The verdict is unjust," said Kelmendi whose own husband and two sons were executed by Serbian forces in spring 1999.

Kosovo's Deputy Prime Minister, Rame Manaj, echoed that line. "The facts presented at the Tribunal provided hard and clear evidence," said



Milan Milutinovic (standing) and Nikola Sainovic (sitting) at the Hague.

Manaj, whose son went missing in the conflict.

Tome Gashi, a lawyer and adviser to Kosovo's Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci, said the decision to free Milutinovic suggested that the Tribunal "wanted to create a kind of balance after previously acquitting some Kosovo Liberation Army commanders".

Gashi added, "According to the constitution of Serbia at the time, Milutinovic was supreme commander of the armed forces. If the others were sentenced, then Milutinovic, as their supreme commander, should have been sentenced as well."

Hysni Berisha, from Suhareka, representing a family of 40 whose

members were murdered on March 26, 1999, said he was deeply shocked. "This is not just," he said, by telephone, describing Milutinovic's acquittal. "Releasing the second architect of crimes against Kosovo Albanians is just absurd."

The prosecution in The Hague called 118 witnesses in a marathon trial that started in July 2006. Witnesses described Serbian forces shelling towns and villages and killing civilians while some 800,000 people were driven from their homes and forced to flee in convoys that sought refuge in Macedonia and Albania.

Prosecutors accused the six men of hatching a criminal plot to drive

ethnic Albanians out of Kosovo in order to consolidate Serbia's control of its then province. Their agenda was said to have included "the deportation and forcible transfer of several hundred thousand people, as well as the murder and persecution of thousands of Kosovo Albanians". Prosecutors had called for sentences of between 20 years and life imprisonment for all the defendants.

This was the first verdict from The Hague concerning the atrocities committed by Serbian forces in the 1998-99 assault on Kosovo, which eventually drew in NATO. The trial against Milosevic on the same charges was aborted after he died of a heart attack in 2006.

Politics

EULEX Will Treat Kosovo War Crimes as Priority

The UN mission in Kosovo, UNMIK, has handed over files on investigations on war crimes committed in the 1998-99 conflict to the newly deployed EU rule of law mission, EULEX.

In an interview for BIRN's "Jeta ne Kosove" ("Life in Kosovo") TV show, Bernard Rabatel, the deputy head of justice in EULEX...

page 4

Business

Global Crisis Rattles Kosovo's Fragile Economy

Kosovo's main pension fund has reported a loss of 100 million euro in less than a year. Production at the giant Ferronikeli nickel plant has meanwhile fallen by 50 per cent and sales of mineral extracts from the Trepca mine in Mitrovica have halted. These are only some of the consequences of the global crisis being felt...

page 5



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Kosovo Opens 18 New Ambassadorial Posts

BALKAN INSIGHT, PRISTINA

Kosovo's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has called for candidates to apply for 18 vacancies in new embassies abroad, spokesperson Albana Beqiri said.



Kosovo's government

"According to administrative instructions, the processes of application, interview, and the narrowing of the candidate list for ambassadors and officials have been established for all missions", she said.

Since declaring independence from Serbia in February of last year, Kosovo has opened embassies in Washington, London, Bern, Brussels, Tirana, Ankara and Vienna.

However the heads of these missions were granted the positions of Charge d'Affaires, which are temporary diplomatic agents, because of the lack of diplomatic legislation in Kosovo. Beqiri said that authorities will soon draft these laws that will develop the diplomatic service.

"The diplomatic criteria but also rankings, immunities, privileges, and number of staff is being determined, everything that has to do with the normal functioning of the diplomatic service", Beqiri added.

The next wave of embassies will be opening in France, Germany, Italy, Czech Republic, Bulgaria, Sweden, Holland, Japan, Hungary, Croatia and Slovenia.

Kosovo's Haradinaj: Ready To Mediate in Uganda



Ramush Haradinaj

BALKAN INSIGHT, PRISTINA

Kosovo's former Prime Minister, Ramush Haradinaj, said he was willing to be the mediator for peace talks in Uganda between the government in Kampala and the Muslim Allied Democratic Forces rebels. The Allied Democratic Forces, ADF, said they wanted Haradinaj, a former commander of the Kosovo Liberation Army acquitted last year of war crimes charges by the International Criminal Tribunal in The Hague, because "he has been through a lot" and had experience "of rebels and difficulties".

"I have been helping them for the past six months," Haradinaj said. "I will be helping them as much as I can without neglecting my obligations here [in Kosovo]"

After the end of the 1998-99 conflict, Haradinaj became deputy commander of the Kosovo Protection Corps, and later founder and president of Alliance for Future of Kosovo, AAK. In 2004 he became Prime Minister but resigned after 100 days in office to surrender for trial at the war crimes tribunal in The Hague. In April 2008 he was acquitted of torture, murder, rape and deportation and returned to Kosovo to a hero's welcome.

The Uganda Muslims' rebellion began in the early 1990s and intensified between 1996 and 2001, forcing tens of thousands of people in the western Rwenzori region to flee their homes. ADF says it is fighting for equal rights for Muslims in the East African country.

Kosovo To Expel Unannounced Serb Leaders

BALKAN INSIGHT, PRISTINA

Kosovo's authorities have said they are adamant about "defusing Serbia's threats towards Kosovo's territorial sovereignty" and would stop any Serbian officials entering Kosovo unannounced. Serbia's Minister for Kosovo and Metohija, Goran Bogdanovic was stopped from coming into Kosovo at the weekend, with authorities saying he was planning to come into the country "indirectly". Kosovo's public television, RTK, quoted Kosovo police General Director, Shermet Ahmeti Sunday night as saying that "the police has handcuffs even for Serbian President Boris Tadic", if he attempts to enter Kosovo without announcing it previously.

Contacted by Balkan Insight, Kosovo Police spokesman Arber Beka asid Ahmeti's statement had not been rendered accurately. "Kosovo's Police are to take measures against everyone who breaches the constitutional order in the country, but no name of any President was mentioned", Beka told Balkan Insight. Deputy Prime Minister Hajredin Kuci said that the same measures would be applied in the future towards other Serbian officials trying to visit in the same manner as Bogdanovic. "We will be careful and look at the agendas of their visits and whether they are in contravention to the legal order. We have been sufficiently patient," he said.



Goran Bogdanovic during a visit in Gracanica

Kosovo Security Force Rejects Clash With Police

BALKAN INSIGHT, PRISTINA

Dozens of former Kosovo Protection Corps members who did not get accepted into the newly formed Kosovo Security Force, KSF, attempted to break into KSF's headquarters, but were stopped by police. The NATO-sponsored KSF, an army in all but name, replaced the Kosovo Protection Corps, KPC, the territory's first quasi-military body that was set up after the end of the 1998-99 war between ethnic Albanian guerrillas and Serb forces, and was overwhelmingly made up of former ethnic Albanian veterans.

In an effort to make the new force a little less closely associated with the war, the selection process left out hundreds of former KPC members, with many taking to the streets in protest, while three high-ranking officers resigned in solidarity.

Scuffles broke out outside the Security Force Ministry building as special police stopped some 200 ex-KPC who were shouting against the unfairness of the selection process.

The Security Force Minister, Fehmi Mujota, after his meeting with former KPC members said the protests would end.

"I guarantee there will not be protests any longer. We don't work under the dictate of protests and disagreements", said Mujota, adding that all those dissatisfied with the selection process have another opportunity to apply for entry into the KSF in March.

Agim Derguti, one of the protesters, said the selection process was not just and the authorities were lying. "Since January 20 we have been protesting peacefully and each time we have been told lies. This cannot go on like this any longer".



Former TMK members protesting

Editor's word

Përgjegjësi!



By Krenar Gashi

Leaving behind all the muddles about Kosovo's first year as an independent country and all the questions that everybody raised, I can't refrain from asking the question: To whom are Kosovo's authorities accountable?

According to our constitution, the government should be responsible to parliament. But is that the case? I don't think so. The last time I saw our Prime Minister being questioned by the MPs, it looked more like a word association game - a senseless one, however.

Deputies would quiz him on some concrete issue, such as the mismanagement of public funds, and he would respond with one of those stale-sounding sentences that we all know by heart about Kosovo's "Euro-Atlantic integration", whatever that means.

Is the government to blame? Not really. Parliament is. It is possibly the only democratic parliament in the world in which deputies only open their mouths when the government instructs them to speak.

They fail to understand their job as representatives of the people in what is supposed to be the supreme legal authority in our new republic.

No wonder that the EU Special Representative, Pieter Feith, told European Parliamentarians that Kosovo's parliament was "still falling short of fulfilling its key role in a democracy, that of providing the main forum for political debate and parliamentary oversight and scrutiny."

And yes, he did say that, though when he came back to Prishtina, he said something else and argued that the media had misinterpreted him. Had he really forgotten that his PR department had already sent an electronic copy of his speech to the media?

Getting back to the issue, if the government is not responsible and accountable to parliament, and through parliament to the people, then to whom is it accountable? Due to this vacuum of responsibility, I don't blame many of my fellow Kosovars for having the impression that our authorities are responsible to the land of Stars and Stripes and to them alone.

P.S. Përgjegjësi is the Albanian word for responsibility.

