

Prishtina Insight

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Belgrade pushes south
in elections. [PAGE 2](#)

Getting the boot:
Failures in capital cost
LDK mayor's office. [PAGE 4](#)

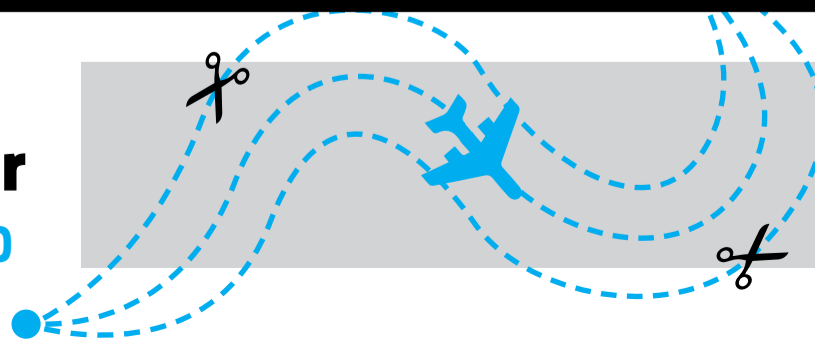


CAN HE FIX PRISHTINA?

Mayor-elect Shpend Ahmeti discusses his vision and what stands in his way. [PAGE 8](#)

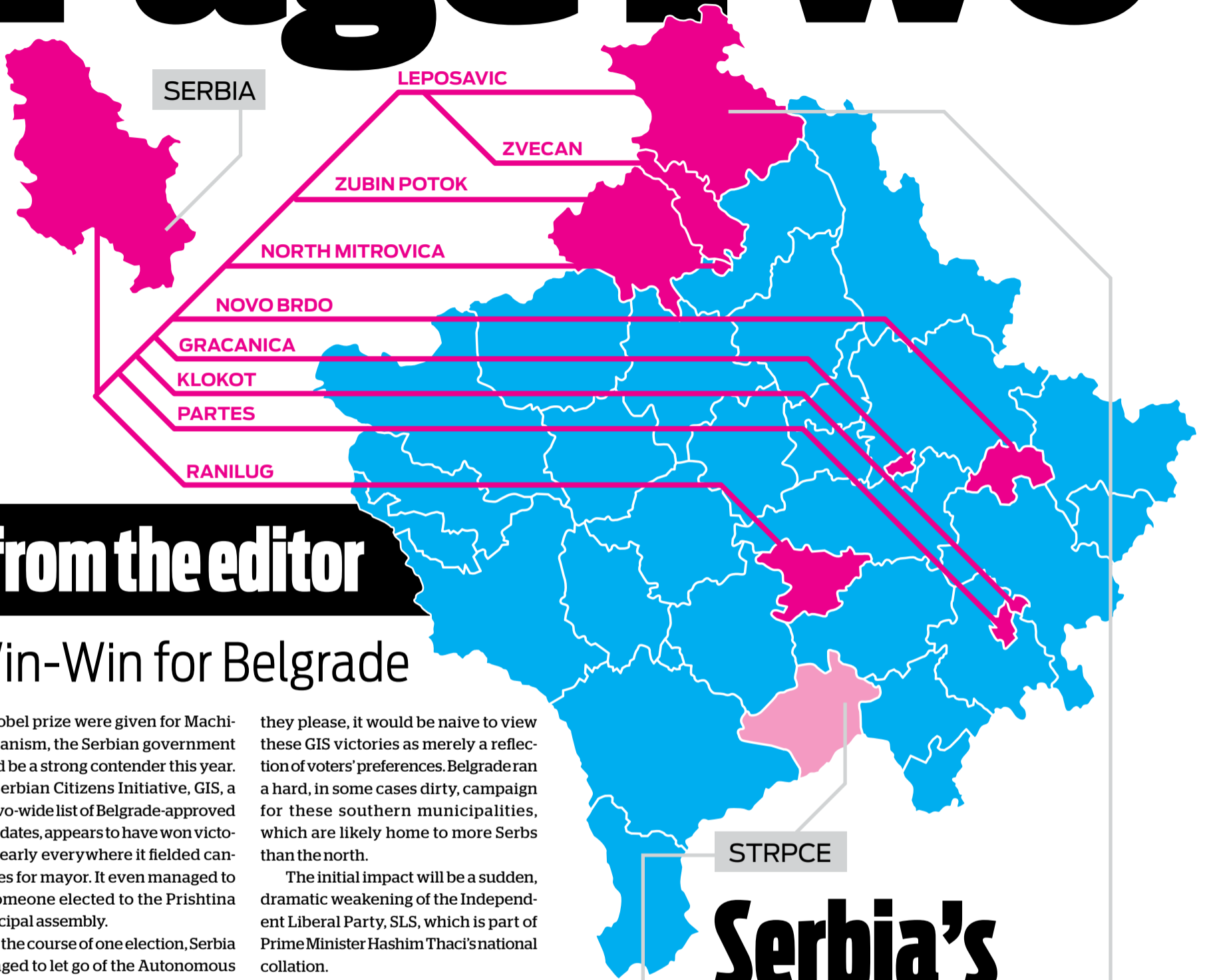
PHOTO/MAJLINDA HOXHA

**PRN loses No. 1
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from the editor

Win-Win for Belgrade

If a Nobel prize were given for Machiavellianism, the Serbian government would be a strong contender this year. The Serbian Citizens Initiative, GIS, a Kosovo-wide list of Belgrade-approved candidates, appears to have won victories nearly everywhere it fielded candidates for mayor. It even managed to get someone elected to the Prishtina municipal assembly.

In the course of one election, Serbia managed to let go of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija and expedite its ticket to the EU while gaining a foothold across the Republic of Kosovo. Belgrade essentially traded in an old Zastava for a fleet of new Volkswagens.



Nate Tabak
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Editor-in-Chief

Belgrade's victories in the north, in places like North Mitrovica and Leposavic, were not all that impressive given that Serbia has basically run the region for 13 years. It claimed its real prizes south of the Ibar river, where GIS mayors will soon be running Novobrd, Gracanica, Ranilug, Partes and Klokot. Only in Strpce, where the Brezovica ski resort is located, did the GIS fail to pull off a victory.

These southern municipalities have been integrated into the Republic of Kosovo for some time. While Serbs have every right to vote for whomever

they please, it would be naive to view these GIS victories as merely a reflection of voters' preferences. Belgrade ran a hard, in some cases dirty, campaign for these southern municipalities, which are likely home to more Serbs than the north.

The initial impact will be a sudden, dramatic weakening of the Independent Liberal Party, SLS, which is part of Prime Minister Hashim Thaci's national coalition.

The SLS has played an essential role in integrating Serbs south of the Ibar, but has also been responsible for the rise of Nenad Cvetkovic, the soon-to-be-former Mayor of Partes, who has a rape conviction. It had its share of other scandals, too.

The breaking of the SLS monopoly over the south is in many ways refreshing, evidence of the recalibration of local politics seen across Kosovo in the recent elections. But the motives of the new crop of leaders are suspect. Many come from the Serbian-run "parallel institutions", and there is reason to think that they will take orders coming from Belgrade.

If this trend is reflected in the national elections in 2014, Belgrade may soon have its people in the Kosovo parliament, and thus a possible say in who becomes the next Prime Minister. That would be a stroke of cunning genius, as Serbia will have managed to relieve itself of the burden of Kosovo, while doubling its actual power in the country.

STRPCE

Serbia's push south

The Belgrade-backed political party, the **Serbian Citizens' Initiative**, has claimed victories in all but one majority-Serb municipality in the recent local elections. The **Independent Serbian Party, SLS**, had dominated Serb politics in Kosovo's centre and south, and was instrumental in integrating these communities into the Republic of Kosovo.

