

Prishtina Insight

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How to Buy an EU Citizenship

Stalin would not have been amused. A man named Vladimir, apparently the Soviet dictator's great-grandson, stands at the threshold of acquiring a Romanian passport and with it, the right to work within the EU.

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Kosovo Businesses Spar Over Faded Spa

Kosovo's top spa resort in Yugoslav times is crumbling away today, and its future remains unclear after a series of failed privatizations and court cases.

By Parim Olluri

Despite interest from some of Kosovo's most powerful businesses, Banja e Pejes, a once popular spa retreat near Peja, is still under state ownership and deprived of much needed investment.

The Kosovo Privatisation Agency, PAK, in August announced that the Prishtina-based firm Interling had offered 6.1 million euro to buy the publicly owned "Hotel Onix Peja Baths and Ilixhe". This was part of the fourth

attempt to offload the huge complex, including 26 acres of land, four hotels and a spa.

But a final decision is being delayed by PAK, which is currently without a board.

Meanwhile Prishtina Insight has learnt that one of the disqualified bidders, the German firm, Rutinvest, is considering a legal challenge.

Firms vie for spa:

In November 2009, one of Kosovo's most powerful business-

men, Ekrem Lluka, was declared winner in the privatisation of the Peja baths after his firm, Dukagjini SHPK, offered 8.6 million euro.

But Lluka later withdrew the bid, claiming that he had received death threats from three men, all of whom were found guilty of extortion the following year.

PAK then put the hotel back up for sale in 2010. A consortium of two firms, Kosova Invest, and a German firm, Wefa Health Management GmbH, was then successful in securing the bid, after offering just under 8.2 million euro.

Gani Dreshaj, owner of Kosova Invest, is a business partner of Khavit Haliti, a senior figure in the ruling Democratic Party of Kosovo, PDK.

But he was unable to provide PAK with the funds on time, and the agency disqualified his offer.

PAK then offered the second highest bidder, which had offered 7 million euro, then the third, which offered 5 million euro, the opportunity to buy the business. But both pulled out.

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Kosovo Imam Laughs Off Al-Qaeda Links

Everyone knows him in Mitrovica. They greet him, hug him, sometimes they even offer him sweets.

But Ekrem Avdiu, an imam at a controversial mosque in this divided Kosovo city, is also known to the American secret services who claim he has links to Islamic extremism...

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Kosovo Marks Full Independence With a Shrug

Apart from the teams of police officers dotted at major intersections, securing safe passage for the diplomats and dignitaries gathering in Prishtina, there was nothing unusual about Monday, September 10 - supposedly a key date in Kosovo's history. Everyone went to work - even the civil servants who had been....

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Kosovo Businesses Spar Over Faded Spa

from page 1

Intering, the highest bidder in the most recent sale, also bid on this occasion, although Prishtina Insight was unable to establish how much it offered.

Meanwhile Dreshaj filed an indictment at the Special Chamber of the Supreme Court, contesting PAK's decision to disqualify his firm. The 500,000 euro he had deposited when bidding for the enterprise has not been returned.

Dreshaj is a business partner with Haliti, who is deputy chairman of the Kosovo assembly, in the firms "Macrometal" and "Kosovo Clinic Management".

He told Prishtina Insight: "I've engaged an American lawyer to deal with the case. PAK's decision was unjust and I'll go to the end." The court has yet to issue a verdict.

Earlier this year, the baths were again put up for sale, receiving just two offers, the first for 4 million euro and the second, from Intering, for 3 million euro.

But PAK's board annulled the tender. "We refused the offer of this company [Intering] as it was too low," Naser Osmani, a PAK board member, explained.

The process was then launched for the fourth time in May.

In August, the agency reported that it had received only one valid offer, for 6.1 million euro, again from Intering, owned by brothers Xhevdet and Arben Shoshi, businessmen from Peja.

Baths still open:

Despite its decrepit state, Banja e Pejës remains open to the public.

For an entrance fee of just 2 euro visitors can enjoy hot pools, sauna, massages and swimming pools.

The complex is about 16km from the town of Peja along the main road to Mitrovica.



Both are part owners of the International Village, built on the outskirts of Prishtina, which is also owned by Dino Asanaj, the former chairman of the PAK board. He died in suspicious circumstances in June, although police said he committed suicide.

Albert Shoshi, an official at Intering, said that they were awaiting the decision of the PAK board on either refusing or approving their offer.

He noted that his company was now competing for the third time for the enterprise.

PAK said a decision on Intering's offer would be made when a new board of the agency is approved. No date has yet been set for the long delayed decision.

Tomas Witsad, manager of the German company Rutinvest, told Prishtina Insight, that they had employed a lawyer to look at why they were disqualified from the most recent bid.

"We were promised a reason for our elimination but this has never happened and we do not know why," Witsad said.

"We are in contact with



Bathers relax in the waters of Banja e Pejës, despite the building's poor state

German institutions and those in the European Union to understand this," he added.

"We have also engaged a lawyer in Kosovo and are awaiting adequate instruction as to how we should proceed.

"We have been very interested in buying the hotel and had a good team of people from Kosovo and other companies in Germany.

"Based on what will happen, we would again be very interested in buying the hotel," he concluded.

Usurped land query:

As part of the hotel sale, 26 acres of land are also on offer. But Prishtina Insight has discovered that the site initially included a further five acres,

which were illegally occupied.

"PAK accepts that it hasn't been able to gain ownership of the entire area of this enterprise," spokesman Ylli Kaloshi said.

He added that PAK had managed to retake some other usurped land on the site and had brought the thief to justice.

"The usurper [of the land] has been convicted and sentenced to one year in jail," Kaloshi added.

"The agency has sent several requests to the relevant institutions in this municipality - the municipality and police - to stop usurpers damaging the property but the necessary measures to preserve the property from damage by illegal users have not been taken."

Police Convoy Sprayed With Bullets in North Kosovo

A Kosovo Police officer was injured when masked men sprayed a convoy of EULEX and Kosovo Police vehicles with bullets.



By Fatmir Aliu

An EU and Kosovo police convoy was attacked last Friday morning in the northern Serb-run part of Kosovo, when a group of masked persons opened fire on them.

The assault, according to the police in northern Kosovo, took place at around 9am on the road between Zupce and Zubin Potok during a routine joint patrol of the two forces.

"One Kosovo Police (KP) officer was slightly injured and a KP and a EULEX vehicle were damaged [after] a number of masked persons appeared on a road between Zupce and Zubin Potok this morning [and] opened fire on the vehicles," a EULEX press release said.

Kosovo Police said that the injured officer, of Serbian ethnicity, is out of danger and was injured by broken glass, not by bullets.

The northern part of Kosovo, which borders Serbia, has long been prone to violence. The local population, almost entirely comprised of Serbs, does not recognise Kosovo's independence, or the ethnic Albanian-led government in Prishtina.

Last week, three explosions were recorded in the zone, targeting the property of a Kosovo Serb Police officer, the director of the hospital in northern Mitrovica and a senior official of the Serbian Progressive Party, SNS, in Leposavic.

The EU Special Representative to Kosovo, Samuel Zbogar and the Head of EULEX, Xavier Bout de Marnhac, condemned the latest incident in northern Kosovo.

"I thoroughly condemn this act of wanton violence. Lives were put at risk. It illustrates and reinforces the need for greater rule of law in this area of Kosovo," Zbogar said.

The head of EULEX said the perpetrators had to be brought to justice, and appealed to all those who had information relating to this incident to contact the police.

Northern Kosovo is widely seen as being under de facto control of so-called parallel institutions, which are funded by Serbia. These include decision-making bodies such as town councils and mayors.

EU Kosovo Police Detain Three Corruption Suspects

The EU rule of law mission has detained the head of the city assembly in Prishtina, Sami Hamiti, and two construction businessmen in a corruption and extortion probe.



By Fatmir Aliu

A senior official of the Prishtina municipality has been detained by EULEX police on Wednesday, along with

two businessmen, suspected of corruption and extortion.

One suspect is Sami Hamiti, president of Prishtina's city assembly.

The two other are Agim Ademi and Muharrem Rama, both involved in the construction trade.

Blerim Krasniqi, spokesperson of EULEX, told Prishtina Insight

that three persons were arrested Wednesday but did not reveal any names.

"They are suspected of extortion and other acts linked with corruption," the spokesperson explained.

Sources told Prishtina Insight that Hamiti was visited this morning by four EULEX police officers in his office and left with them

without being hand-cuffed.

The spokesperson for the city of Prishtina, Asdren Osaj, told Prishtina Insight that all questions related to the case should be addressed to EULEX, since no official note was sent to the municipality to clarify the allegations against Hamiti.

Tome Gashi, the defence attor-

ney of Hamiti, confirmed that his client would be interviewed on Wednesday afternoon by a EULEX prosecutor related to a suspected case of corruption.

He said he had been notified by the European prosecutor that an investigation had been opened against Hamiti, but that no other details were provided to him.



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Kosovo Imam Laughs Off Al-Qaeda Links

Imam Ekrem Avdi claims he only learned last week that he was suspected of links to a member of Al-Qaeda held in Guantanamo Bay.



By Jeton Musliu

Everyone knows him in Mitrovica. They greet him, hug him, sometimes they even offer him sweets.

But Ekrem Avdiu, an imam at a controversial mosque in this divided Kosovo city, is also known to the American secret services who claim he has links to Islamic extremism.

A secret document from the US Department of Defense at Guantanamo Bay, published by WikiLeaks, dating from 2005, lists him as a suspect in recruiting Mujahedeen fighters.

The US secret document notes: "Avdiu is linked to recruitment efforts for the Chechen and Iraqi insurgencies, and as of February 2007, remained active in extremist activities in Albania."

The paperwork, which profiles a former detainee, Faha Sultan, from Saudi Arabia, notes that during a KFOR raid on Avdiu's home in 2003, the NATO force discovered a phone book containing Sultan's number.

Sultan's number was also found in a raid on a "an Arab office in Kandahar", in Afghanistan, during which 160 "military training camp applications" for Al-Qaeda were discovered as well as the same phone number for Sultan noted on Avdiu's Mitrovica papers.

As he drank coffee in a busy shopping centre in Mitrovica last week, the Kosovar imam leafed through each page of the secret US documents linking him to terrorism.

Laughing, he said that he had no idea who Faha Sultan was and didn't know that the Guantanamo document existed.

"I have no idea about what has been said - that I was apparently a recruiter or that I have connections with people in Afghanistan. It's all slander," Avdiu said.

He does admit that he was arrested in 2003, and sent to the American military base known as Bondsteel, near Ferizaj.

Avdiu, says that on November 28, 2003, or as he prefers to remember it "the third day of Eid", KFOR arrested him.

"American KFOR in Bondsteel asked me: 'Why are you connected to terrorism?'" he recalled.

"I was asking them, 'With whom, which network, which people?' But they wouldn't answer," he said.

"They held me for 24 hours in Bondsteel and interrogated me. At the end they thanked me and handed me over to the UNMIK police," he continued.

