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KSF Banned From KLA Festivals in Arms Row

Following a spat with NATO over unit's appearance with weapons, the KSF will not be allowed to take part in future commemorations of the Kosovo Liberation Army.

By Lawrence Marzouk

The Kosovo Security Force, KSF, has been banned from taking part in future commemorations of the Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA, following a row with NATO over bearing arms.

The NATO force in Kosovo, KFOR, froze its relationship with the KSF after members of the force, which does not have military status, appeared carrying weapons at a recent KLA com-

memoration.

The so-called "epopee", or epic poem, commemorating the death of the popular hero Adam Jashari, a key personality in the development of the KLA, took place on March 5.

NATO resumed cooperation with the KSF a few days later. A press release issued by the President's Office clarified that the KSF's ceremonial unit would be allowed to use "demilitarised weapons" for certain events.

But in an interview with Prishtina Insight yesterday,

KFOR's commander, General Markus Bentler, said that the KSF would not be able to take part in such events as the Epopee.

"There will be appearances of the ceremonial unit, probably not on March 5 [next year] but probably at other events," he said.

The KSF took over from the Kosovo Protection Corps, made up of former KLA fighters, in January 2009. Its mandate is to conduct crisis response operations in Kosovo and abroad, civil protection operations within Kosovo and to assist in dealing with natural

disasters.

Although intended as a multi-ethnic force, it is comprised almost entirely of ethnic Albanians, some of whom fought in the KLA and, in spite of NATO attempts to play down such views, is widely seen as Kosovo's future army.

General Bentler said the KSF guard would not be allowed to take part in "events connected [only] to one part of the community", as its activities needed to underline the multiethnic nature of the force.

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The European Commission announced in February that it planned to extend its tariff-free trade agreement with Kosovo and the rest of the Western Balkans to 2015. But Muhamet Imeri, owner of the Galanteria factory...

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The refusal of Serbia's President, Boris Tadic, to attend a regional summit on March 20 in Slovenia, protesting over the invitation given to Kosovo, has drawn criticism from pro-European experts in Serbia itself. They fear the gesture is likely to lead to Serbia's...

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Balkan Economies Brace for



By BIRN staff

Greece has been the economic motor of the region in recent years. As a result, its severe financial troubles hold consequences for several countries beyond its borders.

If the European Union fails to avert the collapse of the Greek economy, it will have repercussions across the Balkans and especially among Greece's immediate neighbours – Albania, Bulgaria and Macedonia.

Greek businesses, especially banks, have been important investors throughout the region and observers predict that as Greece's financial troubles worsen, such investments are bound to dry up.

Inevitable big cuts in public spending in Greece "will affect the whole of the Balkans because Greece has been the gravitational centre of financial, economic and social stability in the region," Pajtim Melani, head of market research at the Albanian Competition Authority, a government watchdog, explains.

Apart from the danger of Greek investment falling, or even disappearing, from parts of the region, trade with Greece – an important component of several regional economies – is declining as Greek consumers tighten belts and cut consumption.

The impact of the Greek crisis is also likely to be felt by emigrant workers in the country. As borders in the region have opened up, and as Greece has become more prosperous since joining the EU, its economy has sucked in large numbers of seasonal and permanent workers. Ethnic Albanians alone make up about 10 per cent of the total Greek workforce. Many of these people have lost, or will lose, their jobs and the negative impact of their loss of earnings will be felt in hundreds of towns and villages "back home".

Not all is doom and gloom. Greece's economic stake in Macedonia and Kosovo had already shrunk before the crisis in its economy unfolded, largely for political reasons.

And, as we report from Bulgaria, some economists there believe that short-term pain could be followed by long-term gain. Investment that might once have gone to Greece will now shift to more stable local economies, they say. One thing is clear; the Greek crisis is creating a



new balance of economic power in the Balkans and regional relationships are likely to be transformed as a result.

ALBANIA: The worst affected neighbour

The roughly 664,000 Albanians currently living in Greece make up to 10 per cent of Greece's total workforce. An important migrant population with strong ties to Albania, they send home hundreds of millions of euros in remittances every year.

After a meeting of the directors of Albania's central bank on February 24, governor Ardian Fullani warned that the Greek debt crisis would have a negative impact on Albania, and the bank was keeping a close watch.

"The economic slowdown of the Greek economy will also affect Albania's economy," Fullani said, adding that the impact would be felt in terms of remittances, foreign trade and in Greek banks present in Albania.

Greek-owned banks in Albania comprise 25 per cent of the country's banking assets and hold 38 per cent of the loans. "Greece has been an important source of investment in Albania in the last decade as well as a source of cheap credit emitted from Greek banks," Melani said. "The rising risk of premiums [on debt] in Greece will raise interest rates in Albania as well," he added.

An EBRD senior economist, Peter Sanfey, told the BBC on March 9 that of all the countries in the region, the Greek crisis would be felt most in Albania, because of the size of Greek investments in Albania and the size of the Albanian emigrant community in Greece.

According to Sanfey, Albania can't do much to avert shocks to its own economy from the Greek crisis

beyond focusing on long-term fundamental economic reform. Albania "should step-up structural reforms, get closer to the EU and apply competitive policies to develop the potential of its own economy," Sanfey said.

KOSOVO: Not much of a relationship

Safet Gerxhaliu, deputy chair of Kosovo's Chamber of Commerce, says that the "one-sided" nature of the economic relationship between Greece and Kosovo means Kosovo will not be affected greatly by Greece's economic turmoil.

"If you look at the trade balance, we are mostly importing from Greece," he said, "and we also used it as a transit point [for imports] from Asia."

Greece is one of the largest sources of imports for Kosovo and the port of Thessalonica is a key transit zone for products destined for Kosovo and coming from Asia and Brazil. Lignite for one of Kosovo's biggest exporters, Ferronikeli, passes through the port as well as almost all chickens, which hail from Brazil.

According to Kosovo's Central Bank, imports to Kosovo from Greece were worth 71 million euro for January to November 2009, a small increase on the 2007 and 2008 figures.

But exports to Greece, which had been the third biggest market in the EU for Kosovo's goods in 2007 and 2008, are already negligible. They fell drastically from 10.8 million in 2008 to 0.2 million euro for January to November 2009.

Gerxhaliu says this collapse reflects poor diplomatic relationships. Athens is one of five EU member states that have not recognized Kosovo's independence. After Kosovo declared independence in

February 2008, its trading relationships with all the non-recognizing countries were badly affected.

Currently there is little Greek investment in Kosovo, although one Greek company, Public Power Corporation, is part of a consortium bidding to build Kosovo's new power plant.

The main problem facing Kosovo in terms of Greece's economic decline is to do with the large ethnic Albanian diaspora in Greece, from Kosovo and Albania proper. As they lose jobs, this is bound to affect the economy of Albania, which will have a knock-on effect on its economically-close neighbour, Kosovo.

BULGARIA: Short-term pain, long-term gain:

The immediate consequences of the downturn in Greece may be damage to Bulgaria's economy and delay to its recovery. But in the long term, some believe Sofia may benefit from its neighbour's economic instability.

Greece has been a key investor in Bulgaria since the 1990s. From 1996 to 2008 it was the third biggest investor in the country, responsible for 9 per cent of direct foreign investments, FDI, in Bulgaria, data from the government's Invest Bulgaria Agency shows.

Last year, however, Greek foreign investment plummeted from 2.7 billion euro in 2008 to a mere 37.7 million euro, according to the National Bank.

Lachezar Bogdanov, of Industry Watch, an economic think tank in Sofia, said the short-term consequences of the Greek downturn would be felt immediately by local businesses dependent on Greek custom. Fewer Greek tourists would visit Bulgarian ski resorts, and fewer people would come to shop in Bulgaria.

"Many Bulgarians who usually work in Greece for the summer will have hard time finding a job or will be paid less," noted Georgi Ganey, an economist from the Centre for Liberal Strategies in Sofia.

Meanwhile, Bulgarian exports to Greece are also expected to drop. Today, around 10 per cent of the county's exports, worth of around 1 billion euro per year, go to Greece.

Some experts warn that Bulgaria's banking system may be vulnerable to shocks from the Greek economy, as Greek banks control about one-third of the local banking system.

United Bulgarian Bank belongs to the National Bank of Greece. Postbank is owned by Eurobank EFG Group, while Piraeus Bank Group, Alpha Bank Group and Emporiki Bank also have their local affiliates.

But Ganey thinks that Bulgarian bank assets will be hit only if Greek bank system collapses completely. "Local branches are stable [though] any severe problems in their parent Greek banks might hurt their work in Bulgaria," Ganey said.

Two weeks ago, the Finance Minister, Simeon Dyankov, expressed concerns about a possible liquidity drain from local bank branches to their headquarters in Greece. However, Ivan Iskrov, governor of the Bulgarian National Bank, BNB, said the local partners of Greek banks appeared stable. "There's no reason to worry," said Iskrov, adding that BNB was monitoring all the banks.

Meanwhile, some experts believe the long-term effects of the Greek crisis may be beneficial. Ganey says that while the Greek downturn could lead to a more restrictive EU policy towards new entrants in the euro-zone, delaying Bulgaria's ambitions to join, the crisis might also have the contrary effect of speeding up euro-zone acceptance of countries like Bulgaria, which have done much to meet the necessary requirements.

Bogdanov said that countries like Bulgaria, Romania and Serbia, which are economically stable, and have lower taxes and a better business environment, could benefit from the downturn in Greece. "If Greece starts to be seen as a risky country, other countries in the region have a better chance to attract investments that otherwise would go to Greece," Bogdanov said.

He doesn't expect the withdrawal of Greek investors from Bulgaria, either. On the contrary, "In times of deep economic crisis and insecurity in Greece, I don't see why any Greek company would wish to shut down a successful business in Bulgaria", he said.

Closures were possible, though only of Greek branches already in financial troubles. The Greek crisis could also bring a positive change to the traditional EU division between "old" and "new" member states. "A division should not be made between 'new' and 'old' member states but between those countries that have reasonable economic policies and those that don't," Bogdanov said.

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"The use of the ceremonial unit needs to be coordinated," he added. "It needs to be coordinated with Com-KFOR in such a way that it presents itself in a way deemed appropriate."

General Bentler said: "There was a difference of opinion that needed to be addressed and solved."

"We have chosen, with the proper support of the chain of command with the Alliance,

to go that way [freeze relations] to make that kind of statement and that statement was understood."

The General said the decision was taken to "underline discrepancies that have been there... What we always said was 'Please do me a favour, stick to the rules.'"

KFOR has since resumed training and mentoring the KSF. "We are committed to bringing that force up to full strength in a very short time," the General said.

But, asked whether the KSF might be

"training with tanks" after 2013, when KFOR is to review the force's use of offensive weapons, General Bentler responded: "Dream on."

He said: "When you look now at this stage, 11 years after 1999, you will see that the military mission is almost entirely fulfilled."

"There is no threat from the outside and when you look inside, where are the military tasks? Most of the tasks still burdening Kosovo are political in nature," he concluded.



Fallout from Greece Crisis

MACEDONIA: Worries about trade but not investment

Greece's economic turmoil is unlikely to decrease the level of direct investment, FDI, in Macedonia, because its role in this field is already negligible.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s investments in the OKTA crude oil refinery, the Usje cement factory, the Stopanska bank, the grocery store chain VERO and hundreds of smaller concerns made Greece one of the main investors in Macedonia.

But during the past few years Greek investments shrank drastically, reflecting poor relations generated by the bilateral "name" dispute. Latest official data from 2008 show that 79 per cent of FDI in Macedonia came from EU countries but Greece's part in the FDI is only 1.1 per cent, worth around 3 million euro.

In terms of trade, however, Greece is Macedonia's third biggest partner after Serbia and Germany. As Macedonia's Finance Minister, Fatmir Besimi, said on Monday, "Greece is one of our most important trade partners and it is normal to expect that this will have an impact on our exchange. But this concerns only the trade."

Official data show that trade between the two countries dropped sharply this year. In the first nine months of 2008, Macedonian exports to Greece totaled 340 million euro. In the same period in 2009 it was less than half that figure, at 160 million euro.