Prishtina Insight

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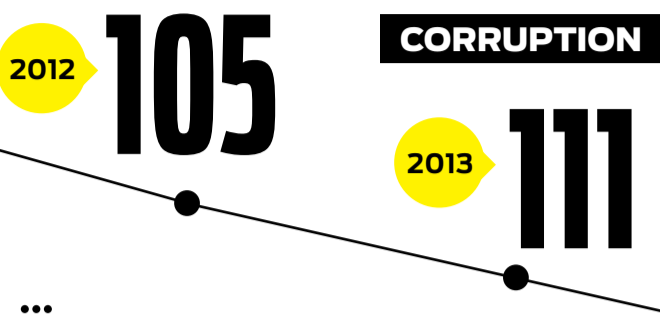
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Nation



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111	ETHIOPIA KOSOVO
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114	EGYPT INDONESIA

Kosovo's rank on Transparency International's 2013 Corruption Perceptions Index - shared with Ethiopia and Tanzania. Kosovo scored 33 on the index, suggesting that corruption has gotten slightly worse than in 2012, when it scored 34 and was ranked 105. (Higher numbers on the index are better). In the region, only Albania is ranked lower, at 116 and an index score of 31.

On Your Side

Fountain preservation remains unfinished

Whether it's a pothole that has not been filled in years or a street light that never seems to turn on, we want to know about it. Send your tips to nate.tabak@birn.eu.com, and we'll get on the case.

When Prishtina's municipality started to revamp the former Mother Teresa Boulevard (Now called Ibrahim Rugova and Zahir Pajaziti boulevards) in the city center last year, workers encountered a fountain underground. Cultural heritage experts concluded that the fountain was built between 16th and 20th centuries and asked for its protection of it. While the boulevard is basically finished, the area where the fountain was discovered remains open.

What's wrong: Manager of the Teatro Cafe, near the National Theatre, continues to wonder as why a huge hole in front of his business hasn't been covered. "I cannot serve my guests freely due to this uncovered hole," said the manager, who preferred to remain anonymous.

Who's responsible: The old fountain falls under the Institute for Monuments in Prishtina, which is under



the Ministry of Culture. **What's being done:** The acting director of the Institute for Monuments, Burbuqe Bakija said fountain will be covered over with special glass from Turkey. The Institute and Prishtina's municipality reached an agreement in December 2012. Mayor Isa Mustafa pledged 15,000 euro for the fountain's restoration and conservation. Bakija said that this money was not be enough to complete the project, so Ministry of Culture pledged an additional 10,000 euro. She said the Turkish International Cooperation and Coordination Agency has committed for help to bring the glass from their country. "We have the money. All we need is the glass." It's not clear when that will happen.

Whom to contact: Burbuqe Bakija, acting director of the Institute for Monuments in Prishtina, +381 (0) 38 244 501. — **Petrit Collaku**

The Ministry of Culture says a special piece of glass will complete the fountain's preservation.

ELECTIONS

Prishtina tires of its old master

Failure to deliver meaningful improvements to Kosovo's capital cost the LDK the mayor's office, and opened the door to Vetevendosje.

By Edona Peci

Founded by the late Ibrahim Rugova, champion of peaceful resistance to Serbian rule, the Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK, has long thrived in the Kosovo capital as the urbane alternative to the major parties run by former KLA commanders - the Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK.

The LDK has held the mayor's office for 13 years. For six of them, Isa Mustafa has been in the post.

On Sunday, Merita Krasniqi cast her ballot for Mustafa, just as she had done in 2009 and 2007. "I thought Mustafa could make things better with a new staff," she said.

But most voters decided otherwise, saying it was time for another economist, Shpend Ahmeti, of Lezvizia Vetevendosje (Self-Determination Movement), to have a go.

He received 51.7 per cent of the vote compared to Mustafa's 48.3 per cent in Sunday's runoff election.

Political analyst Dukagjin Gorani described Mustafa's defeat as "a disastrous loss for the LDK," which also lost 9 council seats and its majority in the municipal assembly.

"A party that is not able to run the capital is going to be rejected," Gorani said.

Prishtina is struggling to handle its 200,000 official residents as well as tens of thousands of others who come to the country's administrative and business hub on any given day.

Traffic jams, public sanitation problems, water shortages and illegal construction are part of daily life.

While Mustafa, and his predecessors, have made some headway, he has not been transformative in the way that Edi Rama was in Tirana, Albania. Pointing to the lack of progress, the Office of the Auditor in 2012 criticised the municipality for failing to fully utilize its budget, especially for capital projects.

The first round of voting on November 3 showed that enthusiasm in the city for Mustafa had waned considerably. He received 43 per cent of the vote, well down on the 57.2 per cent he won in 2009.

In the second round, voters overwhelmingly shifted to Ahmeti who won 12,000 extra votes.

A bruised LDK said it was analyzing its performance in the elections and would soon produce an explanation for why it lost in Prishtina.

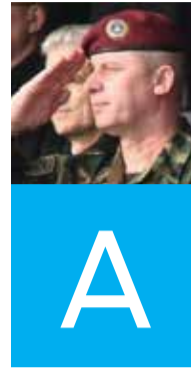
An LDK official, Vjosa Osmani, blamed the party's defeat on "a coalition between Vetevendosje and the PDK".

On Sunday, Prishtina Insight viewed text messages received by PDK supporters, urging them to vote for Ahmeti, but it could not be confirmed if this was part of a large-scale campaign.

The answer to the question of the party's defeat might lie in people like Jon Rugova, who does not count himself as a Vetevendosje supporter.

"I voted for Ahmeti because Prishtina needs new governance and a new generation," he said.

Briefly



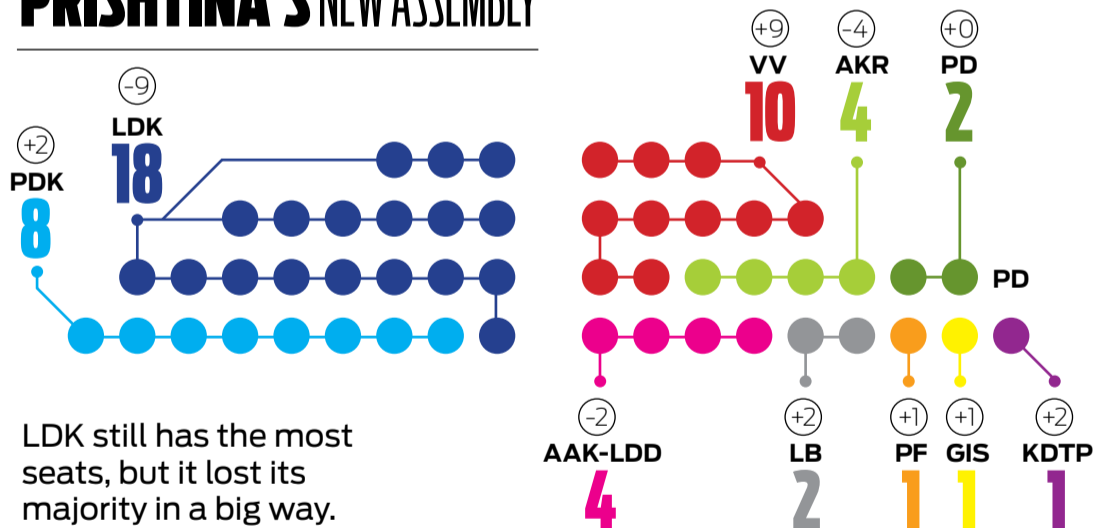
Ambassador's wartime torture trial opens. Pristina's ambassador to Tirana, Sylejman Selimi, a former Kosovo Liberation Army commander, went on trial for alleged war crimes against female prisoners during the 1990s conflict. Ambassador Selimi, who is also Kosovo's former security forces commander, appeared in court in the northern town of Mitrovica with three other defendants on November 27 but denied committing war crimes. Selimi is accused of repeatedly assaulting two ethnic Albanian women who were being held at a KLA detention centre in Likovc/Likovac during the conflict at the end of 1998 and the beginning of 1999. "The defendant in the capacity of a high-profile KLA member, in co-perpetration with some other unidentified KLA members, violated the bodily integrity of witness A and witness B, two Albanian civilians, by continuously beating them up," the indictment said. However Selimi's lawyer denied the allegations, saying that "nothing could have happened" to the women in Likovc/Likovac because they were "kidnapped by well-known people" in the village of Vaganica in the Mitrovica region, an area which fell outside Selimi's command.