After charging him with possession of an illegal weapon, UNMIK freed him.

"I was sentenced for that and had to pay a fine," he said, "and that was it!"

He denies allegations of having



Imam Ekrem Avdiu laughs off links to terrorism

recruited for Islamic extremists.

Prishtina Insight asked KFOR for clarification on the Imam's arrest, but the force refused to comment on the specifics of the case.

"KFOR's mission is to contribute to an orderly and safe environment for all the people of Kosovo. To increase the efficiency of operations, KFOR monitors all activities that may potentially threaten order and a safe environment," spokesman Uwe Nowitzki said.

"However, KFOR is not in a position to comment on issues that are related to operations," he added. Officials working for Kosovo Police in Mitrovica said that they have never had any cause to investigate Avdiu.

The imam "has never been the subject of an investigations by

Kosovo Police," Besim Hoti, spokesperson for Kosovo Police for the Mitrovica region, said.

He added that, in principle, the police do not talk about individuals, but in this case he was happy to say that Avdiu was a respected figure in Mitrovica.

Avdiu received his religious education in Saudi Arabia in 1997, the home of the conservative Wahhabist strand of Islam.

He is a regular lecturer on religious topics on the Kosovo franchise of the London-based Islamic station, Peace TV.

The mosque that he leads is known as "the mosque of Wahhabis" in Mitrovica.

From 1998 until 2001, he was imprisoned in Serbia for alleged terrorist activities in 1997.

Planned Attacks in Kosovo

Other documents included in the WikiLeaks haul of secret Guantanamo files reveal further links between alleged Al-Qaeda operatives and Kosovo.

A suspected member of Al-Qaeda arrested and detained in Guantanamo in 2002, Sami Muheidine Mohamed al-Haj, had been in Kosovo during the summer of 2001.

Another prisoner arrested in 2001, Mustafa Ait Idr, from the Algerian Armed Islamic Group, GIA, suspected of being involved in an attack on the American embassy in Sarajevo, is mentioned for his close ties to the Balkans.

The same document mentions that on August 26, 2012, the Italian police in Kosovo arrested two Kosovo Albanian brothers, Jamel and Sarhane Lamrani.

"Both brothers had made threats against KFOR and UNMIK," the document reads. "Jamel Lamrani is in a direct way connected to prisoner (Mustafta Ait Idr). Sarhane Lamrani has recently claimed that he is connected to Al-Qaeda, and at the end of June 2005, he said that Albanians in Kosovo should carry out suicide attacks on UNMIK and KFOR".

Mustafa Ait Idr, according to documents, was connected to Ahmad Efendi Adilovic and his brother Zuhdija, who was leading an Islamic school in Travnik, Bosnia.

"The school sent students to a camp in Guca Gora [Bosnia]. According to the Bosnian government, the detainee was also involved in this camp, providing karate training," the document said.

It adds: "In March 2004, the Adilovic brothers were among a group of Islamic extremists preparing an attack against Camp Bondsteel, a US military base located at Urosevac[Ferizaj], Kosovo."

Editor's Word

Selling Coal to Kosovo



By Lawrence Marzouk

Ever heard of the expression "selling snow to Eskimos"?

Well, I've got a new one which is almost as absurd: "selling coal to Kosovo".

In November 2009, I wrote about how Ferronikeli, Kosovo's biggest exporter, was forced to import coal from the other side of the planet, despite sitting on one of the world's biggest reserves.

The metal giant complained that Kosovo Coal, a spin-off from KEK which is responsible for preparing and selling the country's publicly owned lignite reserves, was unable to provide enough fuel, and that what it did provide was generally of poor quality.

Ferronikeli said it was expensive bringing it in from Malaysia, but that it had little choice.

At the time, Azem Rexhaj, former director of the Independent Commission of Mines and Minerals, said that the opening of Sibovc mine would solve the problem.

"Workers are moving fast to make the opening of the mine happen. We think that our first coal from this mine will arrive in the middle of next year," Arben Gjukaj, Managing Director of KEK, told us.

Almost three years on, however, the situation has got worse in a bizarre twist which epitomises the problems of doing business in Kosovo.

KEK has, we have learnt, failed to renew its contract with the publicly owned Kosovo Coal - they suggest because of some unpaid debt - and as a result coal destined for big companies, but also public facilities like schools and railroads, is now imported at hugely inflated prices.

Although sitting on the fifth-largest reserve of brown coal in the world, Kosovo has already imported 100,000 tonnes this year - double the total amount brought into the country in 2009, before the troubles began.

As a result, the cost of coal has increased by 60 per cent, depriving the state coffers of funds in lost revenues and the higher cost of imported fuel, and making Kosovo's few exported products less competitive.

This is a remarkable example of gross incompetence and negligence. The problem should have been jumped on and solved by Kosovo politicians or officials within weeks, if not days.

Instead, KEK's contract with Kosovo Coal ended in November 2011, and almost a year on nothing appears to have been done.

What has always struck me about politics in this country is the shocking lack of accountability. Politicians can be exposed as cheats, liars, or at the very least useless, but retain their jobs.

When I wrote about this problem in 2009, I gave KEK and the authorities the benefit of the doubt, pointing out that "Kosovo is making efforts to solve these problems, and is being helped along the way by its international partners".

But instead of resolving the problem, the situation has severely deteriorated.

I hoped at the time that that 'Me i shit qymyr Kosoves' - Selling Coal to Kosovo - wouldn't become a refrain.

I am afraid it has. But since they have chosen not to fix the problem, will anyone have the decency to resign instead?

The Fortnight in Numbers:

+355 Kosovo parliamentarians have voted in favour of dropping the international telephone current codes from Monaco, Serbia and Slovenia - +377, +381 and +386 - in favour of Albania's +355. A number of obstacles remain in Kosovo's way, however, before it can make the switch.

89 The number of states the US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said had recognised the independence of Kosovo, not 91 as is claimed by Kosovo's government.

300 The amount of money that Kosovo Police asked a driver to hand over in order to ignore the fact he was driving without a licence and was found with a small quantity of drugs, according to an investigation by BIRN's show Justice in Kosovo.

Medicus Clinic 'Part of Bigger International Chain'

The clinic at the centre of organ-trafficking claims in Kosovo was just one part of a wider international racket dealing in transplants, Nancy Scheper-Hughes director of Organs Watch, says.



By Fatmir Aliu

The director and co-founder of Organs Watch, an organisation dedicated to research on the global traffic in human organs, has told BIRN that two former clients of the Medicus clinic near Pristina had identified Yusuf Sonmez as the key figure in what she describes as a major organisation based in Israel.

"The organized criminal syndicate begins with Sonmez and his partner in Israel who both started out in the 1990s.... [when] they met at a transplant conference," she says.

The Medicus case centres on allegations that poor donors were induced to sell their kidneys to the clinic, which then sold them on to rich clients.

Seven Kosovo Albanians and two foreigners, one of whom is Sonmez, were indicted by EULEX in 2010 with human trafficking, organised crime and unlawful medical activities.

The accused include the alleged ringleader in Kosovo, the clinic's owner, Professor Lutfi Dervishi.

The Kosovars named in the indictment were allegedly aided by Sonmez, who is wanted on organ trafficking charges in several countries. While the Turkish authorities are prosecuting him for the alleged offences in Kosovo, he remains at liberty in his native Turkey.



Was the Medicus clinic part of a wider organ trafficking network?

The prosecution says Moshe Harel, an Israeli of Turkish origin, acted as the gang's fixer, finding both donors and recipients and handling funds.

Poor people were allegedly lured from Istanbul, Moscow, Moldova and Kazakhstan on the false promise that they would get up to 15,000 for their organs, with some receiving no payment at all.

According to the indictment, 30 operations involving illegal kidney transplants took place at the clinic in 2008.

Scheper-Hughes says that the first man she interviewed, who she calls David, a wealthy client from California in the US, paid the network roughly \$200,000 for the kidney transplant.

Mr David travelled from the US to Israel and then Turkey to go on to Kosovo, she says.

But she says the broker then informed him that police had raided the clinic.

"He had to pay, a second time, another \$120,000.... to go to Baku in Azerbaijan; he didn't even know where this place was," she recalls.

"This man did not come from an educated background; he didn't know where he was. He had no idea who he was getting a kidney from. He is lucky he survived."

Sonmez was arrested in Istanbul in January 2011 but was later released on bail.

His alleged partner, Harel, was arrested on May 25 in Israel with other nine persons. But the director of Organs Watch says he too was since released.

Scheper-Hughes says that Sonmez and Harel started working further afield after their operations received bad publicity in Israel, after a whistleblower told the Israeli authorities that they

were using Palestinians to provide organs for Israelis.

She claims that some of the brokers for the clinic were working for Israeli's national insurance company, which knew how to handle funds provided by Israel's Ministry of Health, which reimburses the costs for Israelis who decide to obtain organ transplants abroad.

The Medicus clinic is also named in a December 2010 Council of Europe report, which alleges that senior members of the Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA, several of whom are now in the Kosovo government, traded the organs of prisoners during the 1999 Kosovo conflict.

She believes that such organ harvesting did take place in 1999, but says the case still lacks sufficient evidence.

She says that the place in Albania named in the report as a key site, known as the "Yellow House", may have been a transit centre.

The victims, she says were "a small number of Serbian former fighters, or perhaps just civilians and minorities at the end of the war, leftovers as you might say."

"It is wrong to speak about Serbs being murdered for their organs. It was really a question of killing Serbs [in retaliation for the war] and then taking advantage of having a technician present to remove their organs," she says.

"According to my sources, the kidneys were taken to the airport in Albania and shipped to Turkey," she adds.

She says Sonmez was not present at the Yellow House but that he may have received the removed kidneys.

"Through his contacts and

intermediaries, he would have been aware of the situation and was perhaps, therefore, in contact with people in the KLA who would have suggested that, as a surgeon, he could help out," she suggested.

Former KLA leaders have strenuously denied all knowledge of the organ trafficking operations during the war.

On Monday night, Serbia's state television station, RTS, broadcast an interview with a man claiming to have been a KLA fighter during the war, and who removed a prisoner's heart intended for the black market in organs during the 1990s Kosovo conflict.

Serbian prosecutors say that the victim was a Serbian prisoner, and the operation had been carried out near the northern Albanian town of Kukes.

The EU-led investigation team looking into the claims in Marty's report said it would consult Serbian prosecutors on the witness at their next meeting.

Scheper-Hughes says she met Sonmez in 1994 and 1996, when they both worked in an international task force on organ trafficking, where Sonmez said he had carried out over 2,000 transplant operations involving what he called "commercial donors."

Last year a Turkish prosecutor asked for Sonmez to be sentenced to 171 years in prison for illegal transplants carried out in the Medicus clinic.

His lawyer told BIRN that his client continues working in Istanbul where he lives.

EULEX prosecutors called last week for Sonmez to be questioned via video link.

The case against the Kosovar suspects is ongoing. All deny wrongdoing.