The Economy Minister, Zoran Stavreski, recently met the representatives of Greek companies in the country and said he was convinced they would stay. "With its business environment and low taxes, Macedonia provides good conditions for the Greeks and other investors," Stavreski said.

But data show that in the first nine months of last year over 70 million euro of Greek capital left the country. This mostly happened in the second quarter of 2009, when the Greek owners of the mobile operator Cosmofon and the marble quarry Prilep sold up and left the country.

SERBIA: Banks are the main concern

Greece's most important investments in Serbia are in the banks.

Greeks own 17 per cent of the capital and assets in Serbia's

banks. The total capital of Greek banks is around 800 million euros, and the value of its assets in Serbia is worth 376 million euros.

The five Greek banks in the Serbian market are Alfa bank, Pireus, Marfin, Eurobank EFG and Vojvodjanska bank, a former state bank privatised by recapitalisation with Greek capital and now a member of the National Bank of Greece group.

Greece's remaining investments in Serbia are mostly in the trade and retail sector.

Economic analyst Goran Nikolic says that under the terms of the February 26 New Vienna Initiative (a meeting between the Serbian National Bank, foreign banks and the IMF), banks can withdraw up to 20 per cent of their assets from Serbia.

However, he does not predict a significant withdrawal of Greek capital, because that capital would have difficulty finding any buyers at this moment. "Now is not the same to sell because the prices are exceptionally low... It is simply not a smart strategy," Nikolic said.

In terms of Greece's overall debt of 50 billion euro, he went on, "I don't see those 376 million of euros' worth of assets, which Greek banks have placed here, being significant as a proportion of that."

However, economic analyst Miroslav Prokopijevic says that it is premature to say what the risks to Serbia's economy are, because the Greek crisis has not yet peaked. He sees two main areas of concern for Serbia.

"In a panic situation, the Vienna Agreement would not mean a thing, as no one would pay attention to it, therefore the withdrawal of capital by [Greek] banks is the first risk," he said. "The second risk is that if Greece starts to face even greater problems, it could influence trade."

Prokopijevic believes that could mean a reduction in the value of trade to the tune of several hundred million euros a year.

ROMANIA: Business as usual – for now

Greece is a significant presence in Romania's economy but not a dominant one. According to official data, two of the top ten banks are Greek and all seven banks with

Greek shareholders account for around 25 per cent of Romania's banking assets. Surprisingly, despite the crisis, between September 2008 and September 2009 Greek bank owners invested 204 million euro in the banks they hold in Romania.

Greece ranked sixth in terms of Foreign Direct Investment, FDI, in Romania at the end of last year, with a share of around 6 per cent. But, overall, FDI almost halved last year in Romania, from 9.5 billion euro in 2008 to 4.9 billion.

Figures for the first nine months of 2009 show exports from Romania to Greece fell by 14 per cent compared to the same period in 2008. Imports from Greece to Romania also fell, by 28.6 per cent, during the same period. Greece's latest troubles are too recent to show up in recent data, analysts say.

"We don't have the 2009 results for all Greek banks present in Romania but we expect they will still report profits, though most likely a bit down compared to previous years", says Ciprian Bota, an economic journalist.

"But Romania has to ask what will happen if the Greek bankers cut their credit lines to their Romanian branches, which are already burdened by non-performing loans," Bota said. "Will the local banking system be thrown off balance?"

Greek investors in Romania remain optimistic. "The difficult economic period Greece is going through will not hurt business in Romania," says Yorgos Ioannidis, general manager of OTE, the Greek telecom operator, which owns a local Romanian company, Romtelecom. "We will make further investments just as in previous years. As regards profits, we expect a better performance than last year," Ioannidis added.

Romania's main troubles relating to the Greek crisis, according to analysts, is that FDI is on decrease and investors' confidence in Romania is falling because of the overall regional picture. "The Greek troubles send worrying signals, affecting investors' moods," says Dan Suci, an economic analyst.

"The Greek crisis has no direct impact on Romania but Bucharest has its own problems as it was forced to take out an IMF-led rescue loan worth 20 billion euro to

avoid a crisis last year," he recalled. Romania's economy is expected to grow by around 1.3 per cent in 2010.

BOSNIA and CROATIA: Too distant to share the pain

The small presence of Greek businesses in Bosnia and Croatia means these countries do not expect any direct spillover from the crisis in Athens.

Total Greek investment in Bosnia and Herzegovina at the end last year amounted to some 2.3 million euro, less than one tenth of 1 per cent of total postwar FDI of 3.8 billion euro. The amount remained unchanged since 2008 as Bosnia did not attract fresh Greek investment last year, Edin Varupa, of Bosnia's trade ministry, told Balkan Insight. As a result, Varupa said, Bosnia "did not expect to feel any impact from the Greek crisis".

The largest Greek investment in Bosnia is the Sarajevo-based Coca-Cola bottling company, part of the Coca-Cola Hellenic Group, which has operations in 28 countries, as well as in Bosnia. The company does not expect to suffer any consequences due to the crisis in Greece.

In Croatia, meanwhile, while many fear that the "Greek scenario" could be repeated here, as the two countries share many problems, notably roaring foreign debt and corruption, there is also no risk of a direct "spill-over".

Trade levels are low and the two countries do not even have direct flights from one to another.

"There are no significant Greek investments in Croatia and our two countries don't share strong trade ties, so I don't expect any direct impact from the economic crisis in Greece," economic analyst Hrvoje Stojic says.

According to Croatia's Chamber of Economy, HOK, the trade exchange between the two countries in 2009 amounted to only 102 million euros, with Croatia exporting goods worth 35 million euros and importing goods from Greece worth 67 million euros.

According to Stojic, Croatia's economy might suffer indirect consequences through its economic ties with Serbia and Macedonia, which are likely to be hit harder by the Greek crisis. "But those indirect consequences would not be significant so I don't believe the crisis in Greece is an important topic for Croatia," concluded Stojic.

Editor's word

Pranverë



By Lawrence Marzouk

Spring is definitely in the air – an appropriate time, you might say, for a spot of spring cleaning.

The government, in the coming days, is expected to unveil its new line-up. Out with the old and in with the new – although many of the 'old' will remain in place, and many of the 'new' aren't in fact that new.

I have heard every possible permutation of cabinet reshuffles on the Prishtina rumour mill in the past month.

Some well-informed sources suggest a minister will be sacked on corruption charges and arrested, while some suggest the minister will be sacked and handed a cushy job outside of government and charges will be dropped.

Some intimate that the unnamed person, who everybody is naming in private without a great deal of evidence, isn't going anywhere. 'The arrest would be too politically sensitive' they say, knowingly.

At the same time we have firm, unwavering statements issued by the international community and by Kosovo's government about tackling corruption, also suggesting that springtime could mean the birth of cleaner, more transparent institutions. EULEX even promised arrests when the leaves come out, referring not so obliquely to spring.

The longer nights and warmer weather have brought out the optimist in me. So I am going to stick to line that this time of year represents a real chance to reshape Kosovo for the better. And it would be a catastrophic error of judgment if firm evidence of corruption is swept aside for the sake of political expediency.

What people want is a real spring clean, not sweeping under the carpet. With all the muck already under there, this is not a long-term solution.

But just in case my wishful thinking is proved wrong, I have my broom at the ready and I hope you do to. You might need it.

Control Tightened on Northern Borders

The EU rule-of-law mission, EULEX, together with Kosovo Police have introduced stricter controls at the northern border crossings 1 and 31.

From March 19, the authorities have decided to thoroughly check all vehicles, cars, buses, trucks and trains passing through these border crossings.

EULEX said that the aim of the

plan is to ensure the highest security measures are in place.

To date, EULEX has been registering details of vehicles and drivers passing through the northern borders, but has rarely been making thorough checks.

Kosovo police said that all vehicles passing through Gates 1 and 31 will now be registered electronically. "So far everything is going according to the plan," Brahim

Sadriu told Prishtina Insight. "Those checks will contribute to the security in the north."

Smuggling remains a number-one law enforcement issue in northern Kosovo.

Following the declaration of independence, Serb militants burned down the border checkpoints in February 2008 and full control has not been restored.

The two crossings, Zubin Potok

and Leposavic, are in an area which remains out of the reach of Prishtina's institutions and is broadly controlled by Belgrade.

An EULEX vehicle and Kosovo Police building were sprayed with gun fire at Gate 31 on March 13.

EULEX spokesperson Karin Limdal said: "There is an urgent need to improve the rule of law situation in the north of Kosovo and the best way forward is to

find pragmatic solutions in coordination with Prishtina and Belgrade."

She added that the mission was in discussions with Serbia about bringing back 'Kosovo-Serb and Kosovo-Albanian judges and prosecutors' back to the municipal court in north Mitrovica.

She added this will ensure 'that justice can be delivered by a single and multi-ethnic judiciary'.

Serbia Boycott of Slovene Summit Angers Pro-Europeans

Belgrade's pro-EU activists and NGOs fear the boycott is likely to increase Serbia's regional isolation and slow its progress towards EU membership.



By Branka Trivic in Belgrade

The refusal of Serbia's President, Boris Tadic, to attend a regional summit on March 20 in Slovenia, protesting over the invitation given to Kosovo, has drawn criticism from pro-European experts in Serbia itself. They fear the gesture is likely to lead to Serbia's isolation from the region and will slow its path towards the European Union.

The summit, organised by Slovenia and Croatia, was intended to gather all Western Balkan leaders for the first time since the wars of the 1990s, to discuss cooperation in reaching their shared goal of European Union membership. The conference was seen as a preparation for the EU-Balkans meeting planned for June in Bosnia's capital, Sarajevo.

However, Serbia had hardened its diplomatic rhetoric on Kosovo even before Slovenia kicked off hectic diplomatic efforts to get both Prishtina and Belgrade to take part at the summit at Brdo.

Without even a word from Brussels, suggesting that Serbia would have to recognise Kosovo before joining the EU, Serbia's Foreign Minister, Vuk Jeremic, jumped the gun this month, stating that if pressed to choose between the EU and its claim to Kosovo, he would chose Kosovo.

Jeremic's statement raised eyebrows among some politicians in



Balkan leaders meet in Brdo

Photo by Council of Europe

the region, though it was no more than a recycling of "both Europe and Kosovo" – the slogan on which Tadic's pro-European coalition campaigned in Serbia's 2008 parliamentary elections.

Some experts maintain that Belgrade is doing no more than short-term muscle flexing, while it awaits the ruling of the International Court of Justice, ICJ, on Kosovo's independence.

Whatever the outcome of the ICJ, this camp believes that Belgrade may adopt a more realistic policy once the ruling has been given. The harshest criticism of Serbia's refusal to attend the summit in Slovenia came from Cedomir Jovanovic's Liberal Democratic Party, LDP.

Insisting that Serbs did not vote in the 2008 elections for a policy that fostered anti-European sentiment, the Liberals said the boycott had highlighted Serbia's ambiguity about EU membership.

Irritated by what they called Tadic "isolationist gesture", Serbia's pro-Europeans were also embarrassed to hear Vojislav Kostunica, head of the nationalist Democratic Party of Serbia, DSS, praise Tadic.

"The extent to which the Kosovo issue has become the focal theme of Serbia's foreign policy is surprising, when one recalls that every election since 2000 has been won on the EU theme, and that Serbian citizens are more interested in European integration than in Kosovo", Aleksandra Joksimovic, of the Forum of International

Relations, told Prishtina Insight.

Ivan Vejvoda, head of the Balkan Trust for Democracy, a NGO, noted in a recent interview with Radio Free Europe that Tadic had mentioned the need for a flexible Kosovo policy.

He said Tadic's expectation that this year would see the beginning of a solution to the problem encouraged him to believe that Serbia may soon abandon its hard-line rhetoric.

"Unimaginable as it seems at the moment, I think that soon – perhaps within the next six months – we will see the highest officials of Serbia and Kosovo sitting in the same room," Vejvoda said.