Photo by Petrit Rahmani for Prishtina Insight

Photo by Vjosa Musliu for Prishtina Insight

Photo by Petrit Rahmani for Prishtina Insight



Bernard Rabatel, deputy head of justice in EULEX

EULEX Will Treat Kosovo War Crimes as Priority

Bernard Rabatel, deputy head of justice in EULEX, says mission will move fast over war crimes because 'justice delayed is justice denied'.

By Krenar Gashi
in Prishtina

The UN mission in Kosovo, UNMIK, has handed over files on investigations on war crimes committed in the 1998-99

conflict to the newly deployed EU rule of law mission, EULEX.

In an interview for BIRN's "Jeta ne Kosove" ("Life in Kosovo") TV show, Bernard Rabatel, the deputy head of justice in EULEX, said the mission's judges and prosecutors were now handling these files and new indictments would soon follow.

"Some 550 civil files were handed over to EULEX, 250 of them criminal files, of which some 50 concern war crimes," Rabatel said. He did not wish to comment further on the state of the transferred files, or on the accuracy of any claims made therein.

"Between January and March, more than 50 hearings have already been scheduled," he added, "of which around 16 will be criminal trials".

Since Kosovo declared independence on February 17, 2008, the UN mission in the country, UNMIK, has started reconfiguring its presence. Police and justice departments in UNMIK are shrinking and eventually will cease to exist, while EULEX police, judges and prosecutors have been stepping in since December 9, 2008.

Rabatel explained that the involvement of the EULEX mission in the field of justice comprised two elements: exclusive jurisdiction and sub-judiciary competences.

"We have an exclusive jurisdiction, for example, for war crimes, money-laundering and organised crime and then we have what we call sub-judiciary competence over a number of serious crimes like corruption, kidnappings and

murders."

War crimes are priority for EULEX, Rabatel continued, although establishing the precise priority of cases would be an independent decision of prosecutors and judges. "EULEX is strongly committed to investigating war crimes, prosecuting them and to trying them in the best way," he said.

Rabatel said that with the assistance of EULEX, Kosovo had established an Office of Special Prosecutors composed of 10 local prosecutors and five international ones. This body would deal with such serious crimes as extortion, war crimes, money laundering and organised crime.

The mission would allow no political influence or interference into the field of justice, especially regarding cases of war crimes.

"No!" he confirmed. "Let me confirm one thing: a strong rule of law is necessary. And rule of law means fair justice; that every person in the country, in the region, everywhere, is treated in the same way."

"EULEX will insist on a fair justice, which is not delayed, because as you know, as we say, justice delayed is justice denied."

Asked to comment on whether one-third of all judges and prosecutors in Kosovo were being investigated by the disciplinary commission of the judiciary, Rabatel merely said EULEX aimed to improve the situation "by mentoring and monitoring", which is one reason why EULEX judges and prosecutors would work alongside local ones.

UK To Cut Its EULEX Staff Numbers In Kosovo

BALKAN INSIGHT, PRISTINA

The UK government has announced plans to reduce its staff in Kosovo's EULEX mission as part of a cost-cutting drive resulting from the global financial crisis.

"We have received some signals that the UK government is planning to reduce its staff under the law and order mission in Kosovo", said Christophe Lamfalussy, spokesman of the mission.

The reduction comes as a result of the financial crisis, he said.

"We are waiting for personnel reduction from Great Britain, though we haven't any decision yet", added Lamfalussy.

Most EULEX mission members

present in Kosovo are deployed and paid by their governments. EULEX is the first international mission in Kosovo to have admitted the repercussions of the global financial crisis. Since Kosovo came under international administration after the 1998-99 conflict, Great Britain has been the greatest contributor to the KFOR peacekeeping mission in Kosovo.

Earlier this week, the Czechs who hold the rotating EU presidency conceded that the bloc is becoming more careful as a result of the financial crisis.

"During an economic crisis people become more careful", said Czech foreign minister Karel Schwarzenberg.



EULEX staff

Prishtina Airport Starts Privatisation Consultations

BALKAN INSIGHT, PRISTINA

Kosovo's government met with consultants Naco Innova to discuss plans to revamp and assist in the privatization of Prishtina International Airport.

Naco Innova, a Dutch-American aviation consulting company, won the tender on January 26 and was on their first official visit to Prishtina, meeting with a special governmental commission formed to monitor the airport's concession process.

Fatmir Limaj, Minister of Transport and Telecommunications, stressed the importance of a clear-cut privatization, stating that "we are very interested that this whole process be a transparent process".

He also spoke of the commission's intention to showcase Kosovo's new identity as an independent state, following its declaration of independence from

Serbia in February of last year.

"There should be distinctive and identifying signs of the new state of Kosovo. You need to take this into consideration," he said.

Ahmet Shala, Minister of Economy and Finance, said Naco Innova had been given a number of objectives, including the development of a modern airport and been briefed on the government's wishes to maintain a certain stake in the airport in order to ensure valuable investments and protect national interests.

"We have explained that retaining a piece of the shares is a possible variant we wish to have from this strategic undertaking... because it is important and essential for the government and country of Kosovo", he said.

Naco Innova's previous consulting assignments in the Balkans included work on Alexander the Great airport in Skopje, and St. Apostle Paul airport in Ohrid.



Prishtina International Airport

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Publisher:

BIRN

Balkan Investigative Reporting Network

Mensa e Studenteve, first floor

10000, Prishtina

Kosovo

Phone: +381 (0) 38 24 33 58

Fax: +381 (0) 38 22 44 98

info@prishtinainsight.com

Editor-in-Chief:

Krenar Gashi

krenar@prishtinainsight.com

Managing Editor:

Vjosa Musliu

vjosa@prishtinainsight.com

Editorial Team:

Ana Petrusheva, Arif Muharremi, Ellie

Tzortzi, Gordana Igric, Jeta Xharra,

Marcus Tanner and Shega A'Mula

Marketing, Sales & Distribution:

marketing@prishtinainsight.com

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Miners in Trepca working to return company's former prestige.

Global Crisis Rattles Kosovo's Fragile Economy

As metal prices tumble and investments on markets lose value, the consequences are being felt in what is already Europe's poorest state.



By Lavdim Hamidi
in Prishtina

Kosovo's main pension fund has reported a loss of 100 million euro in less than a year. Production at the giant Ferronikeli nickel plant has meanwhile fallen by 50 per cent and sales of mineral extracts from the Trepca mine in Mitrovica have halted. These are only some of the consequences of the global crisis being felt by Kosovo's economy – after government officials had previously expressed “relief” that the country would escape the crisis sweeping the rest of the world.

Kosovo can ill afford an economic downturn. Already the least developed economy in the region and in Europe, it has a

GDP per capita of only 1,400 euro compared to an average GDP per capita of around 28,000 euro in EU countries.

Vershini Hatipi, deputy head of the Kosovo Pensions Savings Trust, which had invested its funds in international markets, recently disclosed losses of around 8 million euro in just the last month, while total losses for 2008 reached 100 million euro. The two big metal producers, Trepca and Ferronikeli, are also suffering badly, as sales to international markets lose much of their value. Prices for nickel, zinc, silver and other metals have fallen so far that it barely pays to keep production going.

Awaiting the return of “better days” and a rise in metal prices, more than 4,000 tons of zinc and lead have been put in storage at Trepca warehouses.

Ferronikeli has cut nickel pro-

duction for the same reason – the sharp decline in the price on international markets. Arten Bajrush from Ferronikeli told Prishtina Insight that prices had slumped from 24,000 euro per ton to only 10,000 euro. Bajrush said cuts in production levels had not yet obliged the company to lay off workers. “With this production capacity we could easily function with 300 fewer workers but we don't plan to do such a thing,” he said. Bajrush added that while the company was still operating, it would keep on all its workers, even though there was no sign that metal prices would recover in 2009.

Ferronikeli exports to countries such as India, Belgium and Italy. Kosovo's Minister of Economy and Finance, Ahmet Shala, has admitted that the global crisis has “rattled” Kosovo, while maintaining that government, in cooperation with business, can help the country to bounce back.

At the beginning of this year, the government took the bold step of cutting taxes by 50 per cent.

In the 2009 budget, the government also set aside 200 million euro to intervene when certain sectors of the economy require an urgent financial “infusion”. The funds have not yet been used.

The head of the Kosovo Chamber of Commerce, Besim Beqaj, agreed that 2009 would be another year of financial crisis, which would also make itself apparent in Kosovo.

He urged government to concentrate on trying to increase capital investments, “because every increase in investment means more employment”. Beqaj said strengthening the country's economic stability would also stabilise the political situation.



Miners in Kosovo's old-time giant, Trepca

Bidding On “Kosovo.com” Domain Name

BALKAN INSIGHT, PRISHTINA

The Kosovo.com internet domain name is going on an online auction as from February 19, expected to attract interest from rival Kosovo Albanian and Kosovo Serb businesses and maybe even government agencies. Owners Virtual Network said they would sell the website to the highest bidder, with a reserve price between \$50,000 and \$100,000. Industry analysts have said that the domain name lends itself to an unlimited array of possibilities, business models and future revenue streams and could be expected to fetch many times the reserve price.

“We have already had an important amount of interest from corporations and investors around the world,” said Steven O'Brian, director of the Virtual Network. “This is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity and the domain name will most likely never be sold again.”