The Fortnight in Headlines

Zeri, September 3

Big difference of opinion have started to resurface inside Hashim Thaci's ruling Democratic Party of Kosovo since his first deputy chairman of the party Fatmir Limaj has launched the idea of reforming from inside the PDK. Limaj's proposal of 1 member 1 vote is seen by observers as an imposed dictatorship.

Koha Ditore, September 4

The British diplomat Robert Cooper, known as the facilitator of the Kosovo-Serbia dialogue, has retired and is not working any longer formally for the EU. Diplomats in Brussels don't exclude the possibility that Baroness Ashton will ask for Cooper's services so she does not become heavily involved in the forthcoming talks between Pristina and Belgrade

Koha Ditore, September 5

While the President of the European Council Herman Von Rompuy said that a visible advancement in the relationship with Kosovo is key for the start of Serbia's negotiations for membership into the EU, the President of the European Parliament Martin Schultz was even more precise in underlining Serbia's need to recognise Kosovo as an independent state if it wants to integrate into the EU.



Express, September 7

Nigeria hasn't recognised the independence of Kosovo. The foreign minister of this African state, Olugbenga Ashiry, told Express that his country didn't take any step to recognise the independence of the Republic of Kosovo. Deputy Prime Minister Behgjet Pacolli, who a year ago presented a letter from Nigeria as recognition, was silent on the matter.

Express, September 11

Kosovo Liberation Army veterans are to be counted by their president. According to sources, Muharrem Xhemajli is set to replace the former Supreme Commander of the KLA, Azem Sylva, who resigned recently as the head of the Government Commission to verify and count the veterans, invalids and martyrs of the 1999 war. Xhemajli will be appointed officially to the post during the week, when the commission is expected to gather, for the first time, without Sylva as its chairman.

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NGO Reveals Richest Officials

NGO news

Levizja Fol, one of Kosovo's leading anticorruption organisations, has launched a platform allowing the public to compare the wealth of senior politicians and officials.

Information published on the site - levizjafol.org/al/deklarimet - is based on official declaration of assets submitted to Kosovo's Anticorruption Agency each year.

According to Fol, which means "speak up" in Albanian, the richest public official in Kosovo is Behgjet Pacolli, with 192 million euro in land, shares, cash and other assets.

Pacolli is often labelled the world's richest Albanian. He made his fortune through the Swiss-based construction firm Mabetex which won a number of lucrative contracts from the Kremlin during the Boris Yelstin era.

Pacolli is head of the political party New Kosovo Alliance, AKR, which is coalition with the Prime Minister Hashim Thaci's PDK.

The richest parliamentarian is Ramiz

Kelmendi, owner of the supermarket chain ETC, with 62 million euros. He represents the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo, AAK.

"Available information revealed discrepancies between the income and properties of senior Kosovo officials," the European Commission wrote in its 2010 progress report. "This indicates widespread corruption at high levels in Kosovo persist. This fact has not been followed-up by public debate or investigations of the relevant bodies, showing a distinct lack of political will in fighting corruption."

The issue was again raised in the 2011 EC report. "Declarations of assets by public officials continue to show discrepancies between the assets declared and actual revenue," reads the report.

Fol hopes the website will encourage citizens to take a closer look at official declarations of assets and help the authorities spot inconsistencies.

A total of 224 officials are included in the database.



Fatmir Limaj May be Indicted in October

The investigation into alleged corruption in the Ministry of Transport may result in an indictment of former minister Fatmir Limaj being issued in October.



By Petrit Collaku / Fatmir Aliu

Limaj, now an MP in parliament from the ranks of the ruling Democratic Party of Kosovo, may soon be charged with corruption during his time as the Minister of Transport, Post and Telecommunications, sources have told Prishtina Insight.

The EU rule of law mission to Kosovo, EULEX, has apparently prepared an indictment that it plans to send to the courts as early as October.

Limaj appeared at the EULEX prosecution on Tuesday after being called to sign the hearing session minutes of March 20, 2012.

EULEX has not commented on the reports, although the Ministry of Transport has been under investigation by the European mission since April 2010, when police raided the ministry and properties connected to Limaj in Prishtina.

The operation was part of a corruption probe linked to road tenders issued between 2007 and 2009. Limaj has denied any wrongdoing during his time as the head of the ministry.

The initial investigation exceeded the time limit of 24 months on April 23. This prevents the Special Prosecution Office of Kosovo, SPRK, from undertaking further "investigative actions" into the charges.

EULEX spokesperson Blerim Krasniqi told BIRN that "investigative actions" refer to, but are not limited to, such actions as house searches and arrests.

However, "the time limit of 24 months does not apply to possible additional charges or against possible additional defendants that are added at a later stage of the investigation," he explained.

A Prishtina Insight investigation revealed that a number of lucrative building contracts appear to have gone to friends and relatives of Limaj.

"On-going analysis of the information collected to date will continue in order to make the final assessment of the case at a later stage," EULEX told BIRN.

Limaj was recently freed from another case, related to war crimes during the 1999 conflict in Kosovo.

On May 2, a mixed panel of European and Kosovo Judges at Prishtina's District Court announced that they had found no evidence to justify continuing the trial against 10 former fighters in the Kosovo Liberation Army including Limaj accused of war crimes.



Photo News:

Nationalist Graffiti Appears in Northern Kosovo

Two men talk in front of newly painted nationalist graffiti in the northern part of Mitrovica. The text reads: "No turning back from here."

BETA-PHOTO
/SASA DJORDJEVIC

Kosovo Marks Full Independence With a Shrug

Kosovo was granted full independence by its international masters on September 10 - but few people in Prishtina seemed interested in celebrating.



By Fatmir Aliu

As part from the teams of police officers dotted at major intersections, securing safe passage for the diplomats and dignitaries gathering in Prishtina, there was nothing unusual about Monday, September 10 - supposedly a key date in Kosovo's history.

Everyone went to work - even the civil servants who had been expecting a public holiday to mark the end of the era of Kosovo's internationally "supervised" independence.

Unlike previous milestones on the route to statehood, there were no cars draped in Albanian and Kosovo flags driving around Prishtina to the sound of a horn chorus.

Prime Minister Hashim Thaci and Pieter Feith, the International Civilian Representative for Kosovo, announced the end of supervised independence to a country that seemed largely indifferent.

A concert was held on Tuesday in central Prishtina to mark the decision but more people appeared interested in the football match taking place that evening between Albania and Switzerland.

Hairdresser Ardit Dula, a 25-year-old Kosovo Albanian in Prishtina, said that nothing much had changed as a result of the decision.

"What people tend to forget is that you can never really be independent in our country," he said.

"Everyone knows that the war [of independence] was fought by the US, and that it won it. Now and forever, whatever happens, it's the Americans that decide."

An end to supervision?

The International Steering Group was set up in 2008 by 25 powerful countries that backed Kosovo's independence.



The streets have been devoid of celebrations following the end of supervised independence (Photos by Beta)

It was tasked with implementing the Comprehensive Proposal for Kosovo's Status Settlement, drawn up by the Finnish UN Special Envoy, Martti Ahtisaari.

The so-called "Ahtisaari plan" was designed as a blueprint for Kosovo's future following years spent under an increasingly unpopular UN administration, UNMIK.

After Serbia's main ally, Russia, refused to support Ahtisaari's proposals for "supervised independence", the ISG countries side-stepped the UN Security Council and went it alone.

The ISG created the post of the International Civilian Representative, ICR, to head the International Civilian Office, ICO, which guided the country through its difficult first years alongside the elected government.

Meanwhile Kosovo's disputed status means it has not been able to join a number of international

organisations, including the United Nations, though it has joined the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, IMF.

Pieter Feith of The Netherlands was appointed ICR on February 28, 2008, and has remained at the post since then.

He was tasked with ensuring implementation of the Ahtisaari plan, including the creation of new municipalities, decentralization of power, building up state institutions and ensuring the passage of new laws covering a range of areas, from protecting Serbian Orthodox sites to managing publicly owned enterprises.

In July, the ISG ruled that the ICO had broadly completed its mission, as a result of which it will pack up in Prishtina in September.

But while the ICO clears its desk, experts have pointed out that the Ahtisaari package was not

implemented in full, particularly in the far north of the country, which remains controlled by Belgrade.

Some Kosovo Serbs also warned that progress in interethnic relations could yet be reversed without more commitment from the Kosovo government.

"We are fully aware that our [Kosovo Serbs] future in this place is in question because the institutions are predominantly Albanian," Rada Trajkovic, a Kosovo Serb MP, said.

"Through them, a latent fascist policy is led against the Serbs," she added.

Officials insist they have no problem with coexistence with Serbs. Kosovo's Prime Minister, Hashim Thaci, used a speech this week to emphasise that the government's main priority was integrating the Kosovo Serb community in the north and establishing the rule of law.

He said he wishes to extend the hand of friendship to the northern Serbs by organising free elections there and bringing investments to the three Serb-run municipalities.

But he said that action was required, in partnership with the international community, to put pressure on Serbia to stop financing its structures in Kosovo.

"The international community must put pressure on Serbia to withdraw its security institutions from the north, namely the [Serbian Secret Service] BIA and the [Serbian Interior Ministry] MUP," he added.

A Kosovo government report from 2011 said Serbian security structures have operated continually in the north since 1999.

Thaci said that the country would not agree to any form of partition, nor would the north be granted special status beyond what was offered in the Ahtisaari plan.

Meanwhile, a former ICO

employee, Andrea Capussela, wrote in the leading Kosovo newspaper, Koha Ditore, on Tuesday that the ICO had failed to build up Kosovo's institutions.

He said there was little reason to celebrate the end of supervision, as the country remained under the de facto control of the US and EU.

"The supervision of Kosovo does not end today... Kosovo was, and will continue to be, supervised or managed or influenced or whatever you will, by foreign powers: the US primarily, and to lesser degree also the EU and some of its member states," the former head of the ICO's economic affairs unit said.

A day after supervision ended, Kosovo hosted an international conference on the future.

Hundreds of foreign diplomats gathered in Prishtina to listen to Ahtisaari and watch a video-message from former US President Bill Clinton, whose statue graces one of Prishtina's main thoroughfares and who is a hero to Kosovo Albanians.

The former UN Envoy for Kosovo's Status underlined that lasting peace between Kosovo and Serbia can be reached only by a change of approach by citizens and leaders on both sides.

"Peace doesn't mean Kosovo and Serbia forgetting the past but accepting that their future can be different," Ahtisaari said.

"This is a lesson for international diplomacy, that true success cannot be found in the negotiations room or in the signing of agreements. It can be found in the behaviour of the people, ministers officials and eternal neighbours," he added.

The International Crisis Group released a report on Monday outlining the challenges facing Kosovo following the end of supervision.

"While Kosovo must do more, Belgrade, if it means to help the Serbs south of the Ibar, [i.e. in the rest of Kosovo] has to recognise where fate has left them and accept the same conclusion they have already reached: there is no good alternative to full and open engagement with the Pristina government," Marko Prelec, Crisis Group's Balkans Project Director, said.