But Aleksandra Joksimovic sounds a more skeptical note. She is not convinced Serbia has prepared any "exit strategy" after the ICJ delivers its ruling on Kosovo. Like many observers, she suspects the court's ruling is likely to be neutral, allowing both sides to make their own interpretations. With that in mind, she fears Serbia will try to advertise the court ruling as a huge victory, leading to renewed confrontation. If the scenario comes true, Serbia may try to propose a new motion at the UN General Assembly condemning Kosovo's declaration of independence. This will, she believes, slow Belgrade's EU progress.

Other pro-EU observers in Serbia expressed indignation over Belgrade's insistence that the Slovenia summit was a failure. If Serbia was committed to regional cooperation its officials

would at least have commended the agenda instead of jubilating over an alleged "fiasco", Jelena Milic, director of the NGO Centre for Euro-Atlantic Studies, told Belgrade daily Danas.

Pro-Europeans are disappointed about Serbia's lack of eagerness to compromise, even after Brussels lifted visa requirements on Serbia last December.

While some in Serbia maintain that the Kosovo and EU issues can be separated, pointing to the example of Cyprus, which joined the EU before resolving its internal disputes with the breakaway Turkish-ruled north, Joksimovic dismisses such talk. "The EU is not going to repeat its Cyprus mistake in the Balkans," Joksimovic said.

Meanwhile, senior EU officials have also touched on Serbia's need to improve its regional cooperation, among them the presidents of the European Commission and Council of Europe, Jose Barroso and Herman van Rompuy, and the EU's foreign policy chief, Catherine Ashton.

The British ambassador to Serbia, Stephen Wordsworth, was more unequivocal in an interview with a local daily this month. Whether or not it recognises Kosovo, Serbia will have to start pragmatic dialogue with Kosovo before it joins the EU, he warned. Wordsworth referred to the way the Federal Republic of Germany opened up dialogue with the communist German Democratic Republic, GDR, despite never recognising that country, the so-called ostpolitik (eastern policy).

Predrag Simic believes the EU is going to become increasingly involved in seeking a pragmatic compromise between Belgrade and Pristina.

"If Serbia adopts a constructive approach instead of one based on 'either Kosovo or Europe', it may be assisted even by those EU countries that have recognised Kosovo in finding a middle ground with Kosovo," he said.

Kosovo: Court Bans Prizren Emblem

The emblem of the Municipality of Prizren, Kosovo, has been ruled as anti-constitutional as it does not reflect the commune's 'multi-ethnicity'.

The Constitutional Court ruled on Friday that the emblem, which includes an image of the League of Prizren building, the spiritual home of Albanian nationalism, and the date of its formation, must be changed.

The decision was welcomed by the International Civilian Representative (ICR), Pieter

Feith, who said it was 'both well-reasoned and thorough'.

He said: "It is a boost to the rule of law in Kosovo that the applicant could have his claim decided on by the Constitutional Court, when he was of the view that the Municipal Assembly's Decision violated the rights of Prizren's non-majority communities to protect and promote their identities.

"It is right that in the case of Prizren, the municipal emblem should reflect the multi-ethnic nature of the municipality and

be a common meeting point for all of its citizens.

"This decision strongly reinforces the principle that protecting and promoting the cultural and linguistic rights of all communities strengthens Kosovo and its development as a democratic society."

The lawsuit was brought by the former deputy mayor of the municipality, Xhemajl Kurtishi, a Bosniak.

The Constitutional Court has given the municipality a three-month deadline to bring in a new emblem.

Outside In Chloroform: Dissolve the Government!



By Kreshnik Hoxha

It would probably be fair to say that most people dream to go to Oxford University. But, only weirdos dream of Kosovo politicians queuing up to apply to Oxford's Somerville College.

It was a strange dream! That's what chronic exposure to chloroform does to your brain I guess. I say dream, but it was more like a nightmare if you take into account the presence of my home country's leaders'.

Initially, I thought I spotted Melihate Termkolli putting herself forward for a Plastic Surgery degree to save LDK's face from the wrinkles caused by Fatmir Sejdiu. But, Meli should know that nothing can sort LDK's fossil face!

Somerville is where Margaret Thatcher, the former British PM, did her chemistry degree. And I thought I saw Nexhat Daci attempting to follow in Maggie's footsteps. But, it'll be a cold day in hell before that happens, and Daci's chemistry background should remind him that the netherworld freezing over is thermodynamically impossible.

Oxford University requires dedication and ambition. That translated into Albanian means nothing else but PDK and AAK militants queuing up for etiquette and elocution lessons. But, who would pay the high tuition fees?

Was that Skender Hyseni I spotted with a gormless look on his face and a stack of papers tucked under his arm? The young Hyseni must have studied at one of the great universities to pull off his translator-to-foreign-minister-in-eight-yearstrick. It's just a shame he bunked the courses on diplomacy, public speaking and western politics, as those would have equipped him with the skills he desperately needs.

But then my ear was drawn to the unmistakable twang of the Gjakovar accent. It was an 18-year-old girl from the western city, applying to do politics and economics. Who knows, maybe she can follow Maggie's route and become the first female PM of Kosovo. Maggie privatised everything in the UK. So why can't our Gjakovar do it in Kosovo? She might even manage a transparent privatisation of PTK and KEK.

Odd isn't it? A tiny bit of chloroform gave rise to a complex dream like this one. Regular inhalation would do wonders to politics, at least in my parallel world. EU membership brought to us by the new Western-educated female PM with a fresh government.

So, provided that last year's budget surplus has not been "put to good use" yet, I suggest our government pays this girl's tuition fees and invests in some chloroform! Only by dissolving the current cabinet in chloroform, will the political limbo in Kosovo stop and create opportunities for the likes of this girl to return to Kosovo and take the lead to make positive changes.

And when it comes to dissolving the government, a toxic organic solvent like chloroform is a cheaper option than a heavy drinking night at Zanzi Bar! If nothing, it ensures Hajredin Kuci doesn't suffer indigestion from eating the humble pie the next day.

Prishtina Insight

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Kosovo's New Power Plant – Does Size Matter?



By Besiana Xharra

The downsizing of plans to build a new power plant in Kosovo means that the country's potential to exploit its massive lignite reserves and become an energy exporter are being lost, critics warn.

Kosovo's current and past governments have envisaged the construction of a 2000 megawatt power plant close to the current, aging Kosova A and B facility in Obilic.

This would have positioned the country as a major energy exporter in the region and made use of the world's fifth largest reserve of lignite.

But the tender process for the new power station floundered because interested parties struggled to raise funds due to the Credit Crunch.

In a bid to resuscitate the plan, the ministry of energy announced last year that the scheme was being downsized to just 500MW, with the option of a further 500MW plant being built later.

Earlier this month, four consortiums announced that they were interested in bidding for the tender, which includes improvements to the current Kosova B plant and the Kosova e Re, New Kosovo, facility.

But opposition politicians and some experts claim that this project will fail to exploit Kosovo's rich mineral wealth in lignite.

Ethem Ceku, former minister of energy and a member of the opposition Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK, told Prishtina Insight that reducing the capacity from 2000MW to 500MW is not conducive to economic development.

"Reducing the capacity [of the



New plans to build a 500MW power station near the current site in Obilic are facing opposition

new power plant] will not bring growth in revenues to Kosovo's budget and will not create new jobs," said Ceku. "Kosovo, in this way, is losing its economic power."

He cites long delays to the project, changes to the remit, removal of experts from the ministry of energy, growing environmental con-

cerns and the withdrawal of prestigious global companies as reasons for the larger scheme's failure.

Ceku believes that, worst of all, the plan will fail to use Kosovo's lignite reserves.

"Kosovo has large quantities of lignite and these were earmarked to be used for a Kosova e Re with

2000MW and for exporting over many years," said Ceku.

Officials at the Ministry of Energy and Mines agree that much of the lignite will no longer be used for the power plants, but say it will be exported.

"Sibovc [mine] lignite reserves are about 1 billion tonnes and the

first unit of Kosova e Re, together with Kosova B and Kosova A, for their entire lifespan will use only 25 per cent of those reserves," said Faik Nahi, political advisor to the ministry of energy.

"The rest will be exported and, depending on the energy needs in the years to come, the lignite will be used to generate new capacity."

He said that Kosova e Re will cover Kosovo's energy needs, and a small amount of electricity may still be exported.

Nuhi explained that the downsizing was to allow firms to secure funding and because of question marks over the need for large-scale exports in the region.

The government, according to Nuhi, will be a shareholder in the project but it has not yet been decided what its stake will be.

Minister of energy Justina Shiroka Pula told the Assembly of Kosovo last week that Kosova e Re will first be built with a capacity of 500MW and that by 2018 a further 500MW will be added to the facility. She said that by 2025, the plant will be generating 2000MW.

Government coalition partners Democratic League of Kosovo, LDK, has submitted objections to the proposal, calling for 1000MW followed by a further 1000MW.

"The strategy should be a function of market competition," said Fatmir Rexhepi, an LDK deputy.

Some economic experts believe that delays to the project are the source of all the problems. "At the beginning, there were very good bidders, which have left the race because of the changes and delays," said economist Naim Hoxha.

Another expert, Artan Nimani, believes that delays led bidders to question the value of the project.

What happens next with Kosova e Re?

The four consortiums bidding to build the power plant are Adani Power/Pt Adani Global from India and Indonesia, AES Electric Ltd/Demir Export A.S from USA

and Turkey, Park Holding from Turkey and consortium PPC/Contour Global LLP from Greece and Great Britain.

According to the ministry of energy, the draft tender will be

issued in the coming days. In July, negotiations will be completed with the firms, and the winner will be selected in September.

Construction of the project will begin in early 2011.

Kosovo's Exports Stuck in Doldrums

Despite the waiving of import tariffs to EU and US markets, Kosovo products are failing to make inroads.



By Lavdim Hamidi

The European Commission announced in February that it planned to extend its tariff-free trade agreement with Kosovo and the rest of the Western Balkans to 2015. But Muhamet Imeri, owner of the Galanteria factory, which produces wooden furniture in Podujevo, says the extension offers little hope to his firm.

He last exported to the EU in 2007 and has since been forced to scale back operations because of financial constraints. "In 2007, I exported wooden furniture to Greece and Holland," he recalls. "But since then I haven't been able to continue exporting because I don't have the funds to complete a new production line in the factory."

In 2000, the EU granted trade preferences to all the Western Balkan countries, allowing them to export

nearly all their products to the EU without paying duties or placing limits on the quantities. Quotas remain only on wine, sugar, calf and certain fish products.

The European Commission last month announced that it intended to extend its tariff-free unlimited access agreement to 2015 with the Western Balkans. Kosovo also has a separate preferential agreement with the US for the export of 4,500 different products. But its exports to America remain minimal too.

Firms in Kosovo complain that they are unable to take advantage of these agreements because they don't have the money to invest in new technology. They also say the government doesn't support them enough. "Bank loans aren't favourable," says Imeri, who also chairs Kosovo's Exporters' Association. "The government has not helped with funds to invest in production technology."

The total value of Kosovo's exports was worth around 160 mil-

lion euro in 2009. But exports destined for the EU in first six months of the year were worth only 26.9 million euros and of this, 18.5 million euro of goods was exported to Italy alone. Compared to 2008, last year's export to the EU were down by 20 per cent.

Berat Rukiqi, general secretary of the Kosova Chamber of Commerce, says Brussels' pledge to extend the preferential trade agreement is politically very important, as it shows Kosovo is not being excluded from this deal despite the divisions in the EU over its independence.

In economic terms, the agreement gives Kosovo the potential to export more goods to EU countries, even if, until now, it has not been in a position to exploit it, he adds. "So far, Kosovo hasn't profited from the pact as much as it could, mainly because of its limited potential to export," Rukiqi admits.

But in the long term, this pact could have a positive impact on foreign investments, he continues, by



Kosovo is failing to make inroads in the export market to the EU or USA

attracting foreign firms to Kosovo, from where they can export goods to EU countries without paying tariffs.

He maintains that the government should support local producers by creating a more favourable environment for investments and pushing forward the process of standardising products to meet EU standards.