Kosovo.com was initially the website of a political organisation called The Serbian Democratic Movement, led by Kosovo Serb politician Momcilo Trajkovic. At the end of the 1998-99 conflict, the page



Prishtina

became a decidedly pro-Serbian news portal, connected to the Serbian Orthodox Church.

Online brokers bought the domain in 2006.

A website with Kosovo's name in Albanian, Kosova.com, is owned by the news agency Kosovo Information Centre. The auction will be open until February 26, 6:00 AM CET.

Kosovo Asks To Use Albania's Shengjini Port

BALKAN INSIGHT, PRISHTINA

The government of Kosovo has officially asked Albania permission to use its port of Shengjini in the north western part of the country, saying it is taking up Tirana's earlier offer to provide the landlocked new state with Adriatic sea access for free, boosting its trade and growth chances. The request was approved by Kosovo's assembly in a special session on February 17, the one year anniversary of its declaration of independence from Serbia.

“On this one-year anniversary, by my authority as Prime Minister and within the setting of previous discussions with the Republic of Albania, I have sent a letter to Prime Minister Berisha concerning the offer of the Port of Shengjini,” said Kosovo PM Hashim Thaci.

“I believe that this offer will seal our development perspective between two states – the Republic of Albania and the Republic of Kosovo.” Shengjini is a hub for passenger traffic and goods transport for companies operating in Albania and Montenegro, with a lot of traffic also going to other Balkan states.

Thaci said that the use of Shengjini will give landlocked Kosovo a huge economic boost. The project will be supervised by the Ministry of Transport and Communications, the Ministry of Energy



A view of Shengjini

and Minerals, the Ministry of Trade and Industry and the Ministry of Economy and Finances.

“This will give Kosovo a large boost directly towards its development and economic independence. It will bring in multilateral profits for Kosovo, for the Albanian state and for the whole region”, he said.

The port is currently undergoing major reconstruction, financed by both the Albanian government and the European Commission. The revival of the port is one of the items on Albania's checklist on the way towards European Union membership.

Kosovo Telecom Still Uses Serbia Prefix, Free

BALKAN INSIGHT, PRISHTINA

Kosovo is still using Serbia's +381 international dialing code for its land lines, despite having no formal agreement or any talks on the issue since Kosovo declared independence from Serbia last year.

The head of the parliamentary economic commission, Energy and Transport Minister Myzejene Selmani, said Kosovo should cut this tie with Serbia as soon as possible.

“We have the possibility to arrange an agreement with Albania, why should we keep using Serbia's prefix?” said Selmanaj.

Governmental officials have said they are lobbying to get Kosovo's own international calling code as soon as possible, but are running into obstacles from nations that back Serbia in rejecting Kosovo's secession. Senior officials of the Kosovo Post and Telekom board said Kosovo has no financial obligation toward Serbia despite using its prefix for free since the end of the 1998-99 war.

“We have no agreement with Serbia on this issue but we have been using the prefix as we did before the war”, said the head



Kosovo's Post and Telecommunication

of PTK's board, Rexhe Gjonbalaj. “Neither we, nor them pay each other for the code. There are no financial obligations toward one another.”



Prishtina's train station today

All Aboard!

Shega A'Mula takes a peak at the run-down condition of Prishtina's once prestigious train station



By Shega A'Mula
in Prishtina

As I walk towards the rusting iron fence surrounding the premises of a train station I have never visited before, I can't help but feel drawn to the romantic railway voyages of Europe's past. However, parting lovers, smart leather-bound luggage and 1950s couture are distinctly absent. Instead, I find a platform full of broken concrete and weeds, and an overall air of neglect.

The railway system in Kosovo was completed between 1874 and 1963, first connecting towns with

one another and then with rail networks in the region. Prishtina railway station itself was constructed in 1936, by a French/British company, after the line was extended to the town in 1934.

Located beneath the backdrop of the booming Dragodan estate, the train station hasn't yet felt the waves of development that are fast transforming Prishtina into a more contemporary capital. In fact, the only major changes that it has seen are fresh coats of paint in 2002 and 2005 in flamboyant peach and violet.

High ceilings and lacquered dark wood in the reception area, though worn-out, characterize the 1930s architecture. The absence of computers at the two ticket desks only adds to the somewhat old-fashioned

atmosphere.

Behind the glass protection of the cashier's desk works Isak Nura, 58, who has been with the railways for 32 years. He is quick to offer abundant information about the system and ushers me into his office located in the next room.

Conductor's hat and antique coin dispenser in place, Isak seems to fit in perfectly with the antique décor of his office, which includes a rustic fireplace and old antennae radio.

Paying attention to Albanian courtesy, Isak first insists on bringing refreshments, and then sits down and begins to unlock some of the memories he has accumulated during his three decades on the job.

"There were travelers from all over the region that would stop here

because of the international line that ran from Athens to Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia and eventually to the last stop in Munich," he told Prishtina Insight.

Isak also referred to the diplomatic train called the "blue train", which used to bring the former Yugoslav president Josip Broz Tito to the station, when Kosovo was a part of Yugoslavia. "We had to wear white gloves whenever that train stopped at the station," he recalled.

The travelers now wandering the station have changed. Kosovo Security Force troops, pensioners and students now make up "80 to 90 per cent of travelers" waiting on the platform for the incoming train, Isak says.

Blerim Tafilaj, a Prishtina University student insists that in contradiction to the dire condition of the station, the cleanliness of the trains themselves is top notch, which is an extra incentive to travel by train as opposed to bus.

"I travel back to Shtarice once or twice a week by train, and it is very clean, considering the standard in Kosovo. It also drops me off closer to my village than a bus would," he says.

Blerim and other students waiting for the same train also say the train always arrives on time, sometimes even a few minutes early, although the hands on the aged station clock on the platform always point to 12 o'clock.

As far as renovations are concerned, Besim Asllani, Kosovo Railways commercial director, told Prishtina Insight that the location of the train station may change altogether, as Prishtina's urban planners develop the city.

"At the moment, there is no chance of investment in this station because according to information we obtained after meeting offi-

A Taste of Kosovo Gurabija

This week's recipe was inspired by a late movie night a member of our Prishtina Insight team attended. The hands of the clock were approaching midnight, as visitors were experiencing growling stomachs, indicating elevated hunger. At this moment, a number of female guests got up from their seats and headed to the kitchen to whip up this quick, easy, and ultimately cheap recipe. In no time, the Kosovar classic filled the whole room with a tempting aura of deliciously baked goodness, as people couldn't wait to get their hands on them. Gurabija treats can be made in the most desperate of moments, and can also last for days, so create an extra large batch and enjoy for the rest of the week.



2 eggs
1 glass of sugar
3 packages of vanilla sugar
One glass of yogurt
100 g butter
2 packages of yeast flour
(If you like, add some cocoa)

Preheat oven to 200 degrees Celsius.

Mix all ingredients together rigorously. While mixing with preferably an electronic mixer; add flour until you develop a hard dough consistency. Place dough onto working surface.

Form dough into round balls, roughly the size of ping pong balls. Place on a baking sheet and put into oven. Bake for about 20 minutes. the top of the pastries should be golden.

Serve with a glass of milk, and your choice of jam.

cials from Prishtina Municipality, they plan to transfer the station to another location," he said.

However dismal its current conditions, Prishtina locals say the station was quite the the escape for young people before the war – a late-night hangout, far from the prying eyes of parents and other adults.

"First kisses, cigarettes and drinks were common at the station after closing hours when I was a kid," one former train station enthusiast revealed.

Whatever the future may bring to Prishtina's train station, a ride on the railway can be a great way to discover the landscape of Kosovo, especially when tickets range from only 30 cents to 3 euros.



Prishtina's railway station waiting for rebirth

Independent Kosovo Awaits its Cultural Revolution

A year on, artists and writers feel more marginalized and underfunded than ever by an indifferent state.



By Arif Muharremi
in Prishtina

Kosovo's culture, a year after independence, is not seen as a field in blossom, say artists and culture makers who think that culture and arts are facing a hard time in the new country.

Initially, they see the lack of cultural policy and financial means as the main obstacles for the stagnating situation and disability of Kosovo's cultural representation in the world.

Since it was established in 2002, the Ministry of Culture was mainly obliged to finance events organized by Kosovo cultural institutions such as the National Theatre, National Gallery, Kosovo Museum, and Kosovo Library, as well as ensuring the salaries of workers in these institutions. Nevertheless, during the past years, the Ministry has constantly complained about a low budget. This year's budget for the Ministry of Culture is around 7 million euro.

Ilir Bajri, a composer, says that Kosovo culture is not marketed. "Kosovo culture should be a need. There are so many things that we should do right now in a cultural context. We should not think about how to present it, but firstly recognize that we really need it", said Bajri.

Albert Heta, a contemporary artist and director of Stacion Centre for Contemporary Arts, says that the cultural representation of Kosovo in the West will initially face the most elementary problem, passing the borders.

"Kosovo artists will face even more difficulties with these new



Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport in Prishtina

Kosovo passports than they used to with UNMIK passports", said Heta, adding that contemporary arts and very few independent cultural initiatives are the biggest cultural ambassadors for Kosovo in the world, but have trouble representing themselves because of the low recognition of Kosovo passports.

Since 1999, various international agencies have invested in local independent cultural organisa-

tions in order to encourage artistic development of civil society as a tool to increase tolerance amongst the ethnic groups of Kosovo through artistic and cultural activities, but most of the financial means were used for individual fortune.