The ICG called on Belgrade to rethink its policy of funding Kosovo Serb salaries and pensions and running education and health systems inside Kosovo.

"Belgrade should not discourage Serbs in Kosovo from cooperating with Kosovo institutions and needs to replace its parallel municipal structures with liaison offices to provide for the needs of the Serb community while complying with Kosovo law," the ICG said.

But the influential think-tank also said that authorities in Pristina must also work harder to protect Serbs across the country, and not use the end of supervision to water down any of the provisions in the Ahtisaari package related to minorities.



Kosovo PM Hashim Thaci shakes hand with US Deputy Assistant Secretary Philip Reeker as Martti Ahtisaari (middle right) looks on.

Titan Rejects Claims of SharrCem Sale

Titan Group, owners of the cement giant SharrCem, have told BIRN the firm is not considering selling its cement plant close to the Macedonian border.



By Parim Olluri

One of the Kosovo's biggest investors, the Greek giant Titan Group, has rejected media reports suggesting it was considering exiting Kosovo.

Kosovo daily Express carried quotes from a senior Titan executive earlier this month suggesting that the repeal of an import tax on cement would badly affect the firm's profits.

But a spokeswoman for SharrCem told Prishtina Insight that it was one of biggest employers in the country, with more than 500 employees and 200 contractors, and had no plans to leave.

She added that the firm was an example of the principles of "corporate social responsibility" and that it had invested more than 8 million euro in environmental protection equipment alone.

"Furthermore, the public should be informed that SharrCem is not owned by any company, but is part of Titan Cement, the world renowned company in the cement industry, listed on the stock exchange for more than 100 years," said the spokeswoman. She added that the firm has large factories in nine countries, including the US.

It has also emerged that Titan would require consent from the Privatisation Agency of Kosovo,



The SharrCem cement plant is one of Kosovo's major employers

PAK, if it decides to leave. PAK sold the formerly state own plant. Spokesman Yil Kaloshi said Titan's performance was still being monitored by the agency to ensure it was meeting the terms of the sale.

SharrCem was heralded as the most profitable privatisation in Kosovo's short history when it was sold for 30 million euro in 2010. Titan Group also pledged to invest 35 million euro.

The Kosovo daily Express newspaper reported earlier this month that Titan was considering selling the plant. Michail Sigalas, managing director for Europe and Africa, had complained to the newspaper about the repeal of an import tax on cement.

Ministry of Trade and Industry

Mimoza Kusari-Lila abolished the 35 per cent levy just 52 days after introducing it, following protests from neighbouring Albania.

"To compete, to achieve a multi-year investment plan, such measures on imports of cement should last three to four years," he is reported to have said.

"With the removal of these measures Sharrcem cannot survive".

Kosovo Competition Authority has begun an investigation into whether the temporary protection measures on cement imports were contrary to Article 11 of the Law on Protection of Competition.

ACA noted that the decision affected the cement market and favoured SharrCem.

Fox Marble is Kosovo's London First Floatation

Fox Marble has become the first Kosovo-based firm listed on the London stock exchange.



By Petrit Collaku

The Kosovo company, part owned by former PTK director Etrur Albani, aims to begin operations at three marble quarries following a listing on AIM, the Alternative Investment Market.

Fox Marble owns five quarries in Kosovo and hopes that to raise 10 million euro from the market to enable it to acquire the equipment to extract blocks of marble.

Company chief Christopher Gilbert told the media in London last year that James Caan, star of BBC business and entertainment show "Dragon's Den", through his company "Hamilton Bradshaw Capital Partners", had invested an undisclosed sum of money in the company.

Major shareholder and managing director Etrur Albani, formerly known as Etrur Rrustemaj, said he and the team had overcome great adversity to make it onto the stock market.

"We finally made it," he told Prishtina Insight, explaining that the company had been pushing for the floatation for two-and-a-half

years.

"During this period, we've held 736 meetings with investors from all over the world and every day they have told us that they wouldn't collaborate with us," Albani added.

He said that the main problem was the risks associated with Kosovo's instability.

Albani added that Fox Marble's entry into the London Stock Exchange would put Kosovo on the world business map.

"The main point is that we have received four offers from serious companies that are interested to work in Kosovo in fields such as mining and information technology," Albani said.

Rex Marble, owned by Fox Marble, has secured four licenses for extraction on October 31, 2011, lasting until 2036.

The company plans to process around a million square metres of marble a year, which will produce a turnover of 70 million euro.

"Our investment will open hundreds of job positions in Kosovo," Albani said.

Some 91.3 million metre squares of marble have been located in Kosovo, and it is estimated that the country could hold around 235 million meter squares.

Kosovo Unions Ally Against Post and Telecom Sale

Twenty-seven organisations have called on the government of Kosovo to stop the privatization of the Post and Telecom company, PTK.



By Fatmir Aliu

Kosovo trade unions are calling on the authorities to stop the planned privatizations of the Post and Telecommunications of Kosovo, PTK, and the Trepca mines.

Twenty-seven organisations united to oppose the sales last week at discussions held under the chairmanship of the Alliance of Independent Unions of Kosovo, BSPK.

"We urge an immediate halt to the privatisation of PTK, the Kosovo Power Company, KEK, distribution network and the liquidation of Trepca.

"At the same time we call on all citizens, especially the employees

of those enterprises, to show solidarity in protecting our common resources, which are about to be stolen," the meeting held on September 4 said.

The BSPK issued its call on the same day that the Procurement Overview Body gave a green light to the government to proceed further with its plans.

Five companies have qualified for the next round of the competition to buy the government's 75 per cent of shares in PTK.

These are Albright Capital Management LLC, in cooperation with Portugal Telecom; Columbia Capital in consortium with ACP Axos Capital GmbH, which cooperate with British Telecom - Poland; M1 International Limited; Turkcell and; Twelve Hornbeams in consortium with Avicenna Capital LLC, which cooperate with Sofrecom (part of France



Opposition is growing against the sale of Kosovo's most lucrative publicly owned firm PTK

Telecom).

The alliance of organisations opposed to the sales blames privatisations for massive job losses and for the poor economic situation in general on the ground.

The BSPK claims that the process of selling off former

socially owned enterprises has "de-industrialized" Kosovo.

"The public property of PTK, KEK and Trepca needs to remain untouched if the country is to get out of this deep crisis. Their economic development is a condition and an opportunity for overall eco-

nomical and social development," the BSPK said.

As the government tries for a fourth year in a row to sell the shares it holds in the PTK, it is also encountering objections from the opposition Self-Determination Movement.

Serbia Counts Cost of Politicians' Pledges to Farmers

After a dismal, drought-ridden summer, farmers want politicians to make good on their lavish election-time pledges towards the agricultural sector.



By Stevan Veljovic

Serbian politicians, both those in power and in opposition, competed hard to show their support for hard-pressed farmers in the May general election, all promising more state support. But as autumn approaches, these pledges are coming back to haunt those now in office.

Tomislav Nikolic, presidential candidate for the victorious Serbian Progressive Party, SNS, and now President of Serbia, pledged more investment in agriculture.

Mladjan Dinkic, leader of the United Regions Party, URS, and now Minister of Finance and Economy, was even more specific, promising to double the agricultural budget and to define the subsidies policy for at least five years in advance.

Although it is early to judge to what extent these promises will be fulfilled, the severe drought and rising food prices ensure that agriculture will be high on the new team's agenda.

It is estimated that the drought has halved this year's crop of corn, soya bean and sunflower, while other crops, including fruit and vegetables, also suffered.

Experts at the Serbian Chamber of Commerce put the estimated cost of the damage at roughly at 2.1 billion dollar [1.68 billion euro], warning that this will have an impact on prices of flour, oil, sugar, milk and meat.

Goran Knezevic, Minister of Agriculture, has said that the government will give 160 euro to 170 euro million to cover the consequences of the drought, citing

this as the "single largest state assistance to farmers in the past 25 years".

Following the budget rebalance, the Ministry of Agriculture will have 42 billion dinar [355 million euro] at its disposal, compared to the RSD30 billion [254 million euro] earmarked at the beginning of the fiscal year.

This increase means the agriculture budget now accounts for 2.5 per cent of the national budget, though the government intends to increase the total to four per cent in 2013 and five per cent in 2014, explained Knezevic.

One of his first moves was to terminate the contracts of 1,658 agronomists hired by the previous minister, Dusan Petrovic, to advise farmers.

He said their wage bill of 800 million dinar [6.75 million euro] by the end of the year would be better used in directly alleviating the cost of the drought.

Despite the pledges and demonstrations of concern for the sector, many farmers have yet to be convinced of the willingness and ability of the new team to change things.

Some experts, on the other hand, fear that the proposed measures are not enough to tackle soaring prices, adding that the consequences of the dry summer would have been less dramatic had the state invested more in irrigation in the past.

Food prices head up

The government has adopted two regulations for preferential purchase of 70 million tons of diesel for autumn sowing and subsidising 54.20 euro per hectare of crop and potato, with more measures to follow.

Measures include, among others, a one-year grace period to repay the principal on subsidised

loans, doubling the incentives for fattening cattle and pigs, increasing subsidies for milk from 5 [0.04 euro] to 7 dinars [0.06 euro] for the second half of 2012, as well as the emergency purchase of 200,000 tonnes of commercial maize for strategic reserves.

The package of measures, worth 160 million euro, should alleviate some of the pressure on farmers as a result of their unsuccessful harvest, but is far from enough to cover the damage, or to preserve food prices at present levels.

Natalija Bogdanov, professor of the Faculty of Agriculture, expects that the measures will secure food supplies, but not price stability.

"The biggest increase will be in the price of meat and dairy products," Bogdanov predicted.

Farmers, on the other hand, are still awaiting more exact details about the announced state assistance.

"The government has only adopted two measures that were already promised by the former minister," Vojislav Malesev, farmer and head of the "100P plus", association of largest grain producers, said. "We still don't know how the big sums they talk about will actually be spent," he added.

Sanja Bugarski, president of the Association of Milk Producers of Vojvodina, says the government hasn't yet paid the subsidies for the first six months of 2012, while already promising subsidies for the second half of the year.

"The soaring price of corn and soya means that I'd be better off selling them on the market, rather than using them for breeding cows and producing milk, when dairy purchase prices are low and the state is late in its payments," Bugarski said.



Farmers are facing hardship this year after the summer drought

More investment

Experts say that the lower volume of production and smaller reserves means that high food prices are on the cards in 2013.

The high price of pasturage, meanwhile, will lead to the increased slaughter of cows, pigs and sheep, leading to a further decline in livestock numbers.

Miladin Sevarlic, president of the Serbian Society of Agricultural Economists, estimates that the value of agricultural and food product exports this year will drop by around 800 million euro from 2.1 billion euro in 2011.

He adds that the consequences of drought will affect exports in 2013, too, as there will be less surplus left over for export until the next harvest.

"The biggest weakness in Serbian agriculture exposed in the dry 2012 is the decade-long lack of investment in irrigation," he said.