Economic expert Muhamet Sadiku says that regardless of the preferential trade agreements with the EU and US, Kosovo is not yet capable of producing high enough quality goods for export.

"About 80 of the 160 million euro of Kosovo's exports comes from

metals and scrap metal – and the EU is not that interested in scrap metal," Sadiku says.

Sadiku blames the government for the many of the problems that local producers and exporters are facing, saying they don't support the development of the private sector enough.

In neighbouring countries, he explains, banks provide more credit for exporters. "Turkey has established a whole range of banks to support exports and we should be doing the same," Sadiku says. For their part, government officials blame the fall in Kosovo's exports on the global financial crisis, which, they say, has hit all countries.

Experts Call for Pollution Probe in North Kosovo



By Lawrence Marzouk

Scientists from the UK's Aberystwyth University have called for further studies of pollution in northern Kosovo, after discovering high levels of lead contamination in the area.

The team of specialists also recommend that the Cesmin Lug and Osterode refugee camps, which have been home to Roma families since 1999, be closed 'as a matter of urgency' because of the 'very poor soil and air quality'.

The experts – Professor Mark Macklin, Dr Graham Bird and Dr Paul Brewer – made the remarks in an interview with Prishtina Insight following the release of a report looking at whether an area earmarked for the resettlement of Roma from the lead-contaminated camps in Mitrovica could be made safe.

The scientists concluded that despite lead-pollution in the resettlement area, which is also in Mitrovica, the land will be habitable once remedial action has been taken.

The camps were set up by UNHCR in 1999 as a temporary measure when the Roma Mahalla, on the southern shore of the Ibar River, was burnt down by ethnic Albanians at the end of the conflict in Kosovo. Despite repeated calls to close the camps and numerous investigations into the toxic, lead-contaminated environment, around 600 Roma still live there.

The results of the soil and water testing of the Roma Mahalla, funded by the British



View over Mitrovica, which suffers from high pollution levels

Embassy and Post Telecommunications Kosovo, were presented in Mitrovica on Thursday.

Testing of soil, dust and water in the Roma Mahalla and Fidanishte – the land previously agreed by the Municipality of Mitrovica for the resettlement of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians from the lead contaminated IDP camps Osterode and Cesmin Lug – was carried out in December.

The results show that although there are elevated levels of lead in the resettlement area, remedial measures can make the area safe for the resettlement, which is to be funded by USAID and the European Commission Liaison Office.

The team added that although pollution levels were high, they were not uncommon in post-industrial areas in Europe, including around Aberystwyth University, which has higher lead concentration levels in the soil.

The report was the first to

look at the origin of the pollution, rather than just its impact, concluding that the Zvecan Smelter, which has not been operational since the 1999 conflict, and the nearby waste dumps, were the most likely source of lead pollution.

The experts said that further research was needed to establish the levels of pollution in and alongside the river Ibar and its potential impact downstream in Serbia.

The higher ground near the Zvecan smelter was also highlighted as an area of particular concern. The report called for the facility not to be reopened.

As a result of the high levels of pollution, the report recommends that gardens in the Roma Mahalla be landscaped with paving slabs, as the land will not be safe to grow vegetables or fruit.

Professor Mark Macklin told Balkan Insight that the issue of food safety should be looked at in detail in the whole area surrounding the smelter. He said:

"We don't want to blight the area by saying 'do not eat anything grown here', but it would be prudent to see what is getting into the food chain."

British Ambassador Andy Sparkes said: "The British Embassy closely follows the issue of displaced persons within Kosovo, including Roma, Ashkalis and Egyptians, and we will continue to support the Government of Kosovo and international community in the work that is necessary to resolve this issue."

The European Commission and Kosovo's government launched a 5 million project in February to close the lead-contaminated Cesmin Lug and Osterode refugee camps 'as soon as possible'.

At the launch of the project, Kjartan Björnsson, Chargé d'Affaires at the European Commission Liaison Office in Kosovo, said: "This project was designed to address the alarming and somewhat appalling conditions under which you have lived for the past decade."

"The European Commission worked very closely with the Government of Kosovo, USAID, and other stakeholders during several months to establish a viable framework for solving this long lasting problem."

The 30-month project will be implemented by Mercy Corps and the Kosovo Agency for Assistance and Development (KAAD).

The Council of Europe's commissioner for human rights, Thomas Hammarberg, earlier this year called for the camps to be closed and forced returns to Kosovo to be stopped.

Prishtina through the Eyes of:

Christian Geosits Austrian Development Agency



What surprised you most about Prishtina?

Most people speak better German than I do.

What's your favourite hang-out?

Hard to say, I'd surely forget one. Those places playing alternative music at a volume permitting conversations, I guess. In a few weeks, if I have time to work on it, hopefully my garden (bbq!).

Do you do anything cultural?

The Jazz Fest was a pleasure, I also hope to make it to some of the currently ongoing Francophonie and classical music events. I missed out on last year's motorcycle meeting and should go to the football pitch more often (if you accept my interpretation of culture, too).

What is the most annoying thing about Prishtina?

Air quality.

If you were mayor of Prishtina for the day what would you change?

Like everywhere, traffic and urban planning issues.

How many macchiatos do you drink a day?

In liters?

What's the tastiest Kosovar food?

Home made Ajvar at a friend's place, and I am continuously mapping good qebap/qofte/kernace/cevape places countrywide.

What landmark do you use to tell taxi drivers where you live?

ADA office, of course.

Illegal Buildings to be Mapped From Air

Prishtina Municipality will soon name a 'Day Zero', after which it will monitor all new illegal buildings from the air



By Shengjyl Osmani

The Municipality of Prishtina is to begin mapping illegal buildings with aerial photos.

The municipality will also designate a 'Day Zero', after which all buildings constructed without a permit will not be included in the 'legalisation process', through which previously unregulated buildings will be made legal.

Thousands of illegal buildings have appeared in Prishtina since the end of the conflict in 1999 and, to date, little action has been taken against their owners.

According to the manual for 'legalising illegal buildings', which has been approved by the urbanisation department of the Municipality of Prishtina, aerial

photos will be used to spot newly constructed buildings with no planning permission.

"It is expected that the whole territory of Prishtina will be recorded and we will aim to identify the number and locations of buildings in Prishtina," Muhamet Gashi, the spokesperson of the Municipality of Prishtina, told the daily Koha Ditore. "After these recordings, no building will be allowed without permission."

He said that the photos will be made using satellite imagery. This is expected to be the shortest phase of the process of legalising buildings without planning permission. "The first phase is expected to end within a short period of time and after this phase, the map of the buildings and objects in Prishtina will be sent to competent bodies in the municipality, and to a special



New buildings have sprung up across Prishtina since 1999

commission, which will be established for legalising the buildings, and the supervisory commission of this process," added Gashi.

Besnik Vllasaliu, from the NGO Advocacy Centre, said that the municipality should not start the legalisation of buildings without first running an awareness campaign.

"The public has no clue what in fact is this process and what it includes, and it would be catastrophic if the municipality starts with such a huge process without having a big campaign of informing the public regarding the call for legalising buildings built illegally," Vllasaliu told Koha Ditore.

Plan Unveiled to Drag Farming into 21st Century

While the government hopes that investing 4.7 million euro in agriculture this year will revitalize this war-damaged sector, some farmers fear only big commercial concerns stand to benefit.



By Petrit Collaku

Kosovo's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development, MAFRD, has launched a fresh round of grants in an attempt to move farming into the 21st century and end the country's expensive dependence on imported foodstuffs.

Some 1.4 million euro are being made available for farmers cultivating grapes and apples with a further 3.3 million for other agricultural produce.

The ministry is asking farmers to diversify grape and apple products to appeal more to the EU market. Grape varieties to be cultivated in future will include worldwide favourites such as Chardonnay, Pinot Noir, Merlot and Muscat Hamburg. Currently the main varieties are Vranac and Cabernet Sauvignon.

"Kosovo has a tradition in wine-making but has to enrich its knowledge and technology. This way Kosovo can conquer a corner of the world wine market," Nijazi Idrizi, political advisor to the Ministry of Agriculture, said.

Fruit farmers are being asked to grow such popular apple varieties as Granny Smith, Fuji and Golden Delicious. The Ministry of Agriculture said it expects that by 2013 some 560 extra hectares will be planted with apple trees on top of the current 600 hectares. "If such a trend continues, in 2018 Kosovo will have enough apples for local consumption and be able to export to many countries," Idrizi said.

In the next five years, the ministry plans to spend 37 million euro on agriculture with 50 per cent allocated for this year.

Kosovo has long been an agrarian economy, and even today 60 per cent of the population live off the land. But the agriculture sector is still dominated by subsistence farming, characterized by low yields and small plots and the conflict saddled this already underperforming area with 1.5 billion euros' worth of damage.

Since the 1999 war many international organisations have provided financial and technical assistance to local farmers but Kosovo remains a net importer of fruit and vegetables. According to figures for 2007, Kosovo is a massive importer of agricultural products, buying in 384.6 million euros'

worth of fruit or vegetables, or 24.4 per cent of total imports.

Nijazi Idrizi said Kosovo's terrain and climate favoured the cultivation of good quality fruit and vegetables. Some agricultural produce was already being exported to Western European markets. "Last year, hundreds of tons were exported, and according to exporters European consumers were surprised by the taste," Idrizi said. The strategy of the ministry was to encourage farmers to improve productivity and diversify. "This way they can be more competitive," Nijazi added.

However, the Agricultural Federation of Trade Unions of Kosova has voiced misgivings. The union's head, Tahir Tahiri, said the strategy would appeal to only better-off farmers and make many more unhappy. "The criteria are tough for the grants and there will be more disappointment than satisfaction," Tahiri predicted.

He added that one of the problematic criteria is that an applicant for a grant must have documents proving title to the land. "I can tell you that some 60 to 70 per cent of the farmers do not possess those documents," he said.

Tahiri said he had sent a letter to the Prime Minister, Hashim



Thaci, calling for dialogue on the future of agriculture in Kosovo. If the request is not met, the union plans to stage a peaceful protest on April 10.

The union wants the government to allocate 10 per cent of Kosovo's budget to agriculture, offer a annual subsidy of 200 euro to each farmer who plants a hectare with certain types of produce and set up an "agro-bank" that would offer farmers loans on favourable terms of interest.

Tahiri said it was high time the government started thinking about farmers, because many now faced a difficult economic situation. "We are not using the

recent social unrest [to further our demands]," he said, referring to the wave of strikes staged earlier this year. "It's time to change the conditions... of poor farmers."

Idrizi, from the ministry, has defended the set criteria for the receipt of grants, saying they will help ensure that farmers who truly sought to expand their business are selected. Subsistence farmers may also apply for aid but the aim of the programme is to encourage viable commercial farmers to improve efficiency.

Farming Facts:

The total surface of Kosovo is 10,877 km square of which 53 per cent, 585,000 hectares, is agricultural land, 41 per cent (455,000 ha) is forest and 6 per cent other.

Around 51 per cent of farmland is used for grains and cereals (corn, wheat, barley), 45 per cent for pasture and meadows, 3 per cent for vines, while olive groves and other produce represent the last 1 per cent.

Kosovo's arable land is considered good quality and the temperate climate

makes agriculture potentially a strong economic sector that should be able to adequately feed the population and enable the export of some foodstuffs.

Most farmland is privately owned (88 per cent) while the rest is the property of socially owned companies. The average agricultural area per household is 3.2 ha.

Farms with an area of 0.5 to 2.0 ha dominate the agricultural sector, while only 8 per cent of arable land is divided in units amounting to

more than 10 ha. Agriculture contributes 30 per cent to the GDP of Kosovo and supports 60 per cent of the population.





Prishtina Insight's Guide to Live Music

From cool jazz to heavy metal, Prishtina offers a polyphony of sounds, but it's not always easy to find out who's playing where and to keep up with the ever changing line-up of venues. Here, Prishtina Insight provides you with its top ten places to catch some live music.