Skender Boshnjaku, an art critic, says that culture in Kosovo is in a miserable condition, along with the living conditions of the artists who develop culture. "Until now I

don't see any development of culture. This government is absolutely arrogant and artificially closes its eyes when dealing with culture and those who make efforts to move culture ahead", said Boshnjaku.

In Kosovo there are few annual festivals such as Skena Up, Prishtina Jazz Festival or Dokufest that bring international artists to Kosovo, which help create networks with international arts scenes. But these festivals are a result of individual initiatives aiming to represent the ongoing culture trends in Kosovo, and not institutional.

Ilir Bajri, who is the founder of the Prishtina Jazz Festival, says that culture in Kosovo since 1999 has been mismanaged. "The need for cultural presentation in Kosovo until now consisted of some festivals that did not have live performances, and none of the participants lost, everyone won something", says Bajri.

On the other hand, Albert Heta suggests that the marginalization of Kosovo's arts scene should be blamed on the disability to expose the country's cultural products internationally. "Functioning in a very isolated frame, we are circling in a confusing situation where some pre-institutions try to promote themselves as bodies representing Kosovo in Europe", he says. "But in Europe you cannot represent yourself with values that have been overpassed in EU countries decades ago".

The need to represent the state pushed institutions to plan the building of an Opera house in Prishtina, which will begin this year. But according to artists, Kosovo doesn't need these kinds of structures that stay in one place.

"Right now we don't need static or standing structures. We need moving cultural structures that would represent us outside", says Heta.

"Kosovo culture should be a need. There are so many things that we should do right now in a cultural context. We should not think about how to present it, but firstly recognize that we really need it"

Ilir Bajri, a Kosovar composer

When asked if Kosovo culture is static and marginalized, Ilir Bajri replied that "the value that these representative festivals promote is, 'It is good to lie', covering up an institution that is underdeveloped, and experiencing no significant support from governing bodies.

"Maybe we are hiding the trash under the carpet, but I'm not sure if our carpet is big enough", says Bajri. "But I'm sure there is a lot of trash".



Art Gallery of Kosovo in Prishtina

Independence Anniversary

Photos by *Petrit Rrahmani*



Mother Teresa Square was flooded by Kosovars out to mark the country's first anniversary of its declaration of independence. Many are wearing plastic shirts illustrating the Kosovar flag on the front, handed out by the government.



Hundreds of Kosovars from all over the country gather together on Independence day in the centre of Prishtina, on Mother Teresa square, waving Kosovo's one year old flag, along with the flag Western Allies and Albania.



A girl too young to have experienced the 1999 conflict in Kosovo, which instigated its succession from Serbia, stands in front of a stand selling Kosovar flags for Independence Day



The crowd goes crazy as Morandi perform some of their greatest, world-renown hits, such as "Love is the Answer" and "Save Me", celebrating Independence day with many young Kosovar fans.



A young boy carries the official Kosovar flag, illustrating the territorial map of Kosovo and six stars representing the country's minority groups, and also has the American flag tied around his neck.



The streets of Prishtina were also buzzing with excitement, as Kosovars blasted traditional music from their car speakers, and waved flags out their windows while driving around the city.



Festivities continued into the night, as hundreds of Kosovars attended a multi-artist concert, headlined by Romanian superstars Morandi. Romania, however, has still not recognized the country's independence.



Two young girls, one holding the Albanian flag with the double-headed eagle, a symbol of all ethnic Albanians, the other holding Kosovo's 6-star flag, which was presented to the country for the first time February 17, 2008.

Kosovo Celebrates First, Sombre Birthday Party

Thousands of Albanians took to the streets with flags and banners to celebrate the first anniversary of Kosovo's declaration of independence on Tuesday, but excitement was dampened by the realisation that the secession from Serbia was not a quick fix to the nation's many problems.



By Shega A'Mula
in Prishtina

Car horns, traditional music and roars of happiness echoed through the streets of Pristina, as streets were blocked by hundreds of cars with licence plates from around Europe. Swarms of people from toddlers to grandparents walked around the city carrying the red and black Albanian flag and Kosovo's new blue-gold flag, as well as flags of Kosovo's Western allies, the Stars-and-Stripes and Union Jack.

"We are out celebrating independence; it feels great," said 11-year old Vesa, while Julind from Tirana said he came "to celebrate with our Kosovar brothers on this special day."

"It is my first time in Kosovo and it's great. I have great words to tell my friends in Tirana when I get back," he said, "We are all Albanians!"

Vali Gashi, a Ministry of Education employee, was handing out free Independence t-shirts to people out celebrating in the city.

"The atmosphere is amazing! It is a happy day", Gashi said.



A girl in front of the Kosovo's Ministry of Public Services waves Kosovo's flag

Photo by Petrit Rrahmani for Prishtina Insight

"I'm here on my first visit to Kosovo, I'm really enjoying the festivities, I've never seen so much excitement in such a small place," said Antonio Harrison from Chicago.

Despite the exuberance of the day, many concede that independence has not brought the many changes needed to really improve the lives of ordinary people in a country where half the population lives under or near the poverty

line, many supported by relatives working abroad.

"We came to celebrate Independence, the atmosphere is great. I am not very happy with the government until now, but God willing, (Ramush) Haradinaj will win the next elections and improve our country's situation", said Nexhat from Decan.

Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaci and other senior leaders thanked the people for their sacri-

fices in winning independence from Serbia, and promised that the future would be brighter, with more recognitions of its independence.

"Our first year was a year of pride for Kosovo," Prime Minister Hashim Thaci told a special parliament session.

"Each citizen should be proud for our achievements. We ratified the most important document of the Republic of Kosovo. Our key success was unity," he said, adding that the government was working to protect the rights of all citizens and ethnic communities living in Kosovo.

But the 90-percent Albanian majority knows the joy is not shared in Kosovo's Serb areas. The Serb minority rejects the secession and looks to Serbia as its capital for healthcare, education and administrative support.

"It is a festive day for the whole territory of Kosovo, I mean the whole Albanian population, since we have waited for this for so long. I believe we are going to celebrate in a dignified way", said Fisnik from Prizren.

"I hope that Kosovo gets rid of this problem of the north, and the economic situation improves," said Agron from Prishtina. "The government has finished some work but not as much as they should, but we need mobilization and support from the citizens of the country for it to happen."

While Albanians celebrated, Serb and Kosovo Serb politicians gathered defiantly in the northern Kosovo town of Zvecan on Tuesday to proclaim their rejection

of the secession and flaunt Belgrade's reach in Serb-controlled parts of Kosovo where Prishtina has no authority.

"The Assembly of Serbian municipalities in Kosovo and Metohija reject as invalid and without legal validity all acts and undertakings which unilaterally declares Kosovo's independence and form institutions of the so-called Kosovo state," said Radovan Nacic, speaker of the Assembly.

The meeting was attended by Serb MPs from conservative and nationalist parties, another sign of defiance towards the Albanian authorities in Prishtina and Kosovo's international overseers, which have warned Serbia that consolidating its authority in Kosovo's Serb north and tripping up the new state could end up damaging its own path to the European Union.

"This declaration ... sends a very clear message from Serbs from Kosovo and Metohija to the international community and Albanians as well, that Serbia and Serbs in Kosovo and Metohija do not want to renounce its territory on Kosovo and Metohija," said Serbian Minister for Kosovo Goran Bogdanovic.

"I have mixed feelings about the celebration this year. I was here last year too and the euphoria has calmed down a bit, people have realised that independence is not the only thing that can contribute to bettering their living conditions," said one visitor from Switzerland. "As far as I've seen the living conditions have not improved."



The red-black Albanian flag remains the preferred symbol of Kosovo Albanians

Photo by Petrit Rrahmani for Prishtina Insight



The Art of Selection

If the word 'select' sums up an image of choice, then this atmospheric bistro, with its selection of dishes inspired by countries around the world, is bound to please.



By Rose Whitmore
in Prishtina

What's in a name? The name "Select Bistro" isn't flashy or exotic. It does not transport you to Thailand or to the frenetic Michelin star restaurant scene of New York. Select's simple name reflects its food – solid, simple, and plenty of choice.

Beneath the surface is a whole lot of love, and effort. Just look at the Maple syrup, shipped from Austria, via Peja, so you can have your fluffy buttermilk pancakes just the way you like them. There's a full Canadian breakfast for that home-

sick Canuk, curry for curry lovers, Tuscan grilled trout for Italians far from home, and Buffalo wings for Yanks.

A small sample of menus from almost everywhere is available at Select, and if you don't see what you want, owner and head chef Gili A'Mula will surely try and make it for you. Always willing to add or change items, the Canadian-trained chef takes the art of "selection" to a new level.

"We wanted an international menu because there are so many local restaurants," says Gili, "and I like to have a small menu, so I can ensure all the ingredients are fresh."

The former owner of a deli in Toronto for nine years, Gili and Shani A'Mula opened Select eight

months ago with a view to combining fond memories of Canada with their business experience. The result is a combination of social coffee house in the front and a quiet dining room out at the back. "We want everyone to feel like home here, especially internationals, because we ourselves came here from Canada," Shani says. "We are very open to suggestions."

There's a beer patio and private back yard, not to mention a full bar with wines from Kosovo, Albania, France, Italy, and Montenegro, just to name a few.