He also says that in the last four years, the value of the funds earmarked for agriculture have fallen by half of in the state budget.

"Thirdly, we have huge oscillations in terms of yearly production of more than 25 per cent," Sevarlic added.

Goran Zivkov, consultant for SEEDEV, a consultancy company, and a former minister of agriculture, says Serbia needs to allocate budget money more efficiently if farming is to become more competitive.

"The problem in Serbia is that expectations of agriculture are much higher than the willingness to invest in and reform the sector," he said.

"We should be aware that our economic recovery cannot depend on agriculture, because other sectors will have to provide jobs for all those who have to leave agriculture and provide money to support ageing farmers.

Zivkov says the best way to improve competitiveness is to invest in new technologies and knowledge, but that in reality this is not happening.

"The measures being introduced, such as providing subsidies per hectare ... often don't contribute to this goal," he said.

"Because of that, Serbia now has the smallest share of investment support and support for rural development in the whole of Europe, when only seven or eight years ago it was among the highest in Europe," Zivkov concluded.

Foreign Retailers Struggle in 'Overcrowded' Albania

The announcement that Slovenian retailer Mercator may sell up in Albania highlights the difficulty that big foreign retail chains face in Albania's fragmented and impoverished market.



By Besar Likmeta

"There has been an overcrowding of the Albanian market by international retailers in the last few years and increased competition," Ornella Liperi, editor of the Tirana business weekly Monitor told Prishtina Insight.

"Fierce competition and sluggish demand from consumers due to the economic crisis might explain a possible exit," she added.

Consumer demand in Albania has been badly affected in the last year due to the debt crisis in Greece and Italy, the country's main trading partners, which host more than a million Albanian emigrants.

"Consumers continue to be oriented toward savings by postponing important economic decisions," Albania's central bank governor said last week.

Toni Bazic, the new chief executive of Mercator, told Reuters news agency that the company was considering selling up in Albania and Bulgaria as part of larger cost-cutting drive that includes also the sale of some real estate.

Mercator opened its first hypermarket in Tirana in December 2009 and currently also operates two neighbourhood stores, with 0.8 per cent share of the total retail market in Albania, worth 700 million euro.

The company's revenues in



Mercator superstore in Albania

Albania in 2011 were 5.3 million euro. Several other international food retailers operate in Albania, including Conad, Carrefour and the Belgian Delhaze.

The largest retailer is Delhaze with 3.2 per cent of the market, while traditional and fragmented forms of retail account for the lion's share.

Serbian Democrats to Choose New Leader in November

After a heated debate on the party's future, Serbia's former ruling Democrats agreed to vote on the new leadership on November 10.



By Bojana Barlovac

Members of the main board of the Democratic Party on last Saturday agreed to a proposal of their leader, Boris Tadic, to elect a new party leadership on November 10.

They rejected his proposal for the voting to direct. Instead, the new leadership will be chosen through a delegate system.

The two main candidates in the running for the top post are the current leader, Tadic, and the party's deputy president, the Mayor of Belgrade, Dragan Djilas.

Part of the membership is unhappy with Tadic, Serbia's former President, blaming him for having concentrated too much power in his hands and for losing the May general and presidential elections.

Djilas was the only senior Democrat to do well in the elections, winning the vote in Belgrade and being appointed Mayor for the second time.

Since the presidential and parliamentary elections, party officials have been publicly bickering and blaming each other for their



Former Serbian President Boris Tadic at a meeting of the Democratic Party last week

loss of power.

Saturday's congress was the first opportunity for them to analyze the causes and consequences of their defeat.

At the beginning of the session, Tadic presented a report on the party's work in the previous period.

In it, he admitted that he bore the biggest responsibility for the Democrats' poor elec-

tion results but said he was not the only one responsible.

"I was ready then to step down as leader. However, the party presidency wanted me to stay on and lead the negotiations on the forming of the government," Tadic said, recalling prolonged post-election negotiations, which in the end led to the formation of a government under the Serbian Progressive Party.

Murder Trial of Macedonian Policeman on Hold

The trial of the Macedonian policeman who shot dead two young Albanians in February, causing ethnic uproar in the country, was delayed last Friday for "security reasons".



By Sase Dimovski

The trial of the policeman at the centre of the case has been delayed after the prison in Prilep refused to bring the ethnic Macedonian detainee, Jakim Trifunovski, 39, to trial in Albanian dominated Gostivar, where the murder took place.

"The court received a letter from the prison saying that they will not bring the suspect to trial for security reasons," Kjirko Mihajloski, head of the Gostivar district court, told Prishtina Insight.

He said that the judge in charge of the case will later decide further steps and investigate the security threat.

The prison in Prilep refused to elaborate to Prishtina Insight on what the threats were.

Meanwhile, Trifunovski's defence in the Gostivar court demanded that the trial be moved to Prilep, arguing that it would be a less risky environment. The Supreme Court will decide on this request.

Trifunovski, a police officer from Gostivar, shot dead two ethnic Albanians in the town in unexplained circumstances while off duty.



Albanian women demonstrated against the death of two men at the hands of a Macedonian police officer

Some said the dispute had erupted over a parking space while others claimed that the victims, Imran Mehmet, 29, and Besnik Shehapi, 26, were neighbours of his with whom he had previously quarrelled.

Police initially said Trifunovski fired his gun in self-defence. They said he was first attacked while parking his car outside his home in the presence of his young daughter.

But local Albanians said the

killing was plain murder and accused the police of trying to cover it up.

In a protest held that month, some 10,000 ethnic Albanians gathered in Gostivar to express their anger over the murder. Some of the protestors turned violent, breaking public property and attacking shops owned by Macedonians.

The killing contributed to a spree of inter-ethnic gang violence in March, the worst since the country narrowly avoided

all-out civil war in 2001.

Gangs vandalized buses and beat up citizens at random on the streets of the capital, Skopje, and in other places.

Ethnic Albanians used social networks to call for renewed protests last Friday in front of the court in Gostivar. However, in the absence of the defendant, few people turned out.

Fearing retaliation, the family of the defendant fled the town shortly after the incident took place.

News in brief

TV Organ Testimony 'Broke Serbian Law', Expert Says

Serbian law expert says that by broadcasting the testimony of an alleged participant in organ-harvesting, the War Crimes Prosecutor broke Serbia's own criminal procedures.

Nikola Lazic, a Belgrade criminal lawyer, said Serbia's Prosecution Office for War Crimes had broken Serbian law as it is forbidden for a protected witness in an investigation phase to speak publicly about the case in question.

"The investigation is also a part of the criminal procedure, and the rules for it are prescribed in criminal law," Lazic said.

By law, the investigation phase needs to be conducted secretly, without the eyes of the public, and only parties involved - prosecutor, judge, lawyer, suspect - in the case should be involved in the findings," Lazic added.

"Presenting your witness to the public prior to the indictment for the case endangers the overall criminal procedure.

"First, it may affect the judge's decisions, then the potential witnesses, but also the perpetrators, as they are now informed that this specific event is being investigated," he explained.

Lazic was referring to Monday's broadcast on Serbia's public broadcaster, RTS - done in cooperation with the war crimes prosecutor - of an interview with a self-proclaimed former fighter in the Kosovo Liberation Army, KLA.

Albania General Feared 'Chemical Attack' in 2011 Riots

General Ndreia Prendi, the former head of the Republican Guard, who is indicted for murder, claimed he had information of a possible chemical weapon attack in last January's deadly protests.

Prendi told the court on Wednesday that he heard that "a sniper and individuals from the crowd with chemical weapons would attack the government building", without specifying the source of the information.

The protests on January 21, 2011, turned into a deadly riot when several hundred opposition marchers attacked a police barricade set up to protect Prime Minister Sali Berisha's office, using sticks, stones and Molotov cocktails.

Police and the Republican Guard responded with tear gas, water cannons and later with live ammunition fire, leaving four protestors dead and several others wounded.

Apart from Prendi, two other members of the Republican Guard are accused in the high-profile trial.

Prendi, together with Agim Lupo, former chief of staff of a special unit of the Republican Guard, are accused of murder under aggravated circumstances.

They face a minimum of 20 years to life imprisonment if found guilty.

Belgrade Waste Contract Leaves

City's contract for underground dumpsters clearly violated procurement law -while many believe the whole procedure was tailor-made to fit a pre-arranged winner.



By Aleksandar Djordjevic

While Belgraders get used to their new underground waste containers, 1,800 of which are being set up around the city, BIRN can reveal that the tender awarded by the city's public utility company, Gradska cistoca, worth around 6 million euro, breached the Public Procurement Act.

The first violation was that only two bids were submitted for the tender issued in March 2011, one of which was deemed inadequate.

Although the Public Procurement Act from 2008 obliges the procuring entity to issue a new tender in such cases, Gradska cistoca nevertheless opened negotiations with the other bidder with which it finally signed a contract.

The deal went to a consortium comprised of two companies, a Belgrade-based company, Blok, which had no previous experience in this field, and Blagojevica from Mladenovac, which did have some experience but was founded by an owner of numerous bankrupted companies.

BIRN has failed in its attempts to obtain clarification of the tender procedure.

Gradska cistoca's director, a Democratic Party official, Aleksandar Stamenkovic, "didn't have time" for an interview, he said.

Rigging complaints:

Breaches in the tender procedure were not the only issue.

Several companies that had intended to apply for the job decided in the end not to compete, believing the tender was rigged.

Although 22 companies purchased bidding documentation, only two actually submitted applications.

"The tender was cleverly put together. The suspicious thing was that technical characteristics were such as to suit only one bidder," said Ljubivoje Slavkovic, director of Blok Signal, in Nis, one of the biggest utility equipment factories in the country.

Although his company bought tender documentation, they gave up on submitting a bid after they saw the requirements that Gradska cistoca had prescribed.

In written response to these claims on June 8, Gradska cistoca stated: "All interested bidders could have met the technical requirements for this bid."

Milan Lukic, secretary of the Socialist Party in Mladenovac, and the man listed as the owner and director of Blagojevica in Serbia's Business Register, told BIRN that Blagojevica's role was to produce containers, which it had done.

Lukic said the right person to talk about the tender was Dusan Mandrapa, owner of Blagojevica's

partner company, Blok.

However, Mandrapa repeatedly refused BIRN's requests for an interview.

Blagojevica's founder, Zivko Radojicic, a man close to the Socialist Party of Serbia in the Nineties, also played an important role in the deal.

Radojicic, who is seen as the informal director of Blagojevica, appeared in the tender as Blok's representative.

Attempts to shed light on his role were in vain, however. He said he had the will but no time for an interview by the time of publication.

'Custom-made' for winner:

The city adopted a decision to introduce underground trash bins in 2009. The plan is to introduce 6,000 by 2013.

Underground waste containers are a novelty in Serbia. Because of that, before the tender was issued, it was expected that interested companies would be provided with sufficient time to develop prototypes. Making a prototype takes at least five months.

According to the Public Procurement Act, the institution issuing a tender can announce its intention to issue a tender a year in advance, in order to attract the best and most affordable offers.