AVENUE BAR

Avenue is a bar with a trendy and pleasant ambiance, offering finger food, pasta and cocktails, among other things. It also offers a variety of music to clients - Jazz on Tuesdays, Albanian traditional songs on Thursdays and instrumental piano and violin sounds on Sundays.

Behind Café e Vogel.
Tel: +377 44 45 50 10
Open 08:00-24:00

UNDERGRAND

A new bar located at the former UN headquarters, Undergrand is not a typo but an accurate description of its location. With a stylishly decorated interior, in stark contrast to the muddy exterior, it is one of the best new editions to Prishtina's nightlife in recent months. Rock music on Mondays with Edona Reshitaj and Band is, without doubt, one of the best chances to enjoy live music in Prishtina. The band plays a brilliant repertoire of songs, ranging from rock versions of the Spiderman theme tune to Albanian classics. On Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays there are DJs and live performances.

Off Luan Haradinaj Street, under the Grand Hotel and opposite the New Born statue
049 124 012 or 049 860 920

MAROON PUB

A reddish two-storey building in downtown, Maroon Pub has established itself as one of the best places to catch a band since opening last summer. Live bands perform several nights of the week, starting with Latin rhythms on Mondays and Tuesdays, rock and alternative from Wednesdays to Saturdays and traditional Albanian songs on Sunday. However, as often with Prishtina, schedules are not set in stone.

Fehmi Agani Street (in front of Amelie).
Find them on
Facebook - Maroon Pub

SOKOLI e MIRUSHA

With decent food and a wide variety of music, Sokoli makes an attractive and vibrant hangout for artists, politicians, and the youth of Prishtina. Named after a 70s ballet, you would expect Sokoli e Mirusha to take its music seriously, and you won't be disappointed. Nightly live music varies from Balkan sounds on Mondays to jazz music most of the week. At the weekends, the downstairs bar offers great dancing and a mix of live bands and DJs.

Café e Vogel, right side.
Open: 09am to Midnight; Fri & Sat 9am to 1am
Tel: +377 44 78 88 88

ODYSSEA BISTRO BAR

Already a prime cocktail bar and top-notch restaurant, Odyssea added live music to its list of qualities last year. Jazz or latino music or served up alongside fine food on Friday and Saturday nights. This coming week there will be Two Face band on Saturday from 9.30 p.m and Luan Tashi Band on Sunday 9.30 p.m. If you're looking for a wild night of music, look elsewhere. Odyssea, however, is a great place to enjoy a drink or food while listening to some chilled out music.

Sejdi Kryeziu Street, Pejton
+377 44 55 64 44
Open 9am to Midnight.
<http://www.odyssea-group.com/>

JAZZ CLUB 212

Jazz Club 212 doesn't always stage Jazz, but the venue, one of Prishtina's largest clubs, usually offers a raucous evening. Denik Prizreni performs on Wednesdays, Latina band on Fridays and Zanzi Band on Saturdays. This coming week, Thursday will be a Karaoke night.

Rr:Mbreti Leka Zogu I, Pejton
+377 44 16 72 86
www.212pr.com

CANTO CAFÉ

This bar in Ferizaj offers a homely atmosphere and great music. Canto Café is run by the Nikolla family, who also happen to include among their numbers some very talented musicians. If you can catch them live, you will not be disappointed. This Saturday night, Canto will have alternative rock with 7 me 7 Band and Day Shift.

Wesley Clark Street, off Ferizaj's main road

HARD ROCKERS

Hard Rockers Club is a bar/nightclub, located near the main KEK building.

Music genres include Blues, Alternative, Rock'n'Roll, Hard Rock, Punk Rock, Metal, Death Metal, Melodic Metal, Progressive Rock, Acoustic and a lot more. Hard Rockers is dedicated to promoting new artists and bands in the rock scene.

Live music is usually held at the weekends, although you might be lucky and catch something during the week.

For more information, look up Hard Rockers Club group on Facebook.

On Bill Clinton Street, next to the KEK building

GEGE

049274337

Gege is the latest live music venue to have appeared on the Prishtina scene in the building formerly occupied by Posh Nosh.

It hosts evening events varying from live rock bands to classical Albanian music and states it musical intentions with a piano next to the bar.

There's no particular programme as the owner told Prishtina Insight that they usually spontaneously organise live music evenings. Expect events on most nights of the week.

044169378 Gege
Off Mother Teresa Boulevard next to the NLB bank near the Grand Hotel (The former Posh Nosh)

ZANZI BAR

Zanzi Bar may have hit the headline for all the wrong reasons when the Democratic Party of Kosovo's made an abortive attempt to break the government coalition from the venue, but it is also a stalwart of the Prishtina music scene.

It has been serving up jazz and other musical styles since the end of the conflict and regularly holds music nights in its basement location.

Hajdar Dushi St, Off Mother Teresa Boulevard

Culture



Reviving Glory of National Theatre

With plans to tour Kosovo, hold a summer festival in Prishtina and encourage young actors onto the stage, director Buqe Berisha hopes to put the National Theatre's controversies behind it.



By Shengjyl Osmani

The position of director of Kosovo's National Theatre has proved a difficult one to fill. After the last director resigned, complaining of political pressure, Buqe Berisha could be excused for feeling a weight on her shoulders. But Berisha told Prishtina Insight that she was brushing aside past controversies and outlined bold plans to revive Kosovo's theatrical life.

"I've heard from the news [about the controversy], and that there has been political pressure, but I haven't seen anything like that to date," she said.

When Arian Krasniqi was appointed director in September 2008, it was hoped his arrival would end instability in this 65-year-old institution. The theatre had failed to appoint a new head after two selection processes, leaving it directionless. But Krasniqi lasted less than a year.

In August 2009 he resigned, complaining of "growing bureaucratic

"Our society doesn't lack a culture of attending plays but after being excluded for ten years from cultural events, society needs more public information regarding activities."

pressure" from the Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sport. "It is the start of political interference in the managerial work of the Kosovo National Theatre," he claimed.

Berisha takes a very different view of the culture ministry officials. "In fact, they are very kind and have a great desire to help me in my work... I'm very thankful for their support," she said.

Money remains a big headache, however. In 2005, parliament rati-

fied a law on the National Theatre, confirming its right to receive government funds. But cash remains extremely tight, as the theatre receives less than 1 per cent of the national 1 billion euro budget.

Berisha said the theatre barely gets by on the current level of state funding. The small sum showed "how much the upper levels of our society pay attention to our culture," she maintained. "It's painful that we have such a small support from our government," she added.

But she continued: "We cannot blame the Ministry of Culture for not supporting us, as... they have no say in setting the portion of the budget set aside for culture."

The National Theatre of Kosovo was founded in 1945 in Prizren, the city in Kosovo most associated with cultural life. After six months it relocated to Prishtina. Over the following years actors performed in both Albanian and Serbian until politics got in the way under Slobodan Milosevic.

After Milosevic scrapped Kosovo's autonomy in the late 1980s and tensions mounted in the then province, plays in Albanian were transferred to the privately run Dodona Theatre. It was not until the end of the conflict in 1999 that the Albanian language was again heard on the stage of the National Theatre.

Berisha said there was work to do to revive the old days when the theatre played a more important part in people's lives: "Our society doesn't lack a culture of attending plays but after being excluded for ten years from cultural events, society needs more public information regarding activities."

One way of reviving interest in the theatre, now in the planning stage, is to hold outdoor plays in summer in Prishtina's Germia Park. In cooperation with the city of Prishtina and the department for culture, the theatre is planning a summer theatre festival that Berisha hopes will be particularly popular among members of the large diaspora who return in droves to the country each summer.

Negotiations about the festival with the municipality are underway and Berisha expects to make details of the festival public soon.

The new head is also interested in re-establishing theatre productions outside Prishtina. She is planning to take the National Theatre on the road around Kosovo.

Despite its financial limitations, the theatre tries to support theatre productions out of town, recently loaning costumes for a play in Ferizaj, for example.

But Berisha maintains that theatre can only thrive outside Prishtina if young actors return to their hometowns to perform. "Young people who have a proper education in acting and a talent for drama should return to their home cities to revive the local theatres, which lack the challenging spirit of young people," she said.

Young people should also feel free "to knock on the National Theatre's door" if they want to try out internships in acting, directing, stage designing or costume designing.

"I strongly encourage students from the Faculty of Arts to apply for voluntary internships at the National Theatre where they can gain new professional skills, and in future might get a job within the Theatre," said Berisha who is also a lecturer at the arts faculty.

"Unfortunately, till now, no one has applied for these positions," she added, "so I call on all the students to try out such great opportunities, which can help them and also help us a lot."

The internship programme at the National Theatre lasts six months after which all participants are awarded with certificates by the theatre and the Ministry of Culture.

Berisha believes that better promotion of plays has increased audiences markedly since she assumed the reins last autumn. "I'm very satisfied with our audiences," she said. "And I believe the number of young people visiting our doors will only grow in the months ahead with our rich monthly programmes."



Turbulent history

The National Theatre has its origins in Prizren, Kosovo's "city of culture", where a theatre was established in 1945. But after only six months it moved to Prishtina. Performances were staged in Albanian and Serbian. According to Buqe Berisha the theatre, through the ages, was a place where the disappointment and rebellious feelings of the people were represented.

The 1970s was the heyday of Albanian-language theatre, represented by Esat Mekuli, Azem Shkreli and Ramiz

Kelmendi. But by the end of the 1980s politics was having a major impact. The scrapping of Kosovo's autonomy also meant the withdrawal of the theatre's autonomy and the Albanian theatre troop was left without a place to perform. They transferred their plays to the privately owned Dodona Theatre.

Professor Faruk Begolli led the activities there, which continued despite the growing political turmoil. After the conflict of 1999, the National Theatre was re-established in its former home.



Upcoming Plays

The next regional project with Skopje and Tirana will be Ibsen's Peer Gynt, a high-spirited poetic fantasy, based on Norwegian folklore. "It is a story of an irresponsible, lovable hero, which will be shown to audiences from Prishtina, Skopje and Tirana and performed by actors from all three national theatres," Berisha said. Another upcoming project is a production of a Swiss drama, The Physicists.

The Ministry of Culture has also promised to support the National Theatre in organising a play using young actors and dramatists from the Faculty of Arts.



+



To Thai For



By Maneater

Le Siam is a superb edition to Prishtina's international dining scene

I had the pleasure of dining at the restaurant, Prishtina's newest Thai spot, with a first-timer to South East Asian fare. While I spent the greater part of my day counting down the minutes to dinner time, I knew my dining partner was instead leaning towards a state of apprehensiveness spurred by a fairly inexperienced palate for international food. Nonetheless, I was right to expect their full-out infatuation with everything Thai by the end of our meal.

Le Siam is located on the second level of the Qafa Center on UCK Street, well known for its very grungy and dark interior. It's a shame Le Siam isn't located some-

where else in the city, as its interior is completely in contrast to the rest of the businesses located in the same building.

The space isn't large at all but gives off an air of warmth and Asian sophistication. Two rows of a dozen or so dark wooden tables are smartly dressed in colourful cutlery and accompanied by white upholstered chairs, each adorned with a bright silk pillow. One of the walls hosts built-in seating, with chocolate-coloured cushions and traditional triangular shaped Thai pillows.

The walls are embellished with metallic artwork with Thai-style symbols. Meanwhile, the ceiling is covered in sheets of mirror, which, unexpectedly, are not cheesy and instead help to 'enlarge' the dining area.

Although the interior is fairly modern and refined, the overall look feels refreshingly traditional. The staff also add

to the Thai experience, as waitresses are Thai natives, and fitted out in traditional dress.

The waitresses also provide a lot of assistance when ordering, especially for those that are new to the cuisine. Thai food is well-known for its particular etiquette, such as its disregard of the knife, which is conveniently printed in the menu.

However, Thai food is also known for its intricate use of flavour to create a balanced meal. Every dish incorporates sweet, sour, salty, spicy and bitter elements, creating a fusion of flavour able to captivate all of the senses at once.

The menu includes a range of appetizers, soups, salads, curries, noodles and specialties listed under their Thai name, with a vivid description for each. The main dishes can be ordered with either chicken, beef or seafood, the latter being a bit pricier.