Everywhere on the menu are hints of international inspiration; Caribbean chicken salad with clementines; hot herbed beef salad with garlic, chili peppers and pineapple; calamari, orange-scent-

ed beef stir-fry, and a traditional New York Strip steak are some of the regulars alongside a weekly rotating menu of specials.

Pricewise, appetizers and salads range from one to four euro while dinner entrees range between four and seven. While the sauces and combinations are tantalizing, the portion sizes can vary and the meat is on the well-done side.

One of the best things about Select is the music. Sitting in the front café area, it is easy to rock away to the sound of Lionel Richie while taking in the social scene both inside and out. When you've overdone the espresso, and cigarette smoke, a retreat to the back dining room offers a more tranquil experience.

"We want everyone to feel like home here, especially internationals, because we ourselves came here from Canada. We are very open to suggestions."

*Shani A'Mula,
Select Bistro Owner*

This is the distinction Shani and Gili were aiming for – offering a smoke-free environment for diners while not losing the coffee house feel so familiar to Prishtina. So, if you love to eat smoke-free before lighting up with a cappuccino, this is your place.

Recommendations...

De Rada

French inspired Brasserie scores high marks from our staff for its tasty meat dishes, extensive wine list and friendly staff.

Rr: UÇK 50
tel. +381 38 22 26 22

Pishat

Traditional charm meets contemporary décor at one of our preferred restaurants of the city. Meals range from Kosovar classics to modern favourites, including fresh breads baked in their wood burning oven.

Rr: Qamil Hoxha 11
tel. +381 38 24 53 33

Princesha Gresa

Extra large portions are in store for you at Gresa's, at surprisingly reasonable prices our staff clearly enjoy! Dish out at this venue, and enjoy a shot of rraki after your meal.

Rr: Fehmi Agani 23
tel. +381 38 24 58 41



Tuning the Soul to Something Higher



By Zvezdana Crnogorac

From Austria to Serbia and Russia, alternative music has played a powerful role in challenging conservative societies.

"It is not easy to do good things because, in politics, nobody rewards good things," says Andreas Goerg, an Austrian human rights activist. An organiser of protests against the participation of the late right wing politician, Joerg Haider, in the Austrian government in 2000, he believes the roots of becoming a "political person" are little decisions in one's personal history.

Some of Andreas's first memories are of his grandfather telling "interesting jokes" of his Nazi youth, when, as a doctor, he was present at executions of political prisoners. One of his grandfather's favourite stories was about an execution. When he noticed that one of the victims was not dead, he proudly reported this fact to the soldier - who shot the man again.

While his long hair and hippie appearance disguise the fact, it was Punk music that brought political content into Andreas's life. Now he laughs while recalling how he once drew a picture of a Punk rocker with a swastika symbol on his ear.

From the start of the movement in the mid-1970s, Punk intended to outrage rather than comfort. Conservative icons, such as the monarchy in Britain, became favourite targets. Seeking to distance themselves from the prevailing musical sentimentality of the start of the decade, Punk was a cultural revolt and a musical trend.

Rajko Bozic, from Serbia, another country with a disturbed and disturbing recent past, also describes music as a powerful weapon for change. "I can't remember anything else having such an influence on my life as music did," he says.

Boris Grebenshikov, a rock musician in the former Soviet Union, agrees.

Travelling from the UK, the European cradle of Punk, to Vienna, Novi Sad in Serbia and St Petersburg, he discovered that artistic movements have successfully mobilised and transformed the political landscape in a variety of contexts. They acted as agents to open up space for liberal ideas in societies that had hitherto been unresponsive and static.

Hidden pages in Austria's history

Austria and Serbia are connected in more than one way. Alongside the Turkish community, more than 200,000 Serbs form one of the biggest communities in Austria. At the same time, more significantly, both countries are grappling with the need to address shameful areas in their past that no one wants to mention.

In Austria, that shameful area centres on the period after the 1938 Anschluss with Germany until the end of the Second World War, when Austria presented itself as a victim

of Nazi Germany rather than an accomplice. "Austria has a strange attitude towards its history. Although we were an aggressor in the Second World War, many Austrians have never openly criticised our past," Max Koch from the Austrian League for Human Rights, says.

A second wake-up call was the decision several months later to offer Haider's Freedom Party a seat in a coalition government with Wolfgang Schuessel's mainstream People's Party. Haider was well known for his attacks on immigrants and for referring favourably to Adolf Hitler's employment policies. At first, only a few protesters took to the streets, 'performing' with metal objects and trying to make as much noise as possible. Soon, many joined their actions, shaking Vienna out of its complacency.

Exiting Serbia's troubled past

In Serbia, support for the extreme right also remains strong, feeding on a perception that the international community has unjustly blamed Serbs for the dissolution of Yugoslavia and is now setting humiliating conditions for its integration into the European Union, EU.

One example cited by many Serbs is the obligation to fully cooperate with the International Crimes Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia, ICTY, which means the arrest and extradition of men indicted for war crimes.

The idea behind EXIT was born on 16 October, 1999, when the nationalist regime of Slobodan Milosevic was still in power and a concert entitled Fist in the Head was held.

Earlier, nationalist feeling showed its strength in Belgrade when Serbia's southern province of Kosovo proclaimed its independence, triggering violence. Significantly, the rioters on the streets of Belgrade in February, 2008, who set the US embassy on fire and attacked several other diplomatic missions, were young.

The violent atmosphere threatened to cancel, or at least postpone, the EXIT Music Festival, held every July in the northern city of Novi Sad, which has become a beacon for opponents of Serbian nationalism. Starting in 2000 as a "Go Out To Vote", GOTV, campaign, EXIT has not only become a major European music festival but a window into Serbia for tens of thousands of foreign visitors. This year, for example, about 25,000 of the 160,000 visitors were foreign.

Rajko Bozic, EXIT's PR manager, says that as the festival grows in size, its effect on the country's image abroad increases. Their research shows that large numbers of foreign visitors who come to the festival arrive without any knowl-

edge of the country, and leave pleasantly surprised.

The idea behind EXIT was born on 16 October, 1999, when the nationalist regime of Slobodan Milosevic was still in power and a concert entitled Fist in the Head was held. When around 20,000 people showed up, the managers realised that free musical events could be a powerful tool to mobilise public opinion in a way that conventional politics had not succeeded in doing.

Many youngsters were frustrated that after a devastating decade in power, the Milosevic regime seemed unshakeable with Serbia's quarrelling opposition parties having failed to unite. As a result, students in Novi Sad resolved to use music to create an alternative platform from which to oppose the official politics of isolation, nationalism and intolerance.

The first Exit Noise Summer Fest, which opened on 29 June, 2000, and lasted 100 days, drew an astonishing 200,000 young people. They came to have fun but left with a message about why it was important to change society.

Borka Pavicevic, theatre director and head of the Belgrade-based Center for Cultural Decontamination, CZKD, agrees that artistic movements have been important in changing Serbia's political landscape, though she insists more remains to be done. Pavicevic says Serbia should learn from the post-war German experience, particularly from the changes in the watershed year of 1968.

The changes that 'sixty eight' (1968) brought to Germany and the world were wide-ranging, radically reshaping popular conceptions of the body, sex, fashion and communication.

Professor John Davis of Oxford notes that the collapse of the traditional left had given rise to new forms of utopianism, involving drugs and pop culture, all of which sharpened generational divisions. Significantly, in 2000, when Austrian Chancellor Schuessel attacked the protests against Haider's inclusion in government, he dubbed the protesters "the '68 generation."

Don't mess with the Soviet Union

In St Petersburg, Boris Grebenshikov faced very different challenges when he embraced music as an instrument of change. The worst that Punk rockers faced in Britain was a BBC ban on their then notorious song "God Save the Queen," because of the lyric, "It's a fascist regime." But when Grebenshikov founded his rock band, Aquarium, in 1972, he ran up against a far more monolithic and intolerant political system.

"The Soviet system was faulty because it was based on a lie," he recalls, explaining why he turned to rock and roll music. "However primitive, rock and roll presented people with something real, allowing them to express themselves."

In spite of this, a big underground music scene developed in Russia's second city, with bands



Photo by Exit Festival

EXIT Festival in Belgrade

performing in private apartments. Fans briefly treated the performers as if they were the Beatles. Once the shows were over, they had to become ordinary citizens again. Under those tough conditions, rock musicians, and their audience became used to an enforced minimalism in their music, re-directing their energy towards lyrics and the message they conveyed.

Grebenshikov's first public breakthrough was at Spring Rhythms Tbilisi, in 1980, an event held in the Georgian capital. The first official rock festival in the USSR is considered a landmark in Soviet and Russian rock history and dubbed the "Soviet Woodstock." But, unlike the original, the Tbilisi festival was an official musical competition whose declared aim was "to promote the development of original Soviet (people) through music". Organisers enjoyed the support of Eduard Shevardnadze, then First Secretary of Georgia's Communist Party, who thought popular music a good way to divert youth from nationalist and dissident activities.

The state's heavy-handed tactics against rock groups, coupled with the fact that only one official label, Melodiya, was authorised to release records and cassettes, meanwhile stimulated another phenomenon - magnitizdat, a network of making and distributing do-it-yourself recordings among fans.

The mainstream wins in the end

Today, the former star of the Soviet underground rock scene says that once something is being bought and sold, the soul departs, and this was the fate of Russian music. It was the fate of his own band.