But Gradska cistoca gave potential bidders only two months. The tender was announced in January and issued in March.

Gradska cistoca also breached the Public Procurement Act in terms of advertisements.

The act states that all public procurements worth more than 50 million dinar [420,000 euro] must be announced on the website of the Public Procurement Office and in Serbia's Official Gazette. But information on the tender was published only in the Gazette.

More significantly, perhaps, according to other manufacturers, the tender requirements precisely matched the specifications of the containers, in terms of description and size, that Blagojevica had already installed in the city.

The company delivered 140 dumpsters to Belgrade in 2010.

STP, Molok's representative in Croatia, also pulled out. "We realised that the tender was made to suit only one manufacturer," Marko Brncic, STP's director, told BIRN.

Several directors of other Serbian companies agreed to talk to BIRN but only under condition of anonymity, as they feared they could jeopardise future business deals with the state if they spoke out.

One described the tender deal as "systemic theft".

Another company owner said that he had had bad experiences before with such tenders: "No more tenders for us," he said.

Another bidding requirement practically ruled out all Serbian manufacturers. This asked all potential bidders to produce proof

of prior experience in this field, that is, proof of having manufactured 25 million dinars [214,000 euro] worth of dumpsters.

At the time when the tender was issued, Blagojevica was the only company that could meet this requirement, as this company had previously installed the first and the only underground dumpsters in the country.

Public procurement experts describe the use of this criterion as discriminatory.

Two Serbian companies filed three official complaints against the tender procedure.

Two complaints were upheld June 2011, but Gradska cistoca made only cosmetic changes to the requirements as a result.

Molok's Finland headquarters sent a protest note to Gradska cistoca and to the office of Belgrade Mayor Dragan Djilas. They got no response.

Faulty bid:

Analysts believe that the companies that might file such requests probably have no faith in Serbian institutions and, at the same time, fear that if they complained they would lose opportunities to participate in future tenders.

Fines for violating the Public

Procurement Act are meager and range from 850 euro to 8,500 euro.

This situation, however, may change as the draft of a new Public Procurement Act is soon to be tabled before parliament.

The draft envisages that the Public Procurement Office and the Commission for the Protection of Rights in Public Procurement Procedures could launch procedures to declare contracts null and void.

After the applications were submitted, the tender committee found that the bid submitted by the consortium led by Blok was incorrect, while the bid submitted by other bidder, Eco Waste, was both incorrect and inadequate.

An incorrect bid most often means that the submitted documentation is incomplete, where as an inadequate bid usually implies that the required technical specifications were not met.

In situations when bids are incorrect, bidders are routinely asked to supplement their bids and negotiations are launched with them.

However, Daliborka Sreckov of the Public Procurement Office explains that under the Public Procurement Act, if a submitted bid is judged inadequate, negotiations cannot be launched but a

new tender must be issued.

She further explained that, if the public procurement contract was signed in breach of the law, the contract would be null and void.

In this case, however, although one bid was inadequate, Gradska cistoca still launched negotiations with the consortium led by Blok and finally awarded it the contract.

Although the only other bidder, Eco Waste, was also invited to negotiations, the company decided not to participate.

The winning consortium was not only awarded with a 6 million euro contract.

Gradska cistoca has since signed contracts with the same consortium for additional repair work, servicing, unforeseen works and for cranes used to empty the bins.

The extra contracts were in total worth of about 40 million dinars [350,000 euro].

Where did the money go?

Since the contract was signed, several hundred underground trash bins have been installed in Belgrade and the job should soon be complete.

Meanwhile, Zivko Radojicic's role, both in Blagojevica and in



The plan is to introduce 6,000 underground trash bins by 2013. | Photo by Beoinfo

Law in Dumpster

Blok, remains unclear.

In December 2010, Blok had only two employees and 5 million dinars in earnings (50,000 euro).

By the end of 2011 the company employed 25 people while its income had increased 20 times. Blok ended 2011 with total earnings of about 100 million dinars (about 1 million euro).

The situation in Blagojevica is completely different. The account of this company, which was founded in 1992 by Radojicic, has been blocked since June, because the company is unable to repay 11 million dinars (100,000 euro) in outstanding debts.

Radojicic owns at least four other companies that are either bankrupt or in liquidation.

About three months before the issue of the tender for the waste bins, Radojicic transferred his ownership of Blagojevica to an employee, Milan Lukic.

Locals in Mladenovac still consider Radojicic the real owner of Blagojevica. However, he signed minutes from the negotiating procedure with Gradska cistoca as representative of Blok.

Milan Lukic, listed in the Business Register as the owner and director of Blagojevica, left the company in August, so it remains unclear who officially represents Blagojevica.

In an interview with BIRN in September 2012, Lukic couldn't explain why his former company -



The plan is to introduce 6,000 underground trash bins by 2013. | Photo by Beoinfo

which had won a deal worth 6 million euro - now faced financial difficulties, nor could he say who the current director of Blagojevica was.

"I no longer work for the company, I know nothing about it [the

frozen account]," he said. He spoke of Radojicic with admiration, however, recalling that he had hired him back in 2001 as a labourer.

"I wish there were more people

like him. I take my hat off to him. I admire him," he said.

BIRN journalists Slobodan Georgijev and Gordana Andric also contributed to this article.

Fairness claimed

For the contract to be annulled, one of the interested parties must file a request to the Commission for the Protection of Rights in Public Procurement Procedures.

In case of the Blok-Blagojevica consortium no one filed such requests.

On the contrary, Serbia's Lad Group company, which participated in the tender as part of the Eco Waste consortium, told BIRN it believed that the tender procedure was correct.

"I would have been more than glad to find something wrong and complain but there wasn't anything. It was fair play, an open competition, but we didn't get the job," director Milos Markovic said.

"Blagojevica was at an advantage because they already had a developed model, while we were still developing ours," he added.

Daliborka Sreckov says that she is not aware that anyone in Serbia has ever launched a procedure to declare a tender void, nor that any contracts have ever been declared null and void.

Reform Deadlock Leaves Albania's EU Bid in Limbo

As the big parties exchange recriminations over the country's failure to end the immunity of high state officials, experts remain divided over whether the reform can secure Albania's EU candidate status.



By Besar Likmeta

Since parliament failed to amend the constitution on August 7, lifting officials' immunity from prosecution, the ruling centre-right party and the Socialist opposition have exchanged jibes on the impact that this will have on Albania's bid for EU candidate status.

Sali Berisha's ruling Democrats maintain that the opposition's failure to support the reform serves the interests of a few rich Socialist MPs, while sacrificing Albanian's inspiration for EU integration.

"The billionaires of the Socialist Party are for the third year in a row blocking Albania's candidate status," the Democratic Party spokesperson Silvi Bardhi claimed in mid-August.

Although both Socialist and Democrats agree on the need to lift the immunity that officials currently enjoy, the opposition maintains that such reform should come only as part of a broader constitutional package that also changes the election rules for high court judges and the general prosecutor.

The EU, the US and OSCE

ambassadors in Tirana all urged the Socialists to vote through the reform, although they admit that Albania's justice system needs other changes.

"We believe that lifting immunity is but one step of several that need to be taken to effectively combat corruption," US ambassador Alexander Arvizu said after meeting Socialist leader Edi Rama in early August.

"The timing of steps to address these measures is something that the Albanian political system needs to decide, but, from our perspective, it is important that this be done," he added.

The Socialists maintain that only after their proposals have been discussed in parliament will they give a green light to the amendment to lift the immunity of high state officials.

"We have proposed a series of amendments that do not deal with a make-up of the justice system but with its essence," Socialist MP Gramoz Ruci said in parliament on Monday.

While the big political parties exchange accusations, experts remain divided on whether addressing only one of the many recommendations for reform of the European Commission will be enough for Albania to obtain candidate status in November.

Albania first applied for EU candidacy status in April 2009 but its bid was turned down for the second time last October.

The European Commission said not enough progress had been made in political dialogue, the fight against organised crime and against corruption.

The European Commission has issued 12 recommendations on policy areas that must be addressed for Tirana to obtain candidate status, opening the door to a possible date for negotiations.

Gledis Gjipali, head of the European Movement in Albania, EMA, says the immunity issue is only one of one the priorities that Albania needs to address, and may not be the key condition that secures candidate status.

"Many important issues have not been addressed at all," Gjipali told Prishtina Insight.

"The immunity debate is serving as a justification for what looks like the failure to secure the EU candidate status for the third year in a row," he added.

Gjipali said Albania's political parties have almost completely ignored other key priorities set forth by the Commission, such as parliamentary reform and reform of the justice system, public administration and property rights.

"There also other issues, such as the war against corruption, in which the EU has sought concrete high-profile convictions, not only laws and strategies," he said.

Gjergji Vurmo, director of the Centre for European & Security Affairs at the Tirana-based Institute for Democracy and Mediation, disagrees.

He argues that statements by EU officials indicate that the reform of officials' immunity might be enough for Albania to receive a positive recommendation from the European Commission and later from the EU Council of Ministers.

"The Commission's approach until now has been that reform of immunity should secure a positive recommendation from the European Commission and approval of candidate status from the EU Council," he said.

"Parliamentary reform has also been a condition but it's clear now that if the parties reach a deal on immunity, parliamentary reform will be only a minor detail," he added.

However, Vurmo warns that, based on the experience of other countries, candidate status does not mean necessarily a great leap forward in the EU integration process.

"Receiving EU candidate status

is not a great achievement when the [political] climate and the performances and capacities [of the candidate country] are not at a level that permits the following and most important step, the start of membership negotiations," he said.

Albania has a small window of opportunity until the end of September to solve the logjam over the immunity and address the other recommendations of the Commission before the Commission's progress report is finalised.

Gjipali otherwise believes that only in the case of a grand compromise between parties will the country have a chance to obtain candidate status by the middle of next year, although with the 2013 elections already on the horizon, such compromise looks unlikely.

"It's a small window of opportunity and if commitments are taken with a clear timetable for reforms, Albania could obtain EU candidate status in spring 2013, as Serbia did this year," Gjipali noted.

"However, this is highly unlikely," he concluded, "because with the electoral campaign that seems to have started a year before [the elections], both parties are preparing for war rather than compromise".

How to Buy an EU Citizenship

Dodgy dealers in Romanian nationality can conjure up genuine documents for fake applicants, investigation reveals.



By Adrian Mogos,
Vitalie Calugareanu

Stalin would not have been amused. A man named Vladimir, apparently the Soviet dictator's great-grandson, stands at the threshold of acquiring a Romanian passport and with it, the right to work within the EU. When he crosses that threshold, Vladimir will reverse one of Stalin's achievements. His grandparents were citizens of Romania in the first half of the twentieth century, long before it joined the EU.

They lost their nationality at the end of the Second World War, when Romania ceded the territory of Moldova to Stalin's Soviet Union.

Today, Vladimir is entitled by law to acquire the citizenship that was taken from his grandparents, one of whom shares a name and a birthday with Svetlana Alliluyeva, the Soviet leader's daughter.