LDK used the image of its recently deceased founder, Ibrahim Rugova, to get votes during the 2007 campaign.

PHOTO/SHKUMBIN SANEJA



PRISHTINA'S NEW ASSEMBLY



LDK still has the most seats, but it lost its majority in a big way.



EU mulls Kosovo's role in Serbia talks. The EU and Serbia are still trying to find a proper model for negotiations on membership that will address normalisation of relations with Kosovo within the talks. Serbia and the EU have yet to decide on a negotiating framework despite the fact that negotiations on Serbia's EU membership talks start in January. According to sources in the European Commission, there are two proposed models – the first would include Kosovo only as part of Chapter 35 entitled "other issues" and the second, where normalisation of relations with Pristina is part of Chapter 35, and of every other related chapter. Serbia is currently lobbying in Brussels for the first solution, while a number of countries, led by Germany and the United Kingdom, are pushing for the second solution. The second model will envisage each law adopted by Serbia as part of EU negotiations treating Kosovo as separate and not including it in Serbian legislation. The majority of laws that currently apply in Serbia, including the constitution, treat Kosovo as part of Serbia. - Marija Ristic

New mayor faces uphill task:

"A party that is not able to run the capital is going to be rejected."

- Dukagjin Gorani, political analyst.

Mustafa's ability to govern the city will in a large part hinge on whether he obtains cooperation from the municipal assembly.

Vetevendosje will hold only 10 of 51 seats on the assembly. The LDK, although much diminished, still has the largest number of seats, 18.

One LDK member will be Mustafa, who has said he is willing to work with Ahmeti.

Dardan Sejdiu, one of Vetevendosje's incoming assembly members, said the party would not seek a formal coalition.

"We will present our concrete projects based on the promises of Shpend Ahmeti and we expect deputies from other parties to cooperate with us for the sake of Prishtina and its people," he said. But political analyst Gorani says Ahmeti may find getting the cooperation he needs a struggle.

"The obstacles will be hard... but if he succeeds, Ahmeti will set a new standard for politics, as a young, educated and modern politician who is not part of the big families and clans or a servant of businesses," he said.

"His success would be a risk for the current system of politics and parties in Kosovo," he said.

Nation

Troubled mayor faces defeat in Partes

Nenad Cvetkovic seems to have lost his bid for re-election in Partes, where a polling station and journalist were attacked in the polls.

By Zana Cimili

The administration of Partes Mayor Nenad Cvetkovic, a convicted rapist, has been rife with allegations of thuggery and intimidation. His apparent defeat in his bid for re-election has also been controversial.

A polling station in the same building as the local administration in Pajsan village was broken into during Sunday's runoff between Cvetkovic and Dragan Nikolic.

Ballot boxes were seized and damaged, according to the Central Election Commission, CEC.

A municipal guard and others attacked a cameraman from TV Puls who was attempting to report on the incident, police said.

The CEC said the compromised votes would not be counted and that there are no plans for a re-vote.

Preliminary results showed Nikolic, candidate of the Belgrade-backed Serbian Citizens' Initiative list, leading Cvetkovic, of the Independent Liberal Party, SLS, by 52.9 to 47.1 per cent.

Nikolic claimed victory, but said "these violent tactics" concerned him.

"Votes have been jeopardized. This needs to be dealt with in order to protect the rights of citizens," he said.

Cvetkovic and Nikolic blame each other's supporters for the attack on the polling station. Police arrested two suspects for questioning.

Cvetkovic has claimed that he is the real winner of the election, but would not say if he would contest the results if Nikolic is declared the winner.

"We're a small municipality, and people should go about their daily chores.



Nenad Cvetkovic

Things will resolve themselves over time," Cvetkovic said.

Nikolic, for his part, said he was looking ahead to his administration.

"I will pick up with things that were done wrong in the previous administration. Once this situation is solved, we can start working on our concrete goals," Nikolic said.

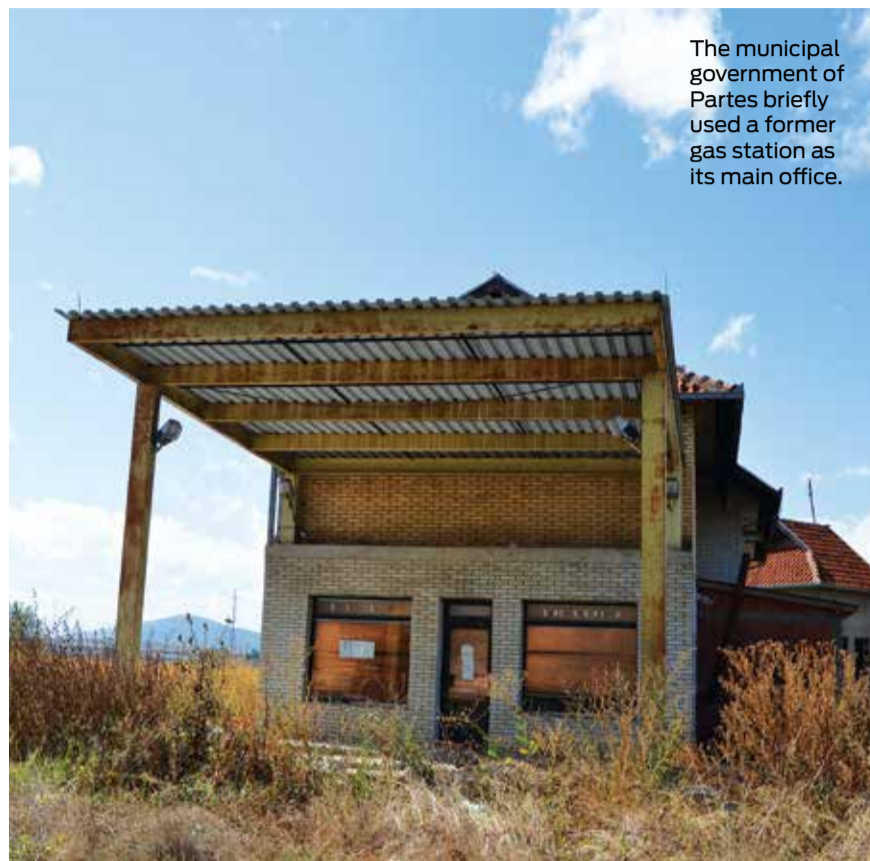
As Prishtina Insight reported in September, the past year of Cvetkovic's administration was dogged by allegations of beating and intimidating people, which he has denied.

In 1997 he was convicted of raping two young women from Gracanica. He has called the conviction politically motivated.