Aquarium sold only a handful of cassettes in the underground days, but in 1986, the days of underground were over as the communist system collapsed and rock'n'roll became legal. Aquarium filled eight stadiums in as little as six days.

Grebenshikov complains that modern Russian rock stars are not trying to say anything; they just

want to be rich and popular. "Money is a liquid form of energy, albeit an energy hidden in paper," he complains. "Unfortunately, it doesn't have the morality that some other forms of energy have."

Complaints about the commercialisation of EXIT are equally loud. Those who say it has sold out quote claims that EXIT 2008 earned as much as 20 million euros. Bozic dismisses those figures, jokily advising those who believe them to start organising their own festivals.

"Austria has a strange attitude towards its history. Although we were an aggressor in the Second World War, many Austrians have never openly criticised our past."

Max Koch, Austrian League for Human Rights.

But, he admits, "sooner or later, all alternative movements become the issue of commercial exploitation." The main point, he continues, is that "some of them get to make a difference before that."

Just how much musicians can change the system is questionable. The continuing strength of nationalism in Serbia, the strong showing of the far right in the recent elections in Austria and Vladimir Putin's ascendancy in Russia, all suggest that while alternative musical movements can empower people, the effect is limited to a minority.

Reluctantly accepting this fate, veterans of alternative movements told me that faith in the validity of the original message is what counts - and justifies everything. "The idea of music is to tune the soul of a person into something higher," says Grebenshikov, describing his own musical philosophy. "As long as music serves this function, it is OK."

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Pedophilia Case Reopens Secular Clerical Clash in Bosnia



By Srecko Latal in Sarajevo

The trial of an imam accused of sexually abusing a young girl reopens tense public debate about the role of religious communities in a fractured society.

Many Bosnians were deeply disturbed by TV footage shown on the main evening news on Sunday of weeping girls huddled around the figure of their sobbing local imam, or Muslim cleric.

Imam Resad Omerhodzic had been found guilty of sexually abusing an underage girl and suspended from his duties while awaiting an appeal and final judgment.

Others believed Omerhodzic's claim, which is that his opponents in the local community had framed him.

"This is pure manipulation of children, which is unacceptable," Mehmed Halilovic, deputy Ombudsman for the media in the Bosniak Croat Federation entity of Bosnia and Herzegovina, complained.

Halilovic criticised the Islamic Community and its leader, Grand Mufti Mustafa Cerić, for having said his role in the case showed he was "assuming the role of the judiciary."

Many human rights activists and experts say the defensive reaction of Mustafa Cerić and the Islamic Community – and their perceived mishandling of the pedophilia row – have come to overshadow the case itself.

A history of confusion

In fact, politics and religion have always been closely linked in the multi-ethnic Balkan state.

"Religion and politics in these areas are often intertwined to the point that sometimes it is hard to determine where one ends and where the other begins," Fra Luka Markesic, a Catholic theologian, told Balkan Insight.

Markesic is the former head of the Franciscan community in Bosnia and one of the founders of the Croat Peoples' Council, a leading local centrist NGO and think-tank. The Catholic Church did not allow him to run in the October 2008 local elections because he remains a Franciscan monk.

He said a large part of the population and their political and religious leaders fail to realize – or deliberately ignore – the necessary difference between secular and religious spheres, which is a key element for any modern society.

The return of the believers

Many observers say the religious communities have since abused their new-old position of power.

There is well-documented evidence of the role that some clergy played in stirring up ethnic hatred in the 1990s, while some local clerics even directly participated in the 1992-1995 war, publicly blessing "their" side's troops and weapons before they went to battle.

After the war, all three main religious communities, Serbian Orthodox, Muslim and Catholic, worked hand-in-glove with the respective Serbian, Muslim and Croat nationalist parties.

Other religious leaders, like Luka



Exterior of a mosque in Sarajevo

Photo by FoNet

Markesic, preferred to back democratic and civic options rather than nationalist parties, or remained focused on spiritual activities, staying away from the secular arena.

Yet in post-war Bosnia those seem a minority. In the main, the Catholic and Serbian Orthodox churches and the Islamic Community have become almost indistinguishable from the big nationalist parties.

One of the most recent and high-profile symbols of this expansion was the decision last year to introduce religious instruction into pre-schools in the capital, and the abolition of traditional Santa Claus festival in the "Djeca Sarajeva" chain of public kindergartens in Sarajevo.

Goodbye, Santa Claus

The move triggered uproar among the city's secular and intellectual elite, but among many Bosniak believers as well who said the kindergartens' director, Arzija Mahmutovic, used legal loopholes to bring in religious classes to virtual toddlers.

"This is about a very aggressive process of clericalisation, which is especially painful since it uses small children," the director of Bosnia's Helsinki Human Rights Committee, Srdjan

"Religion and politics in these areas are often intertwined to the point that sometimes it is hard to determine where one ends and where the other begins."

*Fra Luka Markesic,
a Catholic theologian.*

Dizdarevic, told the magazine Dani last week.

Unable to challenge Mahmutovic's decision on legal grounds, parents organised themselves and devised a different approach – probing the transparency and legality of the kindergartens' daily operations, which soon revealed problems and flaws and put the institution under a public spotlight.

"Even the holy book, the Koran, says children should not attend religious classes before they are at least eight years

old," said one concerned parent, the Sarajevo-based journalist Nedim Dervisbegovic, whose two younger daughters still attend a "Djeca Sarajeva" kindergarden. "This is an assault on the kids' world of imagination and games."

Pedophilia vs Islamophobia

Just as the media appeared to tire of covering the kindergarden wars they were served a fresh topic – the country's first high-profile pedophile case involving a cleric.

The court found him guilty of the sexual abuse of an underage girl and sentenced him to 18 months in prison. Both prosecution and defence immediately announced they would appeal.

But while the case appeared fairly straightforward, it became obscured and was finally overshadowed entirely by the controversial intervention of the Grand Mufti, Mustafa Cerić.

Following these accusations, villagers in Gluha Bukovica even assaulted a local TV crew, which had to be rescued and evacuated by police.

"Ceric has assumed the right to position himself as the ultimate authority and supreme judge," Srdjan Dizdarevic of the Helsinki Human Rights Committee, said. He added Cerić appeared to view legitimate public criticism of the Islamic Community as an attack on all Muslims.

Media and civil society groups also criticised Cerić for several recent speeches in which he defended radical Islamic followers of the "Wahhabi" movement in Bosnia rather than the more moderate local traditions.

The clash between Cerić and media escalated at a press conference last Friday, where Cerić, together with the Omerhodzic's defence lawyer, accused journalists and the abused girl's lawyer, Dusko Tomic, of Islamophobia.

The press conference ended in a shouting match about the roles and responsibilities that religious communities and media organisations should hold in a modern society. "Why are you so nervous?" Cerić asked journalists, trying to keep his cool. "This case is about a little girl, about paedophilia, and has nothing to do with Islamophobia," one journalist yelled back.

Srecko Latal is regular Balkan Insight contributor. Balkan Insight is BIRN's online publication.

Bosnia Anthem Gets Lyrics After 10 Years

BALKAN INSIGHT, SARAJEVO

After nearly 10 years of interethnic deliberations, a commission has agreed on the text of Bosnia's national anthem.

The melody of the Bosnian national anthem was adopted in June 1999, but politicians were unable to agree over its text. The new anthem, with both melody and lyrics, was performed for the first time, and this week will be sent into urgent procedure for adoption by the country's state government and the parliament.

"We are going into the future together," the anthem says at the end.

The current text has been put together by combining two of the best proposals among more than 300 received through an open contest. The two authors, who will share the prize of 15,000 Euros, are noted composer Dusan Sestic and musician Benjamin Isovici. Sestic is also the author of the anthem's melody, which had also been agreed on after a public tender.

The text of the anthem immediately triggered debate and comments from the Bosnian public for mentioning neither the country's two entities nor its three main ethnic groups.

In her comment published in the Banja Luka daily Nezavisne Novine journalist Rubina Cengic said the new anthem is not especially inspiring, but it is "politically correct" and has so far received almost equally positive and negative comments "which in our case is good."



Bosnia's Flag

Croatian MPs Among Best Paid In Europe

BALKAN INSIGHT, ZAGREB

Croatian MPs make approximately 2,500 euros a month, almost three-and-a-half times the average salary in the country, said Dragutin Lesar, an independent MP in Croatia's parliament.

Before the meeting, independent MP Dragutin Lesar published on his blog statistics concerning the salaries of MPs, saying that government figures showing the ratio of MPs' salaries and average salaries in Croatia as 1:2.5 were not true. According to Lesar's calculations, the ratio is 1: 3.46 or an MP salary of 2,500 euros.

Average pensions among MPs and cabinet members were 9,875 kuna (approx 1,325 euros), while pension averages in Croatia is 2,126 kuna (285 euros).



Zagreb

Photo by FoNet

Photo by FoNet

All Form and no Substance



By Albin Kurti
in Prishtina

This government believes it's more important to be recognized as an independent than actually be independent.

The month of February is remembered in Kosovo for two events from the past two years. On the 17th it was one year since parliament declared Kosovo independent. A big fiesta followed what had been billed as a long-awaited day.