He is among hundreds of thousands of Moldovans with Romanian ancestry who regard the border between the two countries as nothing but a bureaucratic invention.

But Vladimir is keeping a secret from the bureaucrats who are about to let him into the EU – his ancestry is also invented.

According to certificates acquired from the Moldovan state archive, his illustrious grandmother was married to one Ostap Bender, who shares a name with the con-man antihero of the Soviet novel, *The Golden Calf*.

The papers from the archive reveal a past rich in historical coincidence. Ostap's Moldovan birth certificate says he was born on June 28, 1914 – the day of the assassination of Franz Ferdinand, and the start of the First World War. The marriage certificate meanwhile shows that Ostap and Svetlana tied the knot on September 2, 1945: the day Japan surrendered to the US.

It is highly unlikely that a woman named after Stalin's daughter took a husband named after a fictitious Soviet trickster on the day the Second World War ended.

Today however, it is entirely possible for a man claiming to be their descendant to buy the right to work in the EU. All he needs are patience, cash, and the right connections among the citizenship brokers and corrupt bureaucrats of Bucharest and Chisinau.

Passport to the EU:

The territory of Moldova was part of Romania between 1918 and 1940, and again between 1941 and 1944. Formerly known as Bessarabia, it was annexed by the Soviet Union during the Second World War and became an independent republic in 1991.

In the same year, Bucharest adopted a law granting foreign nationals of Romanian descent the right to become citizens of the country. Since then, Romania has processed an estimated 225,000 citizenship applications from Moldovans, according to a study published in April 2012 by the Soros Foundation in Romania.

The study was compiled from data provided by Romanian institutions, much of which is incomplete or in dispute. In the absence of exact numbers, the Soros report argues that the figure of 225,000 serves as the "most relevant approximation" of the number of people who have been granted Romanian citizenship in the last 20 years.

The Soros study shows that the annual number of citizenship applications from Moldova has been rising steadily. The rise has coincided with changes in Romanian legislation, and with Romania's entry into the EU in 2007. Moldova is the poorest country on the bloc's borders, and a large proportion of its youth already work in wealthier economies abroad.

The study also shows that Romania has begun processing citizenship applications faster since 2007. Of all applications processed by Bucharest since 2002, more than half – around 116,000 – have been handled in the last four years. Again, the study does not provide a breakdown of how many of these applications were successful.

Many Moldovans regard the Romanian passport as the key to the EU, according to Marian Gherman, a Bucharest prosecutor whose office has investigated a network of touts and bureaucrats who were expediting citizenship applications for money.

"Everybody knows it," he said. "They ask for Romanian citizenship only because it gives them the freedom to travel and work within the EU."

An official from the National Citizenship Authority, NCA, in Bucharest, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirmed that Moldovans had shown little interest in acquiring Romanian nationality until 2007.

'Backdoor' fears:

Moldovans may have several good reasons to seek Romanian nationality – especially where they are legitimately entitled to it. Romanian President Traian Basescu said in 2009 that up to a million Moldovans – representing more than a quarter of the population – wanted to acquire his country's citizenship. He has repeatedly promised to help applicants by cutting red-tape.

However, this investigation, sponsored by the European Fund for Investigative Journalism, reveals that many Moldovans still prefer to acquire Romanian citi-



The documents were issued by the Moldovan state archive, confirming that Vladimir's "ancestors" had once been citizens of Romania.

zenship through unofficial channels. They frequently pay hundreds of euros to brokers in the hope of expediting their applications.

Inexperienced Moldovans risk being ripped off when they use illicit intermediaries. But the unofficial channels can also be very efficient. As this investigation shows, they can even generate proof of Romanian ancestry where none exists.

The EU does not interfere on citizenship, describing it as a sovereign matter for member states. However, Romania's policy has long prompted accusations in the media that it is operating a "backdoor" into the EU, allowing impoverished Moldovans unlawful access to the bloc.

In 2010, France spoke out against Romanian efforts to join the EU's border-free Schengen zone. Among other factors, the French EU affairs minister at the time, Pierre Lellouche, cited "the distribution of Romanian passports" to Moldovans as a cause for concern.

The April 2012 report by the Soros Foundation in Romania argued that many of these fears were unfounded. While criticising Bucharest for an apparent lack of transparency, the study said there was no evidence to support claims of Moldovan migrants surging unchecked into Europe. Nor did the report find any evidence to support Basescu's statement that a million Moldovans were seeking Romanian citizenship.

The Soros foundation is one of several groups in the Open Society network that aim to promote democracy in Eastern Europe.

The authors of the Soros Foundation report said Romania's naturalisation programme – although disorderly – had created proportionately fewer citizens than similar efforts in countries

such as the UK or France. The study also attributed the steep rise in citizenship awards after 2007, the year Romania joined the EU, to the simplification of the process for awarding passports.

'Genuine documents':

Our investigation reveals the existence of a thriving grey market for Romanian citizenship, intersecting official and unofficial channels. However, our investigation does not confirm that Romania is operating a "backdoor" for unchecked and unlawful migration, as some within the EU fear.

Indeed, many Moldovans may use brokers and intermediaries because they are frustrated with the slow pace of Romanian bureaucracy. According to Gherman, the Bucharest prosecutor, the grey market is attractive even to legitimate applicants because it operates faster than the official process, which can take up to six years to award citizenship.

Some Moldovans may also turn to intermediaries because they are already working illegally in western Europe, and cannot leave to apply for citizenship in person. "They can't come to Romania... because they cannot go back to their jobs," Gherman said.

Our investigation mainly calls into question assurances by Romanian officials that all citizenship applications are checked thoroughly to weed out fraud.

By working with a man posing as a citizenship hopeful, "Vladimir", we showed that the procedure for acquiring a Romanian passport cannot distinguish genuine applicants from those whose grandparents are plucked from Soviet history and literature.

After acquiring birth and marriage certificates for Ostap Bender and Svetlana Alliluyeva, we used the same intermediary to get hold

of police records from the Moldovan and Romanian authorities, confirming that Vladimir did not have any criminal convictions.

Along with the certificates from the Moldovan archive, these documents were presented at the citizenship bureau in Bucharest, where an official confirmed that they appeared genuine.

According to the official, Vladimir could apply to take the oath of citizenship once he had completed a few more formalities – namely, submitting his identity card, an application form, and a statement from a notary.

The official's confidence was not misplaced. Vladimir's documents have the seals and signatures of all the appropriate institutions and officials in Moldova and Romania. But while the papers may be legitimate, the means with which they were procured were not.

Fresh from the archive:

We joined Vladimir as he set off on his quest for EU citizenship in Chisinau, the capital of Moldova. The touts were easy to spot, having practically set up stall outside government ministries and the Romanian consulate. They wore pouches around the waist and carried business cards in their hands. At the gates of official buildings they huddled together, drinking coffee or speaking intently into mobile phones.

One of the touts, identifying himself as Vadim, boasted of his contacts with Romanian officials in Bucharest and in the eastern cities of Iasi and Vaslui. He led us to a lady who introduced herself as Maria. As she could not arrange documents in under six months, we continued our search.

A tout calling himself Emil told us he was not doing anything illegal – merely using his influence. "I have a lawyer in Bucharest who can speed things up," he said. He handed out a

business card, advertising a website which promised Romanian citizenship for anyone, anywhere.

The prices quoted on the site varied according to how fast the application would be processed. For 700euro, all the essential citizenship documents could be arranged within 15 months. Payment of 1,000euro guaranteed the documents within 10 months, while a fast-track application – completed within five months – cost 1,500euro. Once citizenship had been acquired, further payment of 95 and a 10-day wait would secure the applicant a Romanian passport. A Romanian ID card would cost an extra 140euro.

Back on the streets, another tout said he could arrange the necessary birth, marriage and death certificates for 300euro. A young woman, claiming to be a university student, interrupted the conversation and promised to lead us to a reliable intermediary. She introduced us to Arghira, a lady in her fifties with a bruise above her eye. She too quoted a price of 300euro, which was then reduced to 250euro. Arghira led us to a public notary, in whose presence Vladimir signed a document. But despite this promising start, Arghira proved to be unreliable, demanding more money at every meeting.

Eventually we struck gold with a middle-aged man who gave his name as Ion. He promised to procure the necessary documents for 70euro each. By the end of February 2012, he had provided birth and marriage certificates for Ostap and Svetlana. The documents were freshly issued by the Moldovan state archive, and they confirmed that Vladimir's "ancestors" had once been citizens of Romania. Shortly afterwards, Ion also provided statements from the police in Romania and Moldova, showing that Vladimir did not have any criminal convictions.

As confirmed by the official in Bucharest, Vladimir was now on the brink of taking the oath of citizenship. In the interests of timeliness, we decided to end our pursuit of Romanian nationality at this point.

Ghostly 'guests':

Had Vladimir gone on to receive citizenship, he would then be in a position to apply for an identity card, which is regarded as the ultimate objective of the citizenship process.

New citizens from Moldova prefer the identity card to the passport because it attracts less scrutiny at EU borders, while offering the same privileges. Recent recipients of Romanian citizenship are still regarded with suspicion at some borders. The identity card, unlike the passport, does not reveal how long its holder has held the nationality.

In order to qualify for an identity card, a citizen must show that they have been resident in Romania for a minimum specified period. Here too, the network of illicit intermediaries is ready to assist, by fabricating proof of residence.

The classified section of a newspaper in Iasi, a large city in eastern Romania, carries ads looking for



A crowd gathered in front of Romanian embassy in Moldova, where touts lurk offering services for those attempting to obtain Romanian citizenship.

locals to host Moldovans that are seeking the ID card. One such ad promises 40euro per guest for anyone willing to host up to 20 people for short periods. In reality, the host is being paid to say that the "guests" are staying at a particular property. The ad asks only that anyone interested have "contacts with the police precinct".

It is not hard to find further evidence that the intermediaries are helping applicants forge their residency. Several citizenship websites contained a picture of the same Romanian ID card, apparently a specimen advertising the final product. While key details on the card had been deliberately blurred, we were able to establish the name of the card's owner and his place of birth – a town in Moldova. The address on the card led to a one-bedroom apartment in a run-down district of Bucharest. No one answered the door. However, a search through online registers revealed that the same address was used by several Moldovans with Romanian citizenship, as well as some Romanian and Chinese firms.

Although it is not illegal for several citizenship applicants to claim residence at the same address, some Romanian officials have tried – without success – to clamp down on the practice.

Victor Gindac, a director in the Office for Immigration, said he began receiving reports in 2009 of individuals who had been tricked by brokers and lawyers in the residence racket. He added that his employees received threats after attempting to unmask lawyers in Bucharest who had helped forge proof of residence.

The NCA has also tried to warn applicants against using unofficial brokers and lawyers to expedite their citizenship applications. However, a statement to this effect on the NCA website, posted in February 2012, provoked fierce complaints from lawyers in Bucharest. The online warning was duly amended to exclude lawyers from the category of intermediaries.