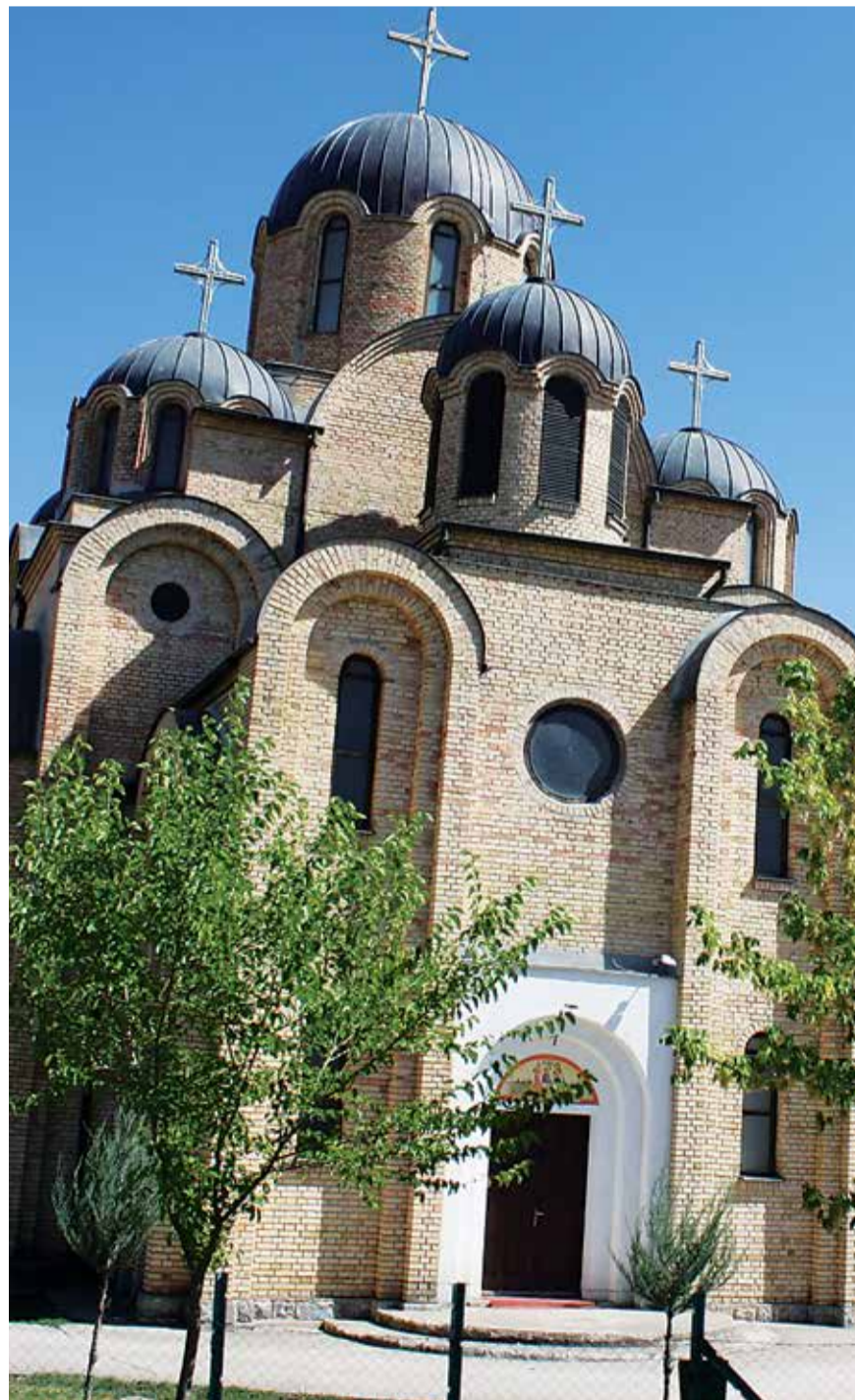
Cvetkovic is a member of the Independent Liberal Party, SLS, which is in a national coalition with Prime Minister Hashim Thaci's Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK.

Cvetkovic's apparent loss is among a series of SLS defeats in eight municipalities in Kosovo at the hands of the Belgrade-supported Serbian Citizens Initiative.

Cvetkovic was elected mayor in 2010 of the newly established municipality, which was formed out of three Serbian villages that were formerly part of the mainly Albanian town of Gjilan.



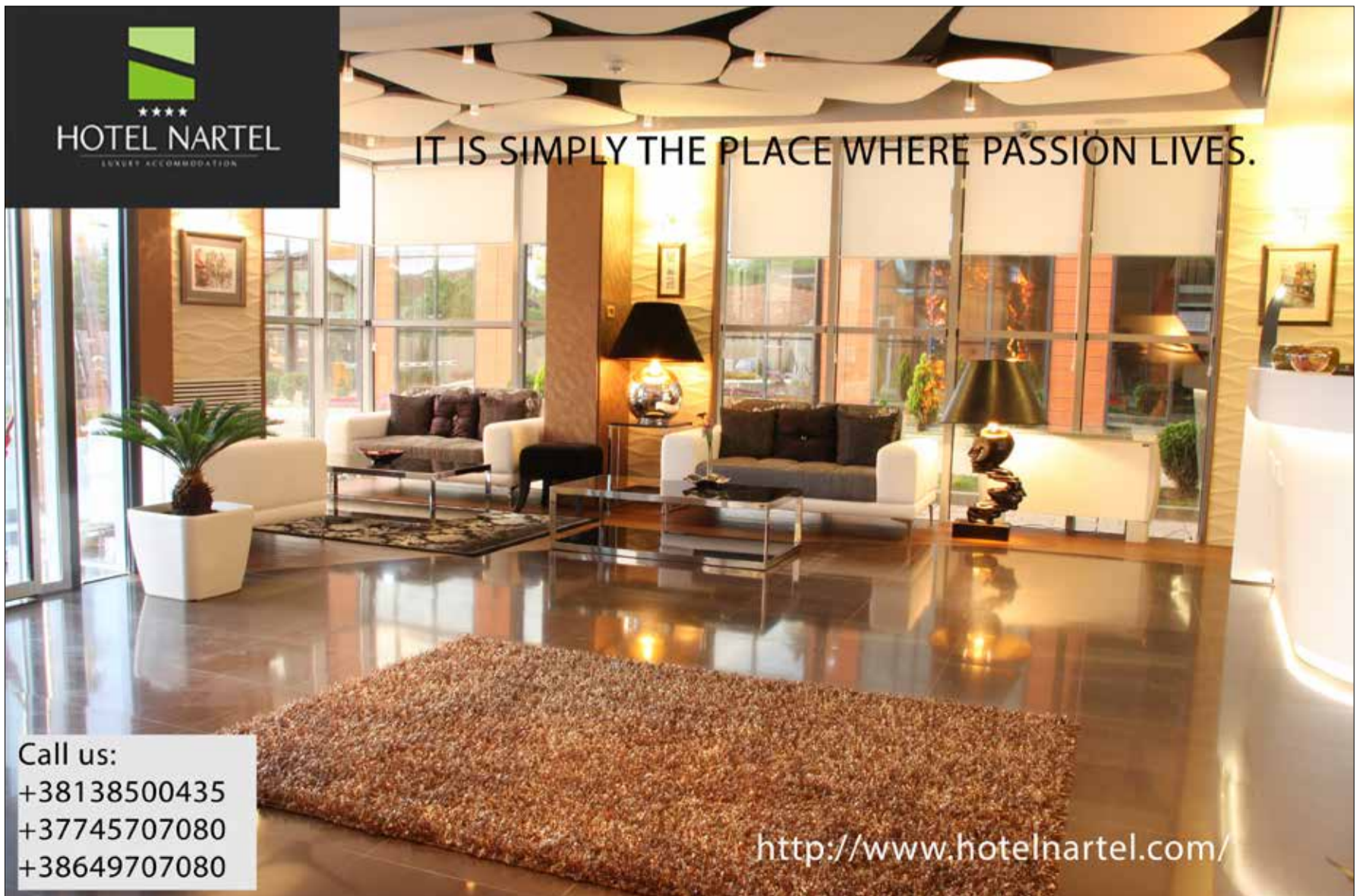
The municipal government of Partes briefly used a former gas station as its main office.




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Cover

Ambitious goals, big obstacles for new mayor

Shpend Ahmeti has a vision of a city that works better and treats its people more fairly - but can he deliver?

By Nate Tabak

In the lobby of headquarters of Levizija Vetevendosje!, photographs plastered over on one of the walls cover the various protests they have held over the years.

These demonstrations have punctuated the party's image, calling to mind the exclamation mark affixed to its name, which means "Self-Determination Movement!"

Opposition, to the UN mission in Kosovo, to "supervised" independence, and lately to agreements with Serbia, has long defined Vetevendosje, from its early days as a movement in the 2000s to the bona fide party that it is today with seats in parliament.

But, in a few weeks, once Vetevendosje's Shpend Ahmeti is sworn in as mayor of Prishtina, the party will have real power for the first time. It is both a challenge and an opportunity ahead of next year's national elections.

"Visible changes have to be seen in the first months, for people to see how Vetevendosje governs, because this is a real test," Ahmeti, a soon-to-be former lecturer at the American University of Kosovo, says.

Ahmeti staked his campaign on good governance and on offering nuts-and-bolts solutions to Prishtina's manifold problems.

Back in 2010, at a time when government in Kosovo was deadlocked and hit by scandal, he co-founded the Fryma e Re, or New Spirit Party.