A list of side dishes is also available and recommended in order to provide balance for every dish. This list includes steamed, garlic or egg-fried rice, and regular or egg-fried noodles.

We went for the platter for our appetizer, which is a selection of starters from the menu. Four out of the five appetizers were beautifully shaped pastries with distinct fillings - vegetable spring roll, nut medley, and curry paste - which are explosive, but delicious in flavour, and served with chilli sauce and cucum-

ber-vinegar condiments. The last appetizer, fish cake, wasn't very appetizing, as it was dreadfully unseasoned.

My inexperienced dining partner decided on Pad See Ew with chicken for their main, which included soft rice noodles coated in salty soy sauce, the crunch of sweet spinach, carrot and cabbage, and shreds of well-seasoned chicken. The ingredients blended together beautifully to create a distinct, yet not overwhelming Thai dish.

I craved something with a little more impact, and decided to order Pra Ram Long Song, a mixture of vegetables and sweet peanut sauce with beef. Slices of green and red pepper, cabbage, carrot and zucchini arrived with very thinly sliced beef and luscious sauce. I ordered a side of sticky steamed rice to balance the flavour, which arrived in a beautiful silver bowl.

My dining partner and I were fully immersed into our Thai evening, full of flavour and beautiful combinations of ingredients differing in colour, texture and taste.

And the menu's breadth allows for a new experience each time, although prices are slightly elevated, in line with other high-end restaurants.

Four stars

First floor of Qafa Building,
UCK Street, 045 243 588, open
Monday to Thursday from
11:00-14:00 and 17:45 to 22:30,
and Friday to Sunday from
11:00 to 23:00

We recommend

If you are tired of Burek, Tave and Pleskavice, here are three recommendations for some good international fare in Prishtina



Himalaya Gorkha

The restaurant is run by a Nepalese family, who serve up tasty meals native to South Asia. Located in what is known as the 'Qafa Gallery', Himalaya Gorkha's only competition is a handful of machiatto bars stuffed with middle-aged men and cigarette smoke, until Le Siam arrived.

The surroundings are a tad uninviting, especially at night when the place is deserted, but luckily not the restaurant, which serves up some of Prishtina's best curries.

Himalaya Gorkha

044 402 265

Qafa Gallery - 17 UCK Boulevard



Chinese Restaurant

This restaurant along Police Avenue will not win any culinary prizes but the food isn't bad, and if you are looking for Chinese in Prishtina, this is the place to come.

Luan Haradinaj Boulevard
[across from the police station]



Cavallero

At Cavallero Mexican Cantina, mouth-watering appetizers and savoruy main dishes are nicely washed down with countless cocktail options and even imported Mexican beer. Gather you're friends and bring on the fiesta.

Next to the ex-UNMIK building, on the alley which connects Luan Haradinaj and Mother Teresa streets.

Tel: 044 508 980



Thai Rex



To Thai For



A Tie



Tongue Tied



Thai-m Out



Low Tide



By Shega A'Mula
in Prishtina

Inside Prishtina

Building Review: Prishtina's Private Sculpture Park

Out of the many attention-grabbing restaurants and businesses located on the highly frequented Qamil Hoxha Street, one residential home with a front lawn full of finished and unfinished sculptures has been receiving unintentional interest for more than a decade. Many people new to Prishtina wonder what the story behind these sculptures is, despite its very logical explanation.

The house is owned by renowned sculptor Fatmir Hoxha, who is also a professor at the University of Prishtina Arts Faculty. The 55-years old artist has been crafting statues for decades, and simply ran out of room for his work. His large front yard has proved accommodating, and has accumulated many works over the years.

His 23-year-old son, Daors Hoxha, who is also a sculptor and art student at the University of Prishtina, invited Prishtina Insight into the family home for an interview. Noticeably, the first level alone is covered in different sizes of portrait-style and full-length sculptures, and numerous paintings also completed by Fatmir.

A large part of Fatmir's work is focused on national Albanian heroes and figures. These include writer Faik Konica, Doctor Ali Sokoli, and fallen fighters of various wars and conflicts.

The two-and-a-half metre tall sculptures located in the front garden, and hard to miss for passers-by, are identical sculptures of Anton Cetta, a very influential academic, who was born in Gjakova in 1920 and died in Prishtina in 1995.

He is best known for his many publications on Kosovar Folklore, and his efforts to reconcile families who were part of blood-feuds in the country. He was responsible for ultimately eliminating all existing feuds in the 1990s.

The first Anton Cetta Sculpture, which is finished and bronzed, was placed a few metres away from the entrance of the yard a couple of years before the 1998-99 conflict, said Doars. After years of on and off interest, the sculpture was finally purchased recently by a buyer in Gjakova and will be moved soon.

The second sculpture, however, remains unfinished and still in its cast. It will remain in the garden until it is completed and bronzed,



Fatmir Hoxha's garden of statues has proved a real draw to tourists

because any attempts to move it will damage it.

Several other sculptures are also located near the entrance of the home. Although significantly smaller, the sculptures are either nude, or portrait-style. Also, a sculpture made with ammunition sits on the other side of the garden and depicts a cracked globe damaged by war.

According to Doars, the municipality has never objected to the display of the sculptures. But he admits that their presence has led to a lot of interest in his father's art, usually after people realise that it is a private home.

He added that many visitors just stride into the garden and take pictures with the sculptures without asking permission.

But again, the Hoxha family seem to be happy with that. Fatmir is regularly commissioned for private work by people, businesses and institutions. Doars is also planning to hold his first personal exposition this year.

Fatmir Hoxha can be contacted at 044 153 710.

Bar Review: Paddy O'Brien's Irish Bar

The staff at Paddy O'Brien's have a saying: "It's easy to walk in, but very hard to leave."

As I looked down at my fourth round of Jameson, and the clock hands pointed to a time well after midnight, I realised that they were right. But I was not alone - the bar was full of casually-clad people, singing along to requested songs, and keeping the bartender busy.

There have been many attempts to establish a proper Irish pub in Prishtina, all of which have either really been a let down or been forced to convert to a Kosovar setting.

Paddy O'Brien's, on the other hand, shows good prospects for longevity, with an incredibly authentic flair hard to outstrip.

'Paddy' and 'O'Brien' aren't just random names chosen to imply an Irish setting, but are instead the names of the two owners that have gone out of their way to create a bar akin to countless scattered

across their homeland.

They've gone as far as to import Irish staff, as I realised when 22-year-old Thomas greeted me from behind the bar. Longing to travel, Thomas accepted a job offer from one of the owners, and made Kosovo his first destination outside of Ireland.

Although he admits his transition has been bumpy, Paddy O'Brien's patrons do a good job of making him feel just at home.

The vast majority of visitors are Irish personnel stationed in Kosovo, who Thomas says have fallen head over heels for the place. Next in line are the English, Americans, and Germans, who also often frequent the venue.

The bar is located in a downtown home which has been totally transformed, and decked out in custom made furniture corresponding to Irish pub standards around the world - the height of the bar, bar

stools, tables and chairs.

A uniform shade of cherry-like wood is used everywhere from the floor to the ceiling beams, and accurately matched with two patterns of emerald green wallpaper, and dozens of framed pictures of the homeland.

As far as liquor is concerned, every possible poison is available, along with local and international draft beer, and freshly shaken cocktails.

Classic coffees along with Irish blends such as O'Brien's traditional Irish coffee and Bailey's Irish coffee are also offered, and served with a touch of alcohol, and whipped cream.

Food is also offered up at Paddy O'Brien's, with a mouth-watering menu of Irish specialties. Many of the food products are imported in order to create an authentic meal.

Options include shepherd's pie, bangers and mash, fish 'n chips, and an all-day breakfast comprising of eggs, sausages, Irish bacon, black and white pudding, tomatoes, beans, and toast. Leave you're carb-counting at home.

The only thing missing now is the Guinness on tap, which will be arriving soon.

The bar opens bright and early at 7 am, served food until 11 pm, and usually closes fairly late.

Location: Tringe Smajli Street, just off Mother Teresa by the Illyria Hotel.

Shop Review: Star Tech Electronic Solutions

Keeping up with changes in technology can be difficult, especially without a go-to place for suggestions.

Star Tech shop in Prishtina can help with a wide-variety of technology accessories and products to make your gadget-filled life a bit easier.

The store may be small, but the number of products seems endless.

Computer accessories are the most common and include speakers, keyboards, headsets, microphones, cameras, printer toner, laptop bags and loads of memory options for hard disks to dozens of USBs. Different CD and DVD variations are also available.

Telephone products are also exciting, from cell phones to personalised accessories - especially for the iPhone.

In fact, there's a large selection of Apple accessories, including the iPod, which have been harder to come by since the closing of the Apple store in town.

Philips electronics are also available, such as hair straighteners, curlers and blow dryers, hair removal devices, and energy efficient light bulbs.

Star Tech's other international brands include Kodak and Fuji, with a range of economically

priced digital cameras, starting from 180 euro.

Finally, a selection of generic office supplies are available, from paper, pens, notebooks, and more - also reasonably priced.

Star Tech's location is probably the best feature of all. It is located right across Grand Hotel, making it a very accessible spot for many electronic solutions.

Mother Teresa #43, 044 112 676



Star Tech is a treasure trove of goods



Drinkers enjoying a pint at Prishtina's first authentic Irish pub

Berisha Backs Down Over Secret Service Changes

Albanian government forced to reconsider bill that would increase Prime Minister's control over the secret service after coming under fire from NATO partners and the opposition.



By Besar Likmeta

Following a strong public outcry, Albania's centre-right government has put planned amendments to the law on the secret service on ice, pulling the bill from the parliamentary schedule.

Sali Berisha's Democratic Party-led administration was forced to back down after Tirana's NATO partners blasted proposed amendments to the law on the State Security Service, SHISH, passed recently by the national security commission in parliament.

The amendments would effectively allow the Prime Minister to dismiss of the current state security director, Bahri Shaqiri, and give the service new powers to spy on public officials.

The bill would give SHISH new powers to force private citizens and government institutions to cooperate with it, while requiring the Prime Minister's permission to allow joint operations with partner agencies.

Although the government said the amendments met NATO standards, those who sponsored Albania's accession into the alliance clearly thought otherwise, arguing that the country would be edging in the wrong direction if it passed the legislation.

On March 12, while the bill was still being discussed in the commission, the US ambassador in Tirana, John L Withers, more or less savaged the proposed changes.

"It is vitally important for Albania to keep the secret service professional, independent and free of all political influence and we are worried that this bill undermines such principles," Withers said. "In addition, this draft assigns troubling new domestic responsibilities to the intelligence service," he added.

Two former Albanian presidents, Rexhep Mejdani and Alfred Moisiu, also spoke out against the bill, organizing a roundtable with Western ambassadors in Tirana to discuss the proposed changes.

"Not every change is a reform that brings positive results," Moisiu said at the roundtable, while calling on the political class to reflect and take a mature decision on the issue.

His predecessor, Rexhep Mejdani, was more direct in his objection to the draft law, accusing the Prime Minister of "trying to bring SHISH under his control".

Objections to the bill have also come from the EU delegation in Tirana and the OSCE



Sali Berisha, Prime Minister of Albania

mission.

Dardan Malaj, politics editor for the daily Shqip, says Berisha's move was not unexpected; he did not expect it to provoke such a backlash.

"All Albanian Prime Ministers have tried to bring the secret service under their control in order to use them when they needed them the most," said Malaj, adding that: "Because of the ongoing political crisis, the government may have hoped there would be little resistance."

Were parliament to pass the bill, Berisha could nominate a new head of the service within the next two months, at a time when the government is locked in political stalemate with the opposition over the results of June 28 parliamentary elections.

The Socialist opposition has boycotted parliament for the past six months and has led a series of protests questioning the legitimacy of Prime Minister Berisha's government.

"This is a time when stability in the Albanian intelligence service is particularly important and this draft law raises questions exactly in that area," Withers underlined.