On February 10, it was two years since the Vetevendosje! demonstration at which UNMIK police killed two demonstrators. That day, thousands of people demanded self-determination for the people of Kosovo and protested against the Ahtisaari Plan which, among other things, foresaw ethnically based decentralization, no army for Kosovo and everlasting international rule.

Romanian UN police shot dead Arben Xheladini and Mon Balaj and injured over 80 others with outdated rubber bullets, fired at short range at the heads of the protesters, while they were withdrawing.

Since we did not achieve independence through self-determination, the independence lacks sovereignty: it is form without substance.

Amnesty International condemned the police action and the UN itself ruled it criminal, unnecessary and avoidable. But two years on, there is no justice: the murderers were allowed to leave Kosovo and took their rifles with them. A contingent of Romanian police has meanwhile been included in EULEX, despite Romania's fierce opposition to independence for Kosovo.

The lack of justice for those two citizens of Kosovo symbolizes the overall quality of the state. One year after the declaration, Kosovo is not really independent. Since we did not achieve independence through self-determination, the independence lacks sovereignty: it is form without substance.

Ever since the declaration, the government has made winning international recognition of this declaration the sole priority, and has left on one side the crucial issues of our sovereignty, territorial integrity and economic development.

Kosovo has been recognized by approximately one country per week over the last year, but it seems that no specific number of recognitions will induce the government drop this topic from the top of its agenda. It appears more important to be recognized as an independent country than actually to be independent.

Let others recognize us as an independent country, despite us being politically and economically as dependent as before and despite us knowing that we are. Or perhaps: let them recognize us as an independent country because maybe

they can convince us that we are. During the first year of independence we have had a lot of circus and little bread.

When Montenegro held a referendum on independence and then declared it in 2006, Milo Djukanovic had already prepared up to 25,000 trained forces, which were often displayed on national television. Djukanovic was trying to lift spirits among the Montenegrins but was also warning Serbia's Vojislav Kostunica to think twice before contemplating any attack. It worked: Kostunica did think twice, and dropped the idea.

Kosovo is an example of the opposite. Fatmir Sejdiu and Hashim Thaci were first busy with the independence party, and then only with the after-party. They did not even plan to turn the protection force, the KPC, into an army and did not take control over the police service, the KPS.

Instead, two days after the independence declaration party, Serbia struck back, as the Serbian government's parallel structures within the country burned down custom posts 1 and 31 in the north of Kosovo – where even now, one year later, order and a properly functioning customs service have yet to be restored.

While the institutions of the independent Kosovo were concentrating on the new flag, anthem, recognitions and other symbols, Serbia was allowed to exercise sovereignty to a greater degree than at any time since the end of the 1999 war, by strengthening its parallel structures.

In May 2008, Serbia held elections in 23 Kosovo municipalities, and on June 12, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's letters to Boris Tadic and Fatmir Sejdiu arrived. Even more shuttle diplomacy on the administrative and territorial rearrangement of Kosovo – beyond Ahtisaari's exiting concessions to Serbia – then took place that summer and autumn. The result was the infamous Six Point Plan, granting the Serbian government, through its parallel structures, a role in Kosovo's police, customs, justice, transportation infrastructure, boundaries, and so-called Serbian patrimony.

Months after the declaration, sovereignty had not been attached to the formal independence – in fact, even the formality of the declared independence had started to leak away. On the first anniversary of independence, the main issue is new talks with Serbia. Obviously, once an unprincipled compromise on core issues has been made, more compromises are demanded.

While the number of recognitions has served as the government's sole international preoccupation during the last year, internally the government's focus has been the weak parliamentary opposition. Government officials have been comparing themselves to the previous government, talking of improvement (not success).

Their reference has stayed in the past (how much we have left behind) and has not looked to the future (how much progress is being made towards becoming a normal democratic state). The economy is the victim of this backward-looking policy. Lack of development has increased unemployment and deepened poverty.

Besides widening roads, which lead to the narrow lanes of the capital, and building schools without proper electricity, heating, water, or indeed, education, the government's sole economic project is to call for visa liberalisation for Kosovo – perhaps because it estimates that the only way to increase per capita GDP is to decrease the number of "capitas".

Badly conducted privatisation of SOEs remains part of the problem rather than the solution. Over 400 million euro gained from the privatisation process are sealed off and not incorporated in any development strategy. The Kosovar Privatisation Agency is a client of the Central Bank of Kosovo, where this money rests. It could simply have withdrawn it. Instead, it chose to ask Pieter Feith first, who replied that that money should stay in foreign banks because it is safer there.

It took one year for the government to remember that we have this amount of money. By promising to withdraw this money now, the government wants to neutralise growing social discontent and halt announcements of strikes and protests.

It would be logical to assume that, until the money of the already privatised SOEs has been withdrawn and utilised, privatisation should not continue. Similarly, privatisation should not be undertaken for the sake of the privatisation but as part of a domestic economic program.

Why, when and what to privatize should be a matter of general public debate and a question for referendum, especially in the case of major resources like the Trepca mine, the power company KEK, PTK and Pristina Airport. Most importantly, privatisation prior to decolonisation is simply unjust.

Let others recognize us as an independent country, despite us being politically and economically as dependent as before and despite us knowing that we are. Or perhaps: let them recognize us as an independent country because maybe they can convince us that we are.

When Slobodan Milosevic's regime abolished Kosovo's autonomy in 1989, it also turned the SOEs in Kosovo (which at the time were considered as belonging to the municipalities, as property of the people) into branches of SOEs in Serbia, before half-privatizing them in the 1990s. Now, due to the lack of decolonization, it seems that Kosovo and not Serbia will be forced to pay back Milosevic's foreign friends.

UN General Assembly Resolution 1803 (XVII) proclaims the "right of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources" and the International Covenants on Human Rights affirms in Article 1(2), the right of peoples to "freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources." But, as cynics would say, Kosovo has been defined as "sui generis".

Kosova's Son-in-Law "An Image Problem"



By Casey Cooper Johnson

I was recently visiting New York City, and a cab driver asked me where I was from. "Kosova," I replied. "Oh no!" he exclaimed, "Albanians! Very dangerous people! Very dangerous." He huddled and cowered from me in fear. I was shocked and offended for my people. I replied, "And where are you from, sir?" "Pakistan," he replied.

I couldn't believe my ears. Pakistan!? The country where they Taliban and Al Qaeda train and hide out. Where Prime Ministers get assassinated so often, they have a national "assassination" day. I thought people were afraid of Arabs! But no, Albanians are more feared than terrorists. This was a sobering revelation, but my taxi driver assured me it was true, as he had worked in Albanian clubs in New York where illegal things went on, and had seen it first hand. I tried my last attempt at national redemption. "Well, Mr.," I huffed, "If you worked in a LEGAL industry, maybe you would meet the many nice and respectable Albanians, who are out there all over the place." Cowering again, he answered, "Whatever you say, sir; just please don't kill me."

What had I missed? When had Albanians become the most notorious and feared people in the world? I later was traveling from Prishtina to Zagreb to serve on the jury of a documentary film festival. I sat next to an Albanian Kosovar woman living in Zagreb. She told me that she long ago had stopped admitting to people that she was Albanian when she traveled in Europe. She said men considered Albanian women to be prostitutes, and that she felt threatened.

What was all this? How did Albanians get such a bad image problem in the world? I mean, I live in Kosova and things are tough, but we don't have rampant mafia gang wars, with junkies, dealers, and whores running around shooting each other. Except for, of course, in Halil Budakova movies. Oh no! That was it!

I looked down at my festival program, and there it was, "Underground 3" by Halil Budakova, being featured in the main cinema for the international documentary competition section. That night, I timidly snuck into the back of the gigantic Zagreb cinema hall, the largest in all of Eastern Europe, with over 1000 seats. It was packed full. The director of the festival spoke some words about the power of documentary to break down stereotypes and cross-cultural boundaries of understanding. Then he proudly announced the newly released, highly informative documentary on Kosovar urban culture by Halil Budakova, "Underground 3."

How was this possible? I tried to stand up and yell out that this gangster film was not a documentary, but just a cheap, low rate shoot-em-up flic. Someone behind me asked me to stop being rude and sit down. After 90 grueling minutes of lousy dialogues and poorly choreographed shoot-out scenes, the credits rolled. The massive crowd of a thousand sat in utter silence. I looked over, and there was even the Croatian president sitting next to the mayor of Zagreb, both shaking their heads in sobered revelation.

I couldn't bear it any more. I jumped onto the stage, yelling, "But this isn't was Albanians are really like! That wasn't even a documentary! We're nice!" Somebody screamed, "Albanian!" from the crowd. President Mesic's secret service agents were upon me in seconds, throwing me down and hauling me away in a van as I muttered, "We're nice. We're nice."

I was released the next day, and escorted to the airport. My jury membership was revoked and I was replaced by a Pakistani filmmaker. On the the flight back to Prishtina, I sat in contemplation of how powerful the moving picture is, and it's ability to educate people about other cultures and far away struggles. This must be why the Kosovar government is working so hard to stimulate film and documentary in Kosova, in an attempt to further dispell the modern myths of dangerous, criminal Albanians. And as for Halil Budakova, that darn counterfeit documentary filmmaker, when I see him next time, I'm gonna fill his BMW up with bullet holes.