Its leaders were young and often Western educated, as was Ahmeti, who had studied public administration at Harvard. They, too, campaigned on a platform of good governance while generating plenty of buzz in Kosovo and abroad.

But the party flopped at the polls, failing to meet the 5-per-cent threshold needed to enter parliament in the 2010 elections.

In 2011, a battered New Spirit merged with, or perhaps more accurately, was absorbed by, Vetevendosje. The move rankled with some New Spirit supporters and leaders, who felt betrayed by the union and disliked Vetevendosje's firebrand leader, Albin Kurti.

Three years later, the move has paid off handsomely for Ahmeti, now 35, however. While Ahmeti has held the party line as its vice-president, he says he has not changed his "centre-left" views, nurtured as a graduate student at Harvard's Kennedy School.

"I'm still fighting for equality, social change and progressive thought. These are the key things I believe in. This is the part of Vetevendosje where I fit in best, with these policies," Ahmeti says.

During the single debate that Isa Mustafa agreed to in the campaign, ahead of the run-off, very different philosophies emerged between the incumbent mayor and Ahmeti when it came to social welfare.

During an exchange about the unpaid employees of the municipal bus company, Mustafa insisted that the



SHPEND AHMETI

Age: 35

Hometown: Prishtina

Education: American University of Bulgaria, Harvard University

Occupation: University lecturer

problem was not the municipality's responsibility, whereas Ahmeti contended that the municipality had an obligation to step in and help.

"When you see a family with children, and their electricity is cut off because they have no money, and they send their children to school with no food, those for me are the biggest problems that this city has," he says. "I am a little bit overwhelmed with the sheer magnitude of the issue," he adds.

Ahmeti sees local government as something that should be active, helpful and service-oriented. "The policies in place until now have made people very private in their own apartments," he says.

Changes in the governance of the city will begin from day one, with improvements to communication and transparency, Ahmeti says. That promise seems credible, as Vetevendosje is the most financially transparent and publicly accessible political party in Kosovo.

Ahmeti admits that providing Prishtina with water for 24 hours day



PHOTOS/MAJLINDA HOXHA

within 24 months will be among his toughest challenges.

"This is an issue that it touches the whole of Prishtina. More than 60 per cent of people face water restrictions, 20 per cent for up to 12 hours per day; that's ridiculous in 2013," he says.

Just about every candidate for mayor promised to deliver 24-hour water. A project is also underway largely with German funding, and support from the Kosovo government and municipality of Prishtina, to build a new water plant that will be in service by 2017.

But Ahmeti says the project isn't enough. He says the real issue is that too much water is being wasted, both through legitimate connections and losses in the system.

"We need to reduce water consumption from 140 liters to 125 per day per person, that's one challenge, and secondly we have to find out where the water is going, which is easily doable," he says.

Within a year, Ahmeti says a proper public transport system will also be in place with new buses and new lines. Changes in traffic and parking will follow.

TIDBITS

- Used to own a sports bar, Filikaqa
- Drinks coffee at Papillon
- Hamam and Megahertz are his preferred nightspots
- A fan of the New England Patriots, and enjoys other American sports
- Has two children: A daughter, 7, and a son, 1
- Lives in Prishtina's center

"Cars are not our priority, people are," Ahmeti says. "Once we fix our public transport then we get into restrictive policies about cars in the city centre. It should be more expensive to get here [by car]. People should find it cheaper and better to use public transport."

Ultimately, the success of Ahmeti's plans will come down to resources and execution. The Democratic League of

Kosovo, LDK, has controlled Prishtina for the past 14 years. Its influence extends into the ranks of the civil service, which will have to execute Ahmeti's policies.

But Ahmeti feels confident that he can transform Prishtina's municipal machine.

"We will see where the obstacles lie; I think a lot of the problems were in management - cronyism - but we'll deal with that once we see what we have in hand, in terms of who works where and what terms of reference they have and how did they deliver."

There will be zero-tolerance of corruption, Ahmeti says, while attempts will be made to remedy performance and competence issues through training.

Another personnel problem lies in the city assembly, where Vetevendosje holds only 10 of the 51 seats. The LDK has lost its majority, but still has the largest number of seats.

Having apparently learned the art of political spin, Ahmeti paints his party's small presence in the assembly in a pos-

WHAT CAN INTERNATIONALS DO?

"They should participate in neighborhoods, and I think many of them want to. ... At the same time I see a lot of internationals live secluded. Only in their international settings do they meet with people. At the same time, they have the problems that the neighborhood has except they find the solutions because they have more money. Why not make them contribute more? They have the comparison with the city where they come from, which I assume is more developed. And they can take something good to the neighborhood level, as well, not just at the central level, where they tell our government what to do."

On expectations ...

"Expectations are high. We have to show how we govern differently from all of the other political parties."

On the Prishtina's development plan ...

"We're going to change it. It doesn't have legitimacy any more."

On cars ...

"Cars are not our priority. People are."

...

itive light. "It's good that we don't control the municipal assembly... it's good for democracy," he says.

The mayor-elect warns that while coalitions are out of the question, he will work with anyone who is not under investigation for corruption. "Then we have nothing to talk about," he says.

Ahmeti also faces the challenge of Prishtina itself. Mass construction of both legal and illegal builds has eaten away at remaining green space and blighted the city with notorious landmarks. Ahmeti pledges to snuff out illegal construction but is realistic about the damage that has been done.

"The time has come to save whatever we can save," he says.

"I'm not saying we're going to achieve miracles in the way that Prishtina looks. But we should go into some long-term planning and deal with some short-term problems," he concludes.

Region

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Albanian parties spar over Belle Air's collapse

Not for the first time in Albania, a major airline has gone bankrupt after losing the crucial political connections that got it airborne in the first place.

By Besar Likmeta in Tirana

ALB After eight years of operations, Belle Air on November 25 announced that it was suspending flights, citing the economic crisis and a consequent fall in demand for its services. Belle Air Europe, a subsidiary of the airline, operating out of Prishtina International Airport also suspended operations a day later.

The airline noted that, owing to its financial problems, the company's accounts had been frozen for more than 18 days.

"The above-mentioned situation impedes continued operations," the company said.

"During this period, Belle Air will start a process of restructuring, aiming to return to the Albanian market with lower prices and quality service," it added.

Records from the Tirana District Court obtained by Prishtina Insight show that the company filed for bankruptcy on November 22.

Ard Kola, a spokesperson for the Ministry of Finance, told PI the airline owed 5 million euro to the tax authorities, but denied that its accounts had been frozen on their request.

The airline operating out of Tirana's Mother Teresa Airport has announced that its routes will be taken over by the Italian low-cost carrier Blue Panorama.

WHAT HAPPENS NOW?

Prishtina airport spokeswoman Valentina Gara said airlines that already serve Prishtina have added more flights. So far no airline has taken over Belle Air Europe's routes, though. In the short term, though, passengers will have fewer options for nonstop flights and face potentially higher airfares.

Mysterious Tito statue rises over Skopje

MK Authorities in the Macedonian capital have been caught by surprise by the unannounced erection of a bronze statue of the Yugoslav president, Josip Broz Tito. The bronze statue was erected in front of the Josip Broz Tito high school in Skopje. "Nobody asked us about anything. The pedestal was erected two weeks ago and the statue was placed there all of a sudden... it is not on our property, so it is not our problem," the school principal, Dragan Danev,

said. It was put up on November 29, the 70th anniversary of the formation of the now defunct Socialist Federative Yugoslavia. Slobodan Ugrinovski, head of the small non-parliamentary party, Tito's Left Forces, who was present at the opening ceremony along with other party members, said they did not put up the statue. "I do not know who is behind this project... It was placed there by Skopje residents who respect the Marshal [Tito] and who are growing in number each day," he said.



Passengers holding a valid Belle Air ticket have been offered the chance to buy new tickets at special adjusted prices from Blue Panorama, which is also under bankruptcy reorganization, but still in operation.

The company also added that customers wanting refunds should contact the bank that issued their credit cards and show the ticket reference and payment receipt.

It is estimated that nearly 52,000 passengers had booked flights with Belle Air and another 12,000 with Belle Air Europe.