According to the terms of the proposed bill, Shaqiri could apply for a second, final term as SHISH director. But the director's relations with the right-wing government have always been strained and it seems unlikely that Berisha would nominate him again.

Since the end of the Stalinist regime of Enver Hoxha in 1991, the security services in Albania have undergone major transformations. SHISH is now considered generally to be under civilian control and professional. It leads important counterterrorism operations in partnership with ally agencies like the CIA.

into the agency that once spied on and persecuted his political rivals, civil society activists and the media," said a Rama, adding that Albania could not afford to disregard the opinions of NATO allies.

According to Artan Hoxha, author of the investigative TV show "Xhungel", the fact that the international community raised the issue of the bill, in the absence of a local debate, shows how sensitive the agency has become in the context of Albania's NATO accession.

"The issue was not raised by those you would normally expect; the opposition, civil society or the media, but by the US embassy and the EU," he noted.

Although Albania has made strides over the last decade, becoming a full member of NATO last year while also applying for EU candidate status, ambassador Withers warned that the draft bill would put into question such achievements.

"Albania is a new NATO member and has aspirations for full Euro-Atlantic integration and we feel that this law is taking Albania in the wrong direction," he said.

"The matter that needs to be kept in mind is that this is not simply an internal political debate. Under NATO, and under bilateral arrangements, this is a matter with international implications," Withers clarified.

With the bill now kicked into the long grass, its future is uncertain. Foreign Minister Ilir Meta, after a trip in Washington last weekend, indicated that the proposal might be redrafted with EU and NATO assistance.

If so, that will be seen as confirmation that governments in Tirana no longer have the leeway to toy with the security service as was often done in the past.

News in Brief

Albania Police Seize One Tonne of Marijuana

Police seized nearly one tonne of marijuana on Sunday in Southern Albania as it was about to be smuggled into Italy on a speedboat.

The bust represents one of the largest quantities of the narcotic ever seized in the country. The drugs were confiscated in a van near the bay of Kakome, which was abandoned by the trafficker at first sight of police.

According to police, the drugs were set to be smuggled into Italy on a speedboat coming from the Italian coast.

According to the US State Department International Strategy for Narcotics Control report, Albania is an important cannabis producer for markets in Europe.

Bosnia: Silajdzic Slams Talk of "Peaceful Divorce"

The Bosniak member of Bosnia's tripartite presidency, Haris Silajdzic, has rejected the talk of a "peaceful divorce", raised by Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik.

Dodik's statement was strongly rebuffed by the Bosniak member of the country's tripartite presidency, Haris Silajdzic, who spoke after a meeting with a NATO delegation headed by the alliance's Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen on Tuesday.

"It is just rhetoric, if (partition) could not have been achieved with tanks it certainly cannot be achieved with microphones," Silajdzic said. "If someone does not like Bosnia-Herzegovina they are free to leave, but they cannot take any part (of the country) with them," he added.

Silajdzic was responding to Dodik's remarks that Bosnia was surviving only because of international intervention. "There are many examples proving that Bosnia-Herzegovina is unsustainable and that the time has come to adopt a different approach," Dodik told journalists in Banja Luka on Monday.

Group Pushes Recognition of Yugoslav Nationality

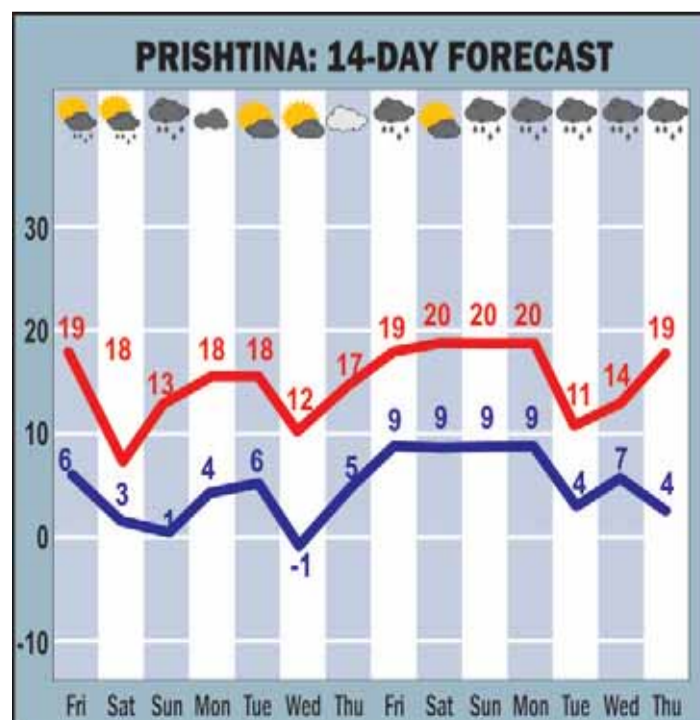
A Yugoslav alliance has been formed in Zagreb with the aim of having the Yugoslav nationality recognised once again as a nationality in all of the Yugoslav successor states.

The Association Nasa Jugoslavija [Our Yugoslavia Alliance] established the Savez Jugoslovena on March 21, 2010.

In a press statement it said that people of Yugoslav nationality have the right to protect their identity and cultural, artistic, linguistic and literary inheritance.

The group wants to open public discussion on the rights of Yugoslav nationals and their "active role in democratisation".

The statement added that "Yugoslavs still exist and they are proud of their position as the only alternative to nationalism."



Kosovo's Internal Reforms Need Outside Support



By Seb Bytyçi

Kosovo celebrated its second independence anniversary on February 17. However, many felt that there was not much to celebrate. Despite its progress, Kosovo is facing very difficult challenges. It's isolated, poor and it is facing a very hostile Serbia.

After many pledges of support and a donors' conference, it is hard for Kosovars not to feel a sense of abandonment from their allies.

First, there were the unnecessary concessions given to Serbia in order to get it to agree to deploy the EU Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) in Serb-majority northern Kosovo.

Then, there was the lack of progress in including Kosovo in the visa liberalisation process. This was coupled with the inclusion of Serbia in the white Schengen list and a general lack of will on the part of EU to deal with Serbia's aggressive foreign policy regarding Kosovo.

And now, to top it all off, it is becoming more obvious that the EU is not sufficiently committed to its own mission on the ground to see it succeed.

Kosovo's government has hired an international PR company to rebrand the country. The motto of the campaign is "Kosovo: Young Europeans."

It tries to utilise the fact that Kosovo has the youngest population in Europe and to present a youthful and progressive image of Kosovo. Unfortunately, the youngest Europeans are also the most isolated. The EU has not yet even started the process of visa liberalisation with Kosovo. The average costs for a Schengen visa application in Kosovo is 124 Euros. While, the average monthly salary in Kosovo is 240 Euros.

Kosovo, has the highest rejection rate for visa applications in the region. About half of the Schengen visa applications from Kosovo are refused.

Kosovo's businesses are also feeling the pinch of isolation. Kosovo became a member of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) through UNMIK (the UN Mission responsible for foreign policy among other things until 2008), but since its declaration of independence Kosovo companies have been unable to sell goods to Serbia or use it as a transit route.

Bosnia also decided not to respect CEFTA provisions when it came to Kosovo's products.

This policy of Serbia and Bosnia is disrupting regional trade and is very damaging to Kosovo's already weak economy.

Although Kosovo is one of the two coun-

tries (the other one being Albania), which has not seen negative growth during the economic crisis, its economy suffers from a wide trade imbalance. If Kosovo cannot sell its products in the region it cannot hope to create much needed new jobs.

The European foreign policy chief, Baroness Ashton, and the French Foreign Minister, Mr Kouchner, just completed their tours of the Western Balkans. The EU Economic and Monetary Affairs Commissioner, Mr Rehn, is in the region in the third week of March.

The message they need to take home is that the current situation is untenable.

Kosovo needs its European and American allies now more than ever to help it break this isolation.

The continuing tolerance of the lack of recognitions by five EU members and the aggressive Serbian policy towards Kosovo has to stop.

Kosovo's citizens must enjoy visa free travel like their neighbours do, so they can see the benefits of a united Europe. Its companies should be able to benefit from free trade agreements and create jobs.

Otherwise, the reformers in Kosovo and civil society will struggle to find meaning to the reforms we are pushing for.

Seb Bytyçi is Executive Director of Balkan Policy Institute (IPOL)

Dear Teta Mia...



Teta Mia solves your problems

Where is Isa Mustafa?
Prishtinalia, Bregu i Diellit

Oh Prishtinali! If only I knew! You seek him here, you seek him there, but Prishtina's mayor is nowhere to be found.

Mr Mustafa was the main winner of the 15 November mayoral race in Kosovo. He swept to victory on a wave of anti-Astriti sentiment among the "qytetarë" of the capital with a whopping 57.2% in the first round – a blazing mandate for reforming Prishtina's infrastructure and public spaces.

With 16,547,354 euro for local infrastructure in the municipality's 2010 budget (drawn up, incidentally, in September 2009), there are certainly a few cents available.

So while the infant mayor of Gjilan has had only days to ponder key appointments to municipal directorates, Isa has had four months.

But as the LDK hangover wore off from their only significant victory in these interminable elections, and we woke, rubbing our bleary eyes, where was our new mayor?

I thought perhaps Isa was eschewing the local limelight in favour of the subterranean world of Prishtina's water pipes. Those of us lucky enough to escape the fumes of Obiliq by living on Sunny Hill will contest that no, there is no way Isa is diverting his extensive energies to fixing the chronic water problems in the neighbourhood. Far from it – for two weeks recently, we were treated to a meagre hour of water for our daily ablutions.

So we should seek him in tortuous negotiations with our beloved KEK, explaining how collective power cuts to punish the few who don't pay must be against some international human rights charter or other. And that two years after the sparks of independence fireworks have faded, any power outages in the capital of a new state struggling to attract foreign investment must be unacceptable – and not unavoidable.

Alas – the power this spring has been worse than ever – but hey, who needs a warm shower when there isn't any water?

Maybe the reason we can't see our Kryetar on TV is because he's pitching in himself with a little bit of road maintenance. After all, the largest pothole in town is his namesake, so it's possible that he's attempting to fill it in...

No. And the crack in my windscreen gets longer with every bump in the road.

So where on earth could Prof. Dr Isa Mustafa be?

You know the answer, Prishtinali. He's rubbing his hands gleefully as he thinks he's just figured out a cheap, clean method for heating the city's apartment blocks next winter, as Springfield Nuclear Power Plant opens a subsidiary in the Balkans. Excellent.

Creative Politics: Buy a Hole in the Road!



By Martin Waehlich

Unofficially, Prishtina might be Europe's capital of potholes. Nearly every second street has damages ranging from the size of a football to the dimension of a volcano crater. As every year at the start of spring, potholes open up like crocuses on the fields after the snow, ice and rain of winter. Moving through the city becomes

no longer driving, but maneuvering.

A creative policy idea could come from Germany: Buy a hole in the road!

Niederzimmern, a German town in the eastern state of Thuringia, started to sell its potholes to finance their repair. The budget of the municipality is tight, so the mayor started an internet campaign putting holes in the road on sale for 50 euros each (www.niederzimmern.de). About 138 potholes have already been snapped up by companies and private individuals. The

hole, once mended, will have a badge of the buyer with a slogan or name of choice.

The sponsorship scheme is not completely new: In Berlin one can adopt exhibit pieces in the Museum of Natural History, and all around the world people become patrons of park benches. The idea promotes community unity: citizens can feel like they own a part of the city and so become more attached to public property.

Whether the idea could work in Kosovo is doubtful, as most people struggle with their own

financial incomes. As critics argue, roads are in a poor state of repair not because of a lack of investment in infrastructure, but due to the misuse of funds which results in thinner asphalt roads or poorer quality than was paid for.

Aside from the practical challenges such an auction would create, it exemplifies a rare outside-the-box approach in politics which could be useful in dealing with some of Kosovo's problems.

And finally, one question remains: What is your favorite hole in the road?



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Don Bosco: A History of Education

The education system in Kosovo suffers from poor infrastructure, ranging from the buildings themselves to classroom equipment, and pupils often face short school days due to the

shift system in place to deal with oversubscription.