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Across

- 1: Prefix with vitamin
6: Big pig
10: Behaves
14: Patty topper
15: Emulate a couch potato
16: Beam with pride
17: Choose a textbook series
18: Word with beer or cellar
19: Mystique
20: Time being
21: Most dismal

- 23: Table scraps
25: Sonata sections
26: Concern
29: Relinquishes
31: In a boisterous way
33: Toilet roll holder
37: Ancient mariner
38: Assuage
41: Madame of the sty
42: Acct. summary
44: False
46: Hurried pace
49: Chain members

- 50: Place of worship
53: Malt liquor yeast
54: Anguish
57: Capsize
61: Southern roots
62: Some votes
63: Discharge of weapons
64: Browser function
65: Young horse
66: Makes level
67: Deli loaves
68: Boulevard liners
69: Visionaries

Down

- 1: Eerie sound
2: Annul
3: He has his pride
4: Final layer
5: Midland
6: Boobies and loons
7: Skunk's funk
8: Burn soother
9: Delay
10: Versus
11: Hinted
12: Human trunk
13: Whacks
22: 'Sweet Pea' singer Tommy
24: Test choice
26: They may be liberal
27: That's an order
28: 1040EZ, e.g.
29: Subject of the biopic 'Sweet Dreams'
30: Spots
32: Cat's eye, sometimes
34: One working with Linux, e.g.
35: The death of the party?
36: Merino mamas
39: Plastic name
40: Commits confidently (to)
43: Lacks proper hydration
45: Seek similarities
47: Aardvark's tidbit
48: Rap session?
50: Less outgoing
51: Intoxicating
52: Durable fiber
53: Outshines
55: 'Far out!'
56: Vital post on a ship
58: Turn on an axis
59: At all
60: Have a fling?

Embassies and Liaison Offices in Prishtina

American

Address: "Nazim Hikmet" no. 30
Arbëria /Dragodan, 10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 549 516

Austrian

Address: "Ahmet Krasniqi" no. 22
Arbëria /Dragodan, 10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 249 284

Belgian

Address: "Taslixhe" I, 23 A
10000 Pristina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 734 734

British

Address: "Ismail Qemajli" no. 6
Arbëria /Dragodan, 10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 254 700

Bulgarian

Address: "Ismail Qemajli" no. 12
Arbëria /Dragodan, 10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 038 245 540

Danish

Address: "Nene Teresa" no. 2
10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 249 995

Dutch

Address: "Xhemal Berisha" no. 12
Velania, 10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 224 61

Finnish

Address: "Eduard Lir" no. 50
Arbëria /Dragodan, 10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 223 775

French

Address: "Ismail Qemajli" no. 67
Arbëria /Dragodan, 10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 22 45 88 00

Greek

Address: "Ismail Qemajli" no. 68
Arbëria /Dragodan, 10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 243 013

German

Address: "Azem Jashanica" no. 17
Arbëria /Dragodan, 10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 254 500

Italian

Address: "Azem Jashanica" no.5
Arbëria /Dragodan, 10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 244 925

Japanese

Address: "Rexhep Malaj" no. 43
10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 249 995

Luxemburg

Address: "Metush Krasniqi" no. 14
Arbëria /Dragodan, 10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 226 787

Malaysian

Address: "Bedri Shala" no. 48
10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 243 467

Norwegian

Address: "Sejdi Kryeziu" no. 6
10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 232 111 00

Saudia Arabian

Address: Dardania SU 7, building 2, #1
10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 549 203

Slovenian

Address: "Anton Ceta" no. 6
10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 244 886

Swedish

Address: "Ekrem Rexha" no. 6
Arbëria /Dragodan, 10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 245 795

Swiss

Address: "Adrian Krasniqi" no. 11
10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 248 088

Turkish

Address: "Ismail Qemajli" no. 59
Arbëria /Dragodan, 10000 Prishtina
Phone: +381 (0) 38 226 044

Solution (Reserved)

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Shopping

Nightlife

Prishtina's flaunting Haute Couture

If you're looking for a one of a kind creation, and a certified ticket to not showing up to an event wearing the same dress as your female foe, then look no further than the fashion house of Blerina Kllokoqi-Rugova, a haven of haute couture flair conveniently located in Prishtina.

Blonde and petite-sized Blerina will greet you with a contagious smile, as she introduces you to her bold designs, each projecting a vivacity only handmade pieces can possess. Her first collection since opening the fashion house, as she likes to call it, is a mixture of short and long evening gowns encrusted with detailed sequins, beading and stitching, usually against very vibrant colours of quality fabrics she collects in destinations such as Dubai, Austria, and Croatia.

Blerina suggests that her ideal client is a strong woman between the ages of 21-35, who chooses elegance to skin-bearing any day. She tells us that she avoids dressing high-profile woman of the city, who chases fame instead of personal achievement. Consequently, most of her clients are from the international community, which take her designs abroad and showcase them to the world.

Pieces range from 250 euro to 2000 euro a piece, depending on materials used and of course the amount of time spend on production.



Blerina Kllokoqi-Rugova
Fashion House located on
Bill Clinton Boulevard,
across from the KEK
building



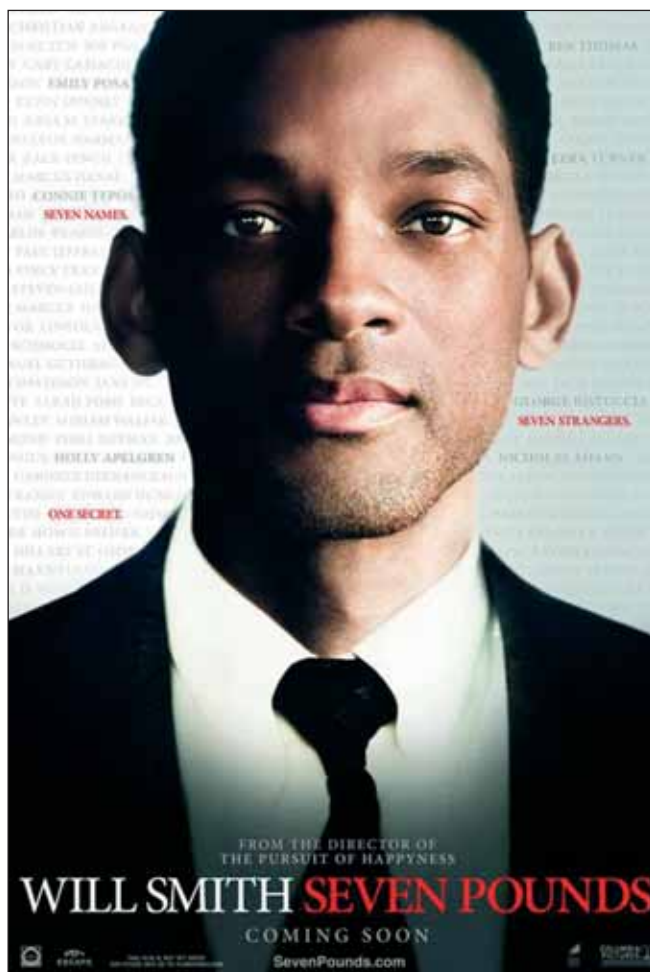
Saturday, February 28 and Saturday, March 7 – Funky house music with a touch of retro love spun by DJs Al and Zex
Wednesday, March 4 – Kosovar natives NRG band, live with English and Albanian tracks, and for the first time at Flirt Lounge



Arts

National Theatre

Kino ABC



Once, Tim Thomas (Will Smith) was a gifted aerospace engineer with a beautiful wife and a lovely beach house. Then, while using his cell phone while driving, his car wandered across lanes and he became responsible for the deaths of 7 others, including his beloved wife. Unable to forgive himself or raise the dead, Tim sets out to give "pounds of flesh" that will give new life to seven deserving individuals to make up for the seven lives he destroyed.

For reservations call + 381 38 244 238

Friday, February 27 – 20:00

Comedy "Dejziland" by Kristofer Durang.
Directed by Agon Myftari

Saturday, February 28 – 20:00

Comedy "Dejziland" by Kristofer Durang.
Directed by Agon Myftari

Monday, March 2 – 20:00

Play "House at the Border" by Sllavomir Mrozhek, Directed by Yucel Erten

Tuesday, March 3 – 20:00

Play "Uuuuh" by Gerard Vasquez, Directed by Ise Qosje

Wednesday, March 4 – 20:00

Play "Tartufi" by Molieri, Directed by Rahim Burhan

Thursday, March 5 – 20:00

Documentary Film "Albanian Spring" by the National Central Film Archive

Friday, March 6 – 20:00

Play "Martin Couple" by Eugène Ionesco, directed by Bekim Lumi

Saturday, March 7 – 20:00

Comedy "Dejziland" by Kristofer Durang.
Directed by Agon Myftari

Thursday, March 12 – 20:00

Ballet "Sleeping Beauty" by P. I. Tchaikovsky,
Directed and Choreographed by Silvia Tomova



For reservations call:

038 224 397 or 044 430 693

ticket price: 3 euro

prepared by *Shega A`Mula*

Kosovo Art Gallery

Hungarian Photographer Janos Eifert is a well known representative and determinative personality of his profession at home and abroad. His works cannot be sorted in a category of solid style, since he tries different interpretations. He is versatile, renews his art constantly and finds experimental forms. His fame is based on his photos with different themes such as dance, nude, nature and applied photography. He is working as a teacher, performer, specialist writer and expert.



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