The company, which began operations in 2005, had a network of around 25 destinations, with the majority of routes flying to Italy, home to a large Albanian diaspora.

The bankruptcy of the company, which accounted for 50 per cent of the traffic through Tirana airport, has surprised many local observers, as until recently it was seen as a profitable monopoly.

As the company closes its doors, many who had earlier connected its suc-

cess to political ties said the same factors lay behind its demise.

Belle Air started up after the bankruptcy of yet another politically connected airline, Albatros Airways, which the authorities grounded on September 1, 2006, citing unpaid air traffic control fees.

The company, owned by the nephews of former Albanian president Alfred Moisiu, claimed it was being forced out of the skies to make space for the entrance of Belle Air.

The company claimed that Belle Air was connected to the then transport minister Lulzim Basha, now chair of the current opposition Democratic Party.

Basha denied the allegations. Meanwhile, a secretly taped telephone call between the head of civil aviation at the time and the owners of Albatros Airways turned into a political scandal.

The tapes, first aired on the investigative television program "Fiks Fare", contained conversations between Gazmend Dibra, head of the Civil Aeronautical Aviation Agency, which is a department of the Transport Ministry

French charge Dylan with insulting Croats

CRO French authorities have filed preliminary charges against Bob Dylan over a 2012 interview in which he was quoted comparing Croats to Nazis and the Ku Klux Klan. The lawsuit was initiated by the Council of Croats in France, CRICCF, right after his interview was published in September. In the interview, Dylan condemned racism as a force holding back the progress of the US, and as a force that black people can sense to

this day. "If you got a slave master or (Ku Klux) Klan in your blood, blacks can sense that ... just like Jews can sense Nazi blood and the Serbs can sense Croatian blood," Dylan said. The CRICCF said the statement violated French laws on hate speech, though they are not looking for money in the case. "We are not seeking monetary damages but only want the singer to apologize to the Croatian people for the comments," a lawyer for CRICCF said.

Montenegro, Serbia top Strasbourg complaints list

MNE Montenegro and Serbia are at the top of the league in terms of the number of their citizens who have complained about them to the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The figures are according to the annual report of the court, which was released on Monday. Lawsuits to the court have become increasingly common among citizens of Montenegro and Serbia, seeking justice over alleged violations of their

rights and freedoms. According to the report, the court has received 1,063 complaints filed against the state of Montenegro. As the country has only about 600,000 inhabitants, this is roughly one complaint for every 600 people, classifying it among the countries with the highest proportion of complaints to inhabitants. Serbia is not far behind. The court has received 11,500 complaints filed against Serbia, a country of just over 7 million people.



PRISHTINA'S BUSIEST AIRLINE

Belle Air Europe had been the No. 1 airline operating out of Prishtina International Airport. It had regular service to Basel, Brussels, Dusseldorf, Malmo, Milan, Stuttgart, Venice and Verona, and also served Zurich and Geneva for Darwin Airlines. It flew 22 flights in and out of the airport each week - 15 under its own flag and seven for Darwin Airlines.

COULD WIZZ AIR COME?

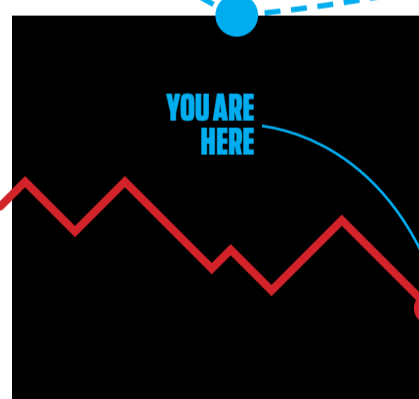
Last week, Hungarian Budget carrier Wizz Air, offered cheap flights from Skopje to ticketed Belle Air Europe customers affected by the shutdown. The carrier has a large European network and has been rumored to have had interest in flying out of Prishtina. Queried by Prishtina Insight, airline spokesman Daniel de Carvalho said, "While we do not comment on route speculations, I can confirm that Wizz Air's could stimulate air traffic at PRN with our low fares, if the costs were right for creating a low fare offer to consumers." Gara would not say if the airport had interesting in Wizz Air. "All interested



air companies are ... welcome to operate in this airport. We have demonstrated

our flexibility offering the necessary capacity and services of the airport," said Gara, the airport spokeswoman. Wizz Air flights to London's Luton airport start at about 24 euro. Budget airlines like Wizz typically only operate at airports that are willing to offer rock-bottom fees. No doubt, Belle Air Europe's demise probably puts Wizz Air in a much better bargaining position.

- Nate Tabak



UPS AND DOWNS

Belle Air Europe ingratiated itself to travelers going to and from Prishtina with cheap fares. Its flights were favored by the diaspora, who often faced astronomic airfares for charter flights during the summer. But the airline struggled with sticking to its own schedules. Traveling on Belle Air Europe often meant fluctuations departure times and inexplicable cancellations. Its onboard service also left a lot to be desired.

regulating passenger and other non-military air activity, and Aleksander and Valer Hoxha, Moisu's nephews and the owners of Albatros Airways

On the tapes, aired on September 11, 2006, Dibra could be heard urging the brothers to use their influence with the President to get him to fire former general prosecutor, Theodhori Sollaku.

In return, Dibra could be heard offering to turn a blind eye to the debts that the airline owed the agency.

Basha backed Dibra to the hilt over Albatros, insisting he was right to suspend its flights and claiming the company had indeed previously benefited improperly from its owners' political connections.

Just like Albatros's demise, Belle Air's bankruptcy provoked a war of words between the opposition and the government on Tuesday in parliament.

Former Prime Minister Sali Berisha accused the centre-left government of running the company into the ground in order to replace it with another company with ties with the new ruling coalition.

"You block bank accounts and bankrupt companies in order to allow the entry of new operators, leaving thousands of people stranded," he said.

However, Finance Minister Shkelqim Cani said the government had done everything it could to work out a solution with the company, which had not paid taxes to the state for the last five years.

"We asked this company for two months to abide by the law and I must say that we have been very much elastic with the law," Cani replied. "However, elasticity with the law has its boundaries," he added.

Gjergj Erebara, an editor for the Tirana daily newspaper Shqip, says that the Belle Air and Albatros sagas have much in common.

"These were companies that exploited political ties to make hefty profits," he said.

"But once the political support disappears so do the profits, and then they go out of business," he added.

pi guide

Four stars: Perfection
 Three stars: Superb
 Two stars: Good
 One star: Just OK
 No star: Don't Bother

GOOD



Newly opened Miqt Taverna a homey classic

By Sonia Roubini

The newly opened Miqt Taverna is tucked into a small alleyway right off of Mother Teresa Boulevard, right next to Photo Nesha. The restaurant is an offshoot of the ever-popular Miqt bar, and seems to rival the appeal of its boozier relative. Advertised as a “traditional” restaurant, Miqt Taverna feels less strictly traditional, and more cozy and homey, like eating in someone’s very well decorated dining room. The red and white checkered tablecloths, and themed red and green canned food items perched on shelves and dangling add to the walls add to this feeling.

The menu is still only available in Albanian, but English-speaking diners should have no trouble deciphering the options, and the bartenders and waiters were more than happy to help us pick our meals.

The food is very reasonably priced, and the menu feels familiar for Prishtina: a standard selection of salads and some bar food including chicken tenders (3 euro), potato skins (2 euro) and a particularly appetizing looking cold meze platter that I spied at the next table. Most of the main courses are meat-based standards, including the

ubiquitous pleskavice (4.50 euro) and chicken filet (3.50 euro), all of which are served with some combination of salad, rice, and grilled vegetable.

The boozier options are exactly what you’d find at Miqt, the bar. Some less than fantastic boxed wine, a respectable beer selection, and an even better selection of rakia, our choice for the night. Beer and the harder stuff seemed like the more appropriate beverage options for the food and the vibe of Miqt Taverna, so my friend and I opted for some rakia, which was quite good.

The highlights of the menu are definitely the daily specials. Miqt Taverna offers a daily hot main (2.5 euro), a daily soup (1.5 euro), and a daily stew (2 euro). These dishes are mostly adapted from the one of the owners’ mothers home recipes, and indeed they all taste like something that you’d be served at a friend’s home.