The picture is altogether different at the well equipped social educative centre Don Bosco in Prishtina, which offers students state-of-art laboratories and excellent vocational tuition.

The Don Bosco Centre in Prishtina, named after Saint Don Bosco, a 19th Century Italian Priest who set up schools for the poor, is part of an international network of 2,000 not-for-profit schools under the umbrella of the Salesians of Don Bosco.

Education at the Kosovo facility started in 2003 and the scope of the project was expanded in 2008.

The centre, in Rr. Tahir Zajmi, includes vocational training; a Lycee, or Middle School of Electrotechnics; a youth centre; library; and space for social and cultural activities.

The Lycee, the first of its kind in Kosovo, has 280 students and expects to register another 130 students this year.

The student fee is 960 euro per academic year but scholarships are offered to 20 per cent of students who come from poorer backgrounds.

The 'Good Morning' programme gathers all students and professors before lessons start at 8am. The aim is allow students to discuss their concerns.

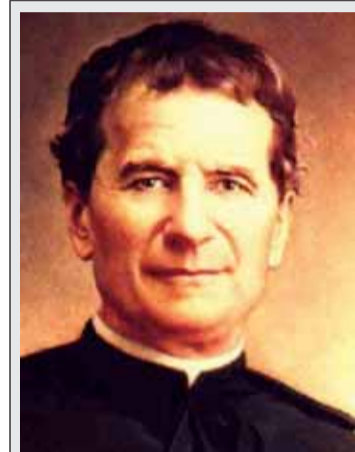
"The aim is not to solve the educational problems in Kosovo but to establish high standards in education and professional vocations," Anton Gojani, the coordinator at Don Bosco, told Prishtina Insight.

Gojani said that Don Bosco offers qualified staff, a modern curriculum and a positive climate for education.

During their four years of studies, from 14 to 18 years old, students are always the centre of attention, following modern methods of educations.

Veton Shabani, an 11th grade student, told Prishtina Insight: "I left public school and joined Don Bosco. Why? Because I heard that there are better conditions and it proved to be so."

Don Bosco also offers training for adults to improve their skills and prepare them for the job market.



Don Bosco, a Visionary Priest

Saint John Bosco was born on August 16, 1815, as Giovanni Melchiorre Bosco, also known as Don Bosco.

He was an Italian Catholic priest and educator who dedicated his life to the education of poor youngsters and employed teaching methods based on 'love rather than punishment'.

He placed his works under the 'protection' of Francis de Sales, a 16th Century saint.

The organisation he founded was thus known as the Society of St. Francis de Sales, or, more popularly, as the Salesian Society or the Salesians of Don Bosco.

He also founded, together with Maria Domenica Mazzarello, the Institute of the Daughters of Mary Help of Christians, a religious congregation of nuns dedicated to the care and education of poor girls, and popularly known as Salesian Sisters.

Don Bosco succeeded in establishing a network of organisations and centres to carry on his work.

In recognition, he was canonised by Pope Pius XI in 1934.

Courses include subjects such as electronics, IT, finances, administration and foreign languages. Recently, new course on welding, hydraulics, processing of fruits and vegetables and tourism have been added to the curriculum.

During a visit to the centre, a group of women was practicing pasteurisation of processed fruits and vegetables.

The training is provided in two difficulty levels, with each level lasting three months. One month costs 80 euro.

"I am really satisfied with the training here," course member Ganimete Pllana told Prishtina Insight. "I considered myself a decent housewife but now I see that I had missed out on the latest techniques."

She added that, following the training, she hoped to create a small firm producing local jams,

ajvar, pickles and other products.

Under a picture of Don Bosco in the main hall of the centre is the saying: "It is enough to know that you are young and abandoned for me to love you very much."

Don Bosco's schools are present in 130 countries worldwide, and all are run under the Salesian philosophy of providing charitable education for the poor.

"That's why we also have the youth centre, the Oratorium," Gojani explained.

"We want to guarantee a space for the youth where they can live and learn together and create friendships."

The Oratorium is open to everyone and tries to direct young people off the streets and towards education.

Don Bosco is planning to open another centre in Gjilan soon.

Visit <http://www.donbosko-kosova.com/> for more information.

Embassies and Liaison Offices in Prishtina

American

Address: "Nazim Hikmet" no. 30
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Easy

	2	5	6					
3	8							1
6		9	7			8		2
			2		8	7		
		2	9		4			
5		4			3	6		8
8							2	5
					7	3	9	

Medium

	6				4	9		
				1		8		2
5								
		6	5		3		8	
		3	9		1	7		
	9		4		6	3		
								1
6		8		5				
		9	2					4

Hard

		9	8	4				
7							5	
		3			8		9	
1	6		7					
	7							3
						2		9
								6
		3		2			1	
		1						2
						9	8	4

Prishtina Diary

FRIDAY 26.03.2010

SQUARE 21:

'Hip Hop Don't Stop' ;
Warm up - Luro;
Special guest DJ Hop
Germany DJ Sket , a
member of Blazin
Brothers

Duplex:

DJ FICI will be playing
House and Hip Hop
mixes for you and
professional dancers.



SATURDAY
27.03.2010

SQUARE 21:

Hip Hop Arena

DJ Goce MK

The most Underground
Hip Hop DJs and many
more surprises.

Duplex:

Swiss DJ Tap Tap will
be playing Hip Hop
after the resident warm
up DJ (10pm to 5am).

DJ Tap Tap first
appeared in Club
Indochine; starting off
in the VIP lounge she

quickly a resident DJ
in many top Swiss
clubs. She has
performed in France,
Belgium, Moscow,
Morocco, America and
Asia.

SATURDAY, 03 April
@ SPRAY

SPRAY CLUB:

DJ OXIA: Olivier
Raymond, born in 1971
in Grenoble (France),
was already into "black
music" (disco & funk)
in his early teens.
During college years,
Olivier's friendship
with Stéphane
Deschezeaux kick start-
ed a musical journey,
with a debut on a local
radio station broadcast-
ing a show dedicated to
Funk. Olivier's mixes
are influenced by a
large spectrum of
music styles: electro-
funk, italo-disco, new-
wave (Depeche Mode,
New Order) and the
early Chicago and New-
York house scene.

Warm Up: SABB (SK
Supreme / Noir Music)

After: VEGIM (TMM
Records)

Afterhours: GENTI &
YACINE (Spray)



American University in Kosovo:

Robert Elsie Presents: KOSOVO IN RARE
COLOUR PHOTOGRAPHS, MIDDAY

Well known writer, translator, interpreter,
and specialist in Albanian studies Robert
Elsie will be at AUK on Tuesday, March
30, to present a collection of beautiful colour
photographs of Prishtina and Prizren taken in 1913.
His presentation includes some of the oldest
photos ever taken of Kosovo. Many have never
before been published. If you are interested in the
history of Prishtina or Prizren, this is a must-see.

Tuesday, March 30, 2010 at MIDDAY
at American University in Kosovo - Auditorium
Germia Campus, Nazim Gafurri 21.



National Theatre of Kosovo

Closer,
Wednesday March 31, 8pm

Closer, a drama by
Patrick Marber, is a
bruising dissection of
modern relationships,
in which sex is the sub-
ject even when it's not,
honesty is frequently
not the best policy, and
people with choices
almost always make the
wrong one.



The National Theatre play is directed by
Kushtrim Koliqi. The play is not open to under
16s because of its sensitive material. Closer is
organised by the National Theatre and 'be ART',
and is supported by the Ministry of Culture,
Youth and Sports.

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof,
Saturday, March 27, 8pm

Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
is a play by Tennessee
Williams about a society
which tries to dictate
how people should live,
at a time when a
lack of human commu-
nication has led to the
isolation.



In the overcharged circumstances of a family
crisis, many truths are revealed about our
desperate fear of death, our love of life, our
hidden guilt, our insecurities, our inability
to face the truth, our materialism, our
greatness and our pettiness.

The monthly programmes of the National
Theatre can be found at www.teatrikombetar.eu
and all the tickets cost only 3 euro.

ABC Cinema



The animated movie Cloudy Meat balls is the
latest film to be screened at ABC. The movie
follows a scientist trying to solve the world
food crisis, but things get complicated and
the food raining from the sky doesn't stop.
The film is based on a children's book. The
film will be screened at 2pm, 4pm, and 6pm
every day. The movie lasts for 1 hour and
21 min. For more information, check ABC's
website kinoabc.info or call 038 243 117.

DAM FESTIVAL 2010 PROGRAMME:

MARCH 25

8 pm National Theatre
Grand Opening
Prishtina New Orchestra
Visar Kuci, violin and artistic
director
New Born Choir
Ylber Asllanaj, artistic director
Donika Rudi, composer
Ethem Qerimi, violin



Donika Rudi: Albanian
composer of electro acoustic
and instrumental music. She
studied at Conservatory of
Music in Geneva-composi-
tion/instrumental music. She
is currently following a mas-
ters degree at the Royal
Conservatory of Music in
Mons, Belgium.

MARCH 26

8pm Youth Palace - Red Hall
Gala Concert
Kosovo Philharmonic - Opera
Patris Berisha, xylophone
(Kosovo)
Jonian - Ilia Kadesha, violin
(Albania /Greece)
Luka Sulic, violoncello
(Slovenia)
Claudio Buchler, conductor
(Austria)



Jonian-Ilia Kadesha: Born in
Athens in August 1992, he
began studying the violin at
four.
He performed for the first time
in public at the age of five.
In May 2000, he received two
special prizes at the interna-
tional competition "Musicalia
2000" in Athens.

MARCH 29

8pm, National Theatre
Authorial Concert
Dafina Zerqiri composer
(Kosovo)

8.45pm
String Concert
Fegus Quartet (Slovenia)

MARCH 30

7pm, National Theatre
Recital Concert
Mennan Berveniku (Kosovo)

8pm, Marathon Concert
Kosovo Young Soloists, ensem-
bles and composers
Faculty of arts, music art
branch - Prishtina

MARCH 31

8pm Oda Theatre

Ulfah Arts and Dam Festival
presents:
The historic, heroic and
humorous works by Armend
Xhaferi, guitar, Dafina Zeqiri
and Visar Kuci. Violin, Alia Al
Zougbi, actress/storyteller
(Lebanon/UK), Lule Ballata,
flute, Riad Ymeri, tenor,
Rosalind Parker, piano (UK),

APRIL 1

7pm National Theatre
Baroque Concert
Marigona Qerkezi flute
(Kosovo)
Annika Quartet (Kosovo)



Marigona Qerkezi: A 15-year-
old student at the renowned
Music High School Prenk
Jakova in Prishtina, Kosovo.
In 2007, Marigona received the
best artistic performance
award at the Young Musicians
Competition 'Ars Kosovo' in
Prishtina.

8pm National Theatre
New American Music
Indiana University New Music
Ensemble
David Dzubay, composer &
conductor, Liana Gourdjia, violin,
Robert Spady, clarinet, Eric
Allen, violoncello, Teddy
Neidermaier, piano, Daniel
Stein, flute.

APRIL 2

8pm National Theatre
Concert by Swiss Paganini
Alexandre Dubach, violin
(Switzerland), Luan Durmishi,
tenor, New Born Choir,
Ansambli Rexho Mulliqi.

APRIL 9

8pm Youth Palace - Red Hall
Recital Concert
Agron Shujaku piano

APRIL 19

8pm Youth Palace - Red Hall
Fatosat N'Dam (children's pro-
gramme)
Air Music Orchestra
Kushtrim Gashi conductor
Toshio Yanagisawa, conductor
(Japan)



Toshio Yanagisawa: Born in
Japan 1971, he studied conduct-
ing at L'Ecole Normale de
Musique de Paris.



Starting April 3
Prishtina » Dusseldorf » New York

FROM

450€

Round-trip / excl. taxes

FROM

290€

One-way / excl. taxes

Up to 10 times
 a week to Zürich
 and Genève

Also flights to Düsseldorf, München
 Frankfurt and Hannover.

Flights to Hamburg, starting April 3.



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