We began our meal with the spinach salad, which was intriguingly served with roasted mushrooms and radishes. I found the combination a bit strange at first, but it was ultimately pretty tasty. The mushrooms were salty and flavorful, and paired nicely with the house-made vinaigrette.

I was curious about the daily specials, and opted to try the daily hot



Miqt Tavern feels just like the home you always wanted.

main (stewed cabbage and meat) which was more of a tomato-based soup than a stew, richly flavored by the tender stewed beef, and full of tender chunks of cabbage that had clearly been stewing for hours. It was delicious. My friend tried the daily stew, also beef based, and full of spicy chunks of pepper and potato - perfect for the frigid winter nights that we’re sadly stuck with for the season. Our dishes were all flavorful and placed a refreshing emphasis on simplicity and home-style cooking.

MIQT TAVERNA

Right off Mother Theresa Boulevard, next to Photo Nesha, Prishtina; Hours: Open daily For more information visit www.facebook.com/miqt.taverna

All in all, the dining experience at Miqt Taverna is as pleasant and friendly as it is tasty. It’s small enough to work for a more intimate meal, but would also be a good place to begin a weekend night out with a group of friends.

EDS EAT DRINK SHOP



XHONI'S BAR > Xhoni's Bar is one of those Prishtina institutions that people tend to forget about. The small, cozy bar is something right out of the 60s, with leather lining the walls, and an impressive collection of vinyls kept behind the bar. The bartenders rotate through their music options every night, but you won't be disappointed by their selection of rock 'n' roll, jazz, soul, and other classic favorites. In my experience, Xhoni's is not the best way to start a night, but heading there in the wee hours for one (or two, or three) is one of the better ways to end a long night out. The cozy bar is definitely more of a wintery spot, and it gets quite crowded, so expect to be overheated, and don't expect to find a seat. Xhoni's serves the standard selection of Peja and a few other beers, some wine, and some liquor.

Xhoni's Bar, Rr. Rexhep Mala; Unmarked door next to Allegro Restaurant; 044 75 07 20; 20:00-3:00; Closed Sundays



FURRA LUMI > Furra Lumi is easily the best bakery in town. It caters to all of your carb-cravings, whether you're most in the mood for burek, mantilla, pastries, rich cakes, or just a loaf of good bread to bring home for dinner. The more traditional Albanian options are the best: Lumi serves up an impressive selection of burek (cheese, spinach, meat, and a few other specials all 4.5 euro per kilo).

Furra Lumi has a café area, so that you can enjoy your choice with a macchiato or a glass of ayran. Don't make the mistake of leaving without buying one of the excellent cookies, muffins, or croissants for dessert.

Furra Lumi, 1 Anton Ceta; 038 22 97 52
 Monday-Saturday: 7am to 9pm
 Sunday: 7am to 6pm



FYI



Dokufest premieres year-round cinema

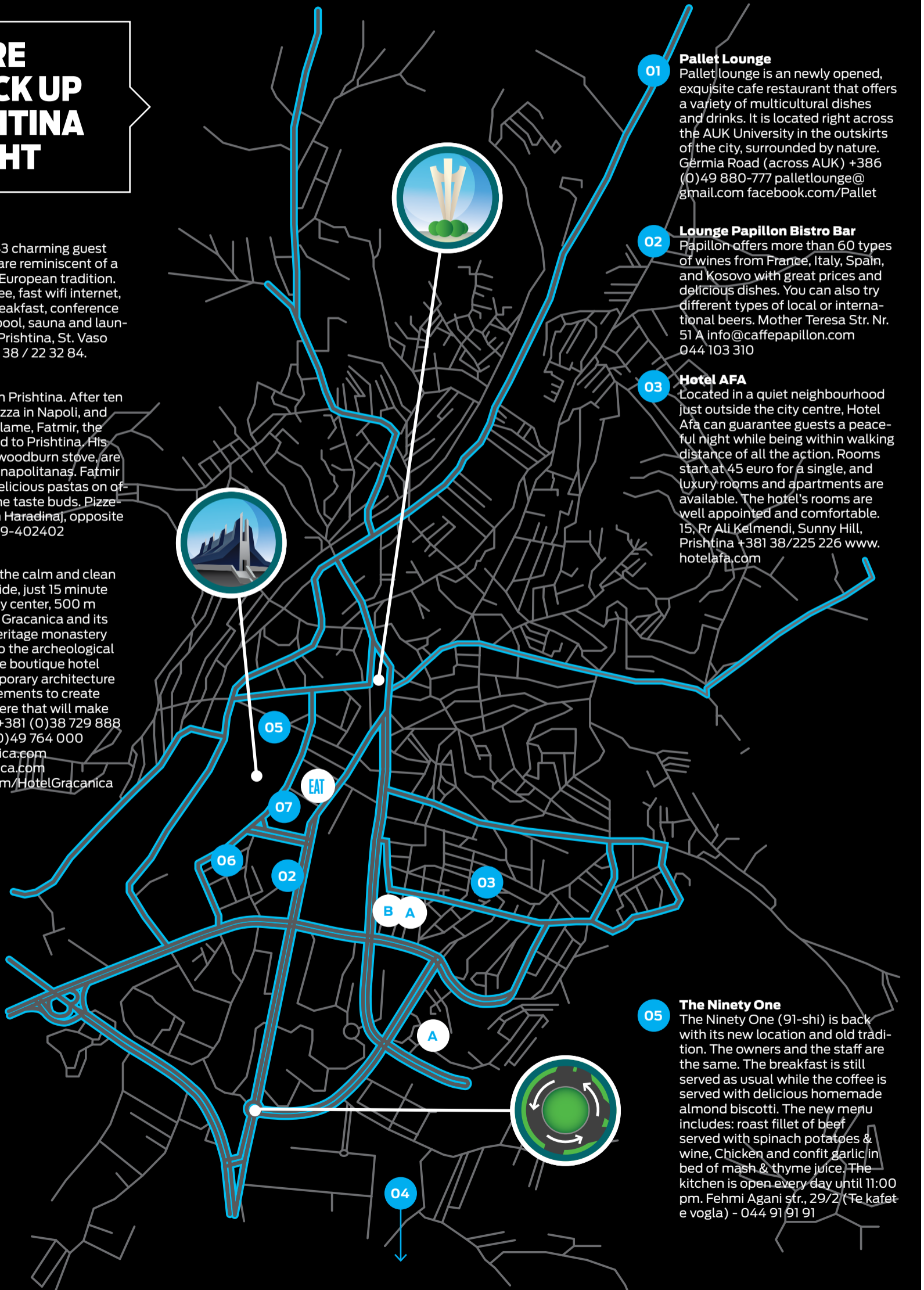
Movie-goers now have a second option for visiting a proper cinema. On December 3, Dokufest opened a 150-seat theatre in Prizren, dubbed Dokukino. The first movie screened was the Hollywood blockbuster "Thor." Until recently, Kino ABC in Prishtina's centre was the only fully operational movie theatre in Kosovo. For more information, visit www.facebook.com/dokufestkino.

WHERE TO PICK UP PRISHTINA INSIGHT

- 06 Hotel Prishtina**
Hotel Prishtina's 43 charming guest rooms and suites are reminiscent of a small hotel in the European tradition. The hotel offers free, fast wifi internet, complimentary breakfast, conference room, swimming pool, sauna and laundry service. Hotel Prishtina, St. Vaso Pasha nr. 20, +381 38 / 22 32 84.
- 07 Pizza Napoli**
A taste of Napoli in Prishtina. After ten years of making pizza in Napoli, and with only love to blame, Fatmir, the head chef, returned to Prishtina. His pizzas, made in a woodburn stove, are definitely genuine napolitanas. Fatmir also has several delicious pastas on offer, a true joy for the taste buds. Pizzeria Napoli off Luan Haradinaj, opposite Newborn. 044/409-402402
- 04 Hotel Gracanica**
A place to relax in the calm and clean air of the countryside, just 15 minute sfrom Prishtina city center, 500 m from the center of Gracanica and its UNESCO World Heritage monastery and a short walk to the archeological site of Ulpiana. The boutique hotel combines contemporary architecture with traditional elements to create a unique atmosphere that will make you feel at home. +381 (0)38 729 888 (landline) +386 (0)49 764 000 info@hotelgracanica.com www.hotelgracanica.com www.facebook.com/HotelGracanica

- 01 Pallet Lounge**
Pallet lounge is an newly opened, exquisite cafe restaurant that offers a variety of multicultural dishes and drinks. It is located right across the AUK University in the outskirts of the city, surrounded by nature. Gërmia Road (across AUK) +386 (0)49 880-777 palletlounge@gmail.com [facebook.com/Pallet](https://www.facebook.com/Pallet)
- 02 Lounge Papillon Bistro Bar**
Papillon offers more than 60 types of wines from France, Italy, Spain, and Kosovo with great prices and delicious dishes. You can also try different types of local or international beers. Mother Teresa Str. Nr. 51 A info@caffepapillon.com 044 103 310
- 03 Hotel AFA**
Located in a quiet neighbourhood just outside the city centre, Hotel Afa can guarantee guests a peaceful night while being within walking distance of all the action. Rooms start at 45 euro for a single, and luxury rooms and apartments are available. The hotel's rooms are well appointed and comfortable. 15, Rr Ali Kelmendi, Sunny Hill, Prishtina +381 38/225 226 www.hotelafa.com

- 05 The Ninety One**
The Ninety One (91-shi) is back with its new location and old tradition. The owners and the staff are the same. The breakfast is still served as usual while the coffee is served with delicious homemade almond biscotti. The new menu includes: roast fillet of beef served with spinach potatoes & wine, Chicken and confit garlic in bed of mash & thyme juice. The kitchen is open every day until 11:00 pm. Fehmi Agani str., 29/2 (Te kafete vogla) - 044 91 91 91



Opinion

Send us your thoughts to info@prishtinainsight.com.

Kosovars have staged an election revolution

The recent local elections in Kosovo were a remarkable event. On the surface, it may look as if nothing has changed. This is because, ranked by party votes, the political pecking order has roughly stayed the same, with the Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK, getting the most votes, followed by the Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK, the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK, Vetevendosje and the AKR.

Yet, Kosovars did more than deliver an unrigger election, which was not the case in 2010; they voted in a sophisticated, strategic and tactical manner. They broke the stereotype of the classic Kosovo voter: loyal to the party leader and the family patriarch. They managed to stage something of a revolution.

Dramatic shift in power:

More than 50 per cent of municipalities voted out their old mayors, regardless of which political party they belonged to. This was a smart move. The public decided not to use their votes to get jobs or contracts, or establish a clientelistic relationship with those elected.

Instead they used their votes to keep the powerful on edge, and rotate them. The message is: if the vote is not rigged and if the dead don't turn up to vote, no victory can be taken for granted any longer in Kosovo. Nowhere was that more apparent than in my hometown of Prishtina, where voters evicted the LDK from the mayor's office after 13 who years.

The rise of the urbanites:

Big municipalities set the trend in ousting the established parties. Prishtina, Gjilan, Ferizaj, Peja, Gjakova and Mitrovica all voted to kick out incumbent mayors who took their positions for granted. The PDK thought Ferizaj and Mitrovica required no effort to win, and that is why the Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci, spent most of his time visiting Prizren with no worry for these other two just as important towns. The same goes for the LDK in Prishtina. Isa Mustafa shunned debates and once claimed he could "win Prishtina with my hands in my pockets". The parties used to accu-

multate support on the basis of inertia, and on the basis of the promise of jobs and contracts and other services. But fewer people are getting these privileges. Those Kosovars who do not depend on the current party structures for their economic survival, and are in fact probably suffering from them, have become the new majority - and are more prone to vote for the new kid on the block.

Programs mattered:

Individual candidates and their programs mattered more than in any previous election. I have been moderating political debates since 2004 and the results in an election have rarely reflected the performance of candidates in the public TV debates that we held at BIRN. The old rule suggested that the Kosovar voter was led by the mystical aura of the leaders of the party, and loyalty to them would overcome any questions about programs, individual talents, or about the level of professionalism and competence that they showed in a debate. This time, even the candidates themselves felt that the bar had risen along with the demands of voters for serious presentations. That is why for the first time in the political history of Kosovo, and probably of the Balkans, 95 per cent of candidates who ran in the second round presented incredibly detailed political programs using Power Point presentations. They used realistic budgets and even included before-and-after photographs of proposed projects. Such widespread technocratic attitudes and attention to detail are unprecedented, and will make it much easier to evaluate their performance over the next four years.

The myth of reform:

Ironically, two key areas of focus by the international community produced the least in terms of results in this election. Despite the aggressive - but unsuccessful - push from the International Community, and certain members of the political elite and civil society, for electoral reform in the wake of the 2010 polls debacle, these recent polls managed to be free by and large, and free from rigging although there was no reform.



BY JETA XHARRA

These elections showed that the failures of the past were about people, not the system. Nevertheless, the push for electoral reform will likely continue ahead of the 2014 elections. But, if political parties, their leaders and election commissioners exercise the political will to agree that the forthcoming national elections will be clean, further talk of reform will be wasted energy. After all, if there is a will to rig the vote, then the election thieves will find ways to get around any reforms.

Sliding backwards in North:

As far as the data go, the Belgrade backed-party, the Serbian Citizens Initiative, has won in nine municipalities, the same as the LDK, and only one less than the PDK. The dialogue with Serbia led in Brussels has made Belgrade the third largest player in local governance in Kosovo. So, the promise that northern Kosovo will integrate after this election is starting to look like a myth. Reality looks more like the rest of the formerly integrated southern-Serb municipalities coming under pressure to look more like those in the north - not the other way around. This makes all the investment in the Independent Liberals, SLS, the party that many Serbs call "Thaci's Serbs", a poor investment on the part of the government, as it was only able to hold on to Sterpce. Last July, to convince the public that dialogue with Serbia would benefit Kosovo, Enver Hoxhaj, the Foreign Minister, told me on "Life in Kosovo" that the north would be so integrated after the local elections that, "on November 10, we will be doing an interview in North Mitrovica, Leposavic or in Zubin Potok." Surprise, surprise, the minister has so far not agreed to do that interview yet.

For the moment, we have a right to feel pleased with our election, but we have allowed the international community to twist our arm into giving away half the country. Will we be too euphoric to notice? Let's wait and see.

culture

SKENA UP puts Prishtina on international stage

By Sonia Roubini

The SKENA UP International Students' Film and Theater Festival was founded in 2003 by a group of young artists and performers. The ninth edition of the festival runs from December 5 to 11, and features 11 original plays and over a 100 films written and performed by film and theater students from all over the world. The festival also offers these students the chance to participate in a series of workshops on topics including script development and film scoring, led by professionals including the actor and producer Brendan Ward, and pianist and composer Stephan Graf Von Bothmer.

SKENA UP aims to "overcome the weak institutional support offered to film and theater students across the Balkans" by providing students with a forum to present their work to and receive feedback from the public. The festival also facilitates "access to an

artistic network invaluable for their future careers" by bringing together students and leaders in the field from all over the world.

The organizers of SKENA UP say they strongly believe in the importance of promoting the contemporary art tradition in Kosovo, and of increasing artistic partnerships and ties between Kosovo and the rest of the world. The function of SKENA UP is to "motivate students not only to have sight, but also a strong vision," said the festival's manager, Hana Qena.

In addition to its important role in developing Kosovo's art scene, the festival's week of events are of interest even to those who aren't necessarily invested in these developments. SKENA UP offers a week packed with series of films in the afternoons, theater performances in the evenings, and the notorious SKENA UP after parties at Hamam, Zanzi Bar, and Megahertz.

The individual festival events are



too numerous to list here, but ones of particular interest include: the National Film Competition (December 8, 6pm, Oda Theater); the ExYU Generation Next Film competition, featuring films

from all countries in the former Yugoslavia; and "Starring James Franco", an English-language theater performance from the UK (December 7, 6pm, National Theater).

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