Migrants go legal:

Romania carried out its most high-profile crackdown on the citizenship racket in March 2012. Dozens of people were arrested and thousands of euros were recovered in a series of raids. NCA employees as well as brokers holding Moldovan and Romanian nationality are awaiting trial.

According to Gherman, the Bucharest prosecutor, they formed part of a network that was responsible for handling around 1,000 citizenship applications. Court documents said US investigators had helped trace the group's financial transactions.

Moldovan officials also say they made several arrests in concert with the Romanian crackdown. Anastasia Mihalceanu, a spokeswoman for the anti-corruption agency in Chisinau, said some 80 people had been questioned over the citizenship racket – all of them brokers or people employed by them. "Here in Moldova, no officials were involved," she added.

Separately, Moldovan prosecutors and anti-corruption officials say they have been making arrests throughout 2012. Of the nine people questioned over citizenship rackets since January, some have reportedly been state officials or lawyers. Only two of the nine cases have proceeded to trial so far. There have been no convictions.

Our investigation shows that the grey market has continued to thrive, despite arrests on both sides of the border. The birth and marriage certificates for Ostap and Svetlana were procured just weeks after the March crackdown.

And while Mihalceanu says state employees were not among the 80 arrested in the Moldovan sweep, our investigation suggests they are nonetheless complicit in the citizenship racket. How else could the state archive in Chisinau deliver legitimate-seeming records for fictitious individuals?

At best, the March crackdown may have succeeded in temporarily slowing down the illicit citizen-

ship business. In April, we met a Moldovan man outside the passport directorate in Bucharest. His Romania-based broker, a lady named Oxana, was due to procure his identity card – but had been scared off by the recent arrests. "She knew somebody in a high position – but now she wants to lie low for a while," he said. The man, who gave his name as Andrei, said it had taken him a year to acquire his Romanian citizenship through intermediaries, at a cost of almost 1,500 uro.

Meanwhile in Chisinau, several Moldovans said they had used their new nationality to take jobs in the EU. All said they had migrated in order to support families struggling in dire poverty.

Alexandru Covas, a garage employee, said he used to work illegally in Italy and would dread being stopped by Italian police – until he received his Romanian citizenship. "The passport is a salvation but I can't stand the Romanians," he said. "They are selfish, treacherous people."

Interviewed while visiting his hometown in Moldova, Veaceslav Mandis said he did not feel he had profited unfairly by becoming a Romanian national: "Nobody asked my grandfather when they took away his Romanian citizenship in 1945." A former teacher who now works as a truck driver in Italy, Mandis said the passport meant he did not have to break any laws.

Liuba Carpineanu, a Moldovan who has worked in Italy as a carer for the elderly, said her Romanian passport spared her from using people traffickers. "The first time I left Moldova, we had to pay 4,000euro to a guide who took us through swamps and forests," she said. "I don't want to remember what we went through."

Disputed figures:

While the advantages of acquiring Romanian citizenship are obvious, the number of beneficiaries remains in dispute.

Efforts to draw conclusions about the process are hampered by a lack of clear data, and by dramatic discrepancies in the figures provided by various institutions.

For instance, the NCA told us it had approved around 15,000 applications in the period 2007-11. It said it had rejected around 1,000 applications in the same period. Taken together, this would mean the NCA had processed around 16,000 applications in that time.

However, this contradicts official figures quoted by the Soros Foundation's April 2012 study, which say that the NCA had processed 116,000 applications between 2007 and August 2011.

While the study did not have exact figures for how many citizenships were granted, the authors suggested that most of the applications in the 2007-11 period would have been successful.

The NCA did not comment on the discrepancy, only saying that its figures were correct. The Soros Foundation is also standing by the figures. The study containing them was released in the presence of NCA representatives.

The NCA insists it carries out thorough checks on all citizenship applications. "If there are any suspicions over a document [such as a birth or marriage certificate], there are supplementary verifications," NCA spokeswoman Gabriela Neagu said.

A Moldovan citizenship broker offered an alternative guarantee. "Give me a Russian from Siberia," he boasted, "and I will make him a Romanian citizen."

Additional reporting by Vitalie Selaru in Chisinau and Lina Vdovii in Bucharest. Editing by Neil Arun for the Balkan Investigative Reporting Network.

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'Black Sheep' Disturbs Lethargy of Albania Art Scene

An exhibition by painter Helidon Haliti, which draws inspiration from his personal narrative, anxieties and qualms, has art lovers flocking to Albania's National Gallery.



By Besar Likmeta

August is an unusual month for an art exhibition in Tirana. Its often chaotic streets, filled with unruly drivers, go quiet as the city takes a break from its own mundane restfulness.

Like the city, Tirana's art scene comes to a standstill as artists and art lovers move to the coast or fly away to resorts for their summer vacations.

However, the exhibition that Helidon Haliti opened in mid-August, called "Black Sheep", had many people flocking back and filled the media with a buzz.

Haliti's large canvasses, painted with warm colours and simple figures, which often create complex exchanges, narrate a deeply felt personal and artistic quest, covering his first steps in watercolours at the age of eight to the murder of four opposition protestors during last January's riots in Tirana.

Haliti says that when he started conceptualizing the exhibition he immediately decided that all of its characters would be strictly connected with his own personal narrative - his fears and anxieties, rancour and sarcasm.

To escape from himself as an individual, Haliti spent months secluded in his studio in order to attach himself more closely to his artistic alter ego.

"The periods that I could go beyond myself as an individual were few, but they were enough to bring forth this exhibition, which explores my deficiencies and the malformations of a country with imposed boundaries," he said.

Haliti belongs to a new generation of contemporary Albanian painters that graduated during the Nineties in the Academy of Fine Arts in Tirana following the collapse of Albania's communist regime, which for nearly half-a-century had imposed Social Realist aesthetics with an iron fist.

After graduation, like many artists of his generation, Haliti moved to Athens, where he explored genres and techniques.

The drama of emigration and the spiritual distemper as an emigrant were reflected in several pictorial cycles, such as "The Legs", "The pigeon", "The cage" and "Adam and Eve".

"Black Sheep" is the artist's first exhibition at the National Gallery of Arts, GKA, and represents works produced in the last three years, the period following his return to Albania, which, although often defined by a personal gloom, produced a body of works with cheerful colours.

"Now that I see the exhibition as a spectator I am surprised by the harmony of the opposites, the contradictions in light, shadows and forms, between warm and cold colours," Haliti said.

"The conversion that happened inside

me reaches an almost joyful expression in the canvass, which I cannot explain but pleases me very much," he added.

Since the exhibition opened on August 16, it has received more than 2,500 visitors, a record for the GKA this year.

The poem, written in 1972, used sharp wit to contrast the propaganda of the Communist regime with the impoverished reality in which many Albanians lived.

Following publication of the poem Haliti was chaffed by the then literary establishment, banished from publishing and sent to work as a labourer for a decade, first in a collective farm and, after four years, digging ditches.

Haliti says that his painting is not a recreation of his father's poem, but rather explores the impact that this poem had on their family, the qualms and sacrifices of his father, questioning if they were really worth it.

"Sometimes in art you receive a much harder blow than the one you gave," Haliti said of his father's poem.

Haliti's exhibition includes two dozen works, whose simple figures and symbols are depicted in warm colours that make them easily decipherable.

"The world is too tired, has too many wounds... and that is why my symbols are simple," Haliti says, paraphrasing one of his father's poems. "Rancour and pain and problems mixed with colours are easier to see," he added.

The only painting in Haliti's exhibition that does not draw inspiration directly from his life, "21 J" refers to the deadly opposition protest in Tirana in January 2011, in which four protestors were shot dead by the Republican Guard and several others wounded.

Haliti says he decided to include the painting in the exhibition only at the last moment, while transferring the canvasses from the studio to the National Gallery of Arts.

"While walking with a friend [in the boulevard] I stepped on some tiles and it hit me that blood had been spilled on those tiles," Haliti recalls. "So I decided to exhibit it and there is no mystery as to what it refers," he added.

The canvass gives the impression of a river of blood that nearly spills out of the frame with a watchful head of a rooster serving as a counterpoint.

The painter remembers seeing the death of the protestors live on TV while at luncheon in Lake Ohrid at an artists' colony, and feeling completely shocked at what had happened.

"I was completely horrified but to my shock some of my colleagues there approved of the shootings," Haliti recalled.

"This nagged me so much that I could not overcome it without reacting," he said, adding: "The painting was more imposed than inspired."

This article is funded under the BICCED project, supported by the Swiss Cultural Programme.



Photo News:

Great Britain's David Weir celebrates on the podium with his gold medal after winning the men's marathon T54, at The Mall in London, on Sunday September 9, 2012. The man nicknamed the "Weirwolf of London" has become a household name in the host nation by triumphing in the 800 meters, 1,500 meters and 5,000 meters over the past week, and now takes the marathon crown in a time of time of 1 hour, 30 minutes, 20 seconds.

(AP Photo / Chris Radburn, PA)



London Celebrates the Paralympics

Analysis: Does the CIA step up drone strikes during Muslim festivals?

by Jack Serle and Chris Woods

The news-lines said it all. 'US official summoned after drone rampage over Eid,' reported The Hindu. 'A flurry of drone attacks pounded northern Pakistan as Pakistanis celebrate the end of the holy month of Ramadan,' said Reuters.

The Eid witnessed some of the most intense bombing of Pakistan by the CIA in many months. Seven attacks since August 18 have killed up to 65 people including senior Taliban leaders and civilians.

But are the CIA's drone strikes actually more frequent during Muslim religious holidays?

It seems not. Data from the Bureau reveals no major difference in the tempo of CIA attacks during Ramadan compared to other times of the year. The exception was in 2010 when there were 15 strikes during the Muslim holy month compared to the monthly average of 11 for that year. This, however, was possibly linked to an Isaf counter-insurgency push across the border in Afghanistan which took place at that time.

Perhaps more surprising, research by the Islamabad-based Conflict Monitoring Centre (CMC) shows that some militant groups in Pakistan do not seem to respect the religious periods.

A time of peace?

Throughout the world, Muslims fast from dawn until sunset for the month of Ramadan. It is supposed

to be a time of religious devotion. The long fast is broken with Eid al Fitr, a three-day holiday when families gather together to feast and celebrate.

'Generally it is perceived that the month of Ramadan is a time of peace and tranquility,' the CMC's director Abdullah Khan told the Bureau. '[But for] the militants who claim to be mujahedin and wage jihad against Islam's enemies, this sacred period is called the Month of Jihad.'

Landmark battles for the control of Mecca early in Islam's history were fought during Ramadan, Khan explains. Some militants use this as proof 'that Muslims should wage Jihad in Ramadan.'

Militant groups such as the Pakistan Taliban (TTP) have continued to kill and wound Pakistani security forces and civilians throughout Ramadan.

According to data provided to the Bureau by the CMC, this year there were 86 attacks in the month prior to Ramadan and 96 during Ramadan and Eid.

And in 2011 there were 120 recorded terrorist attacks during Ramadan and Eid, compared with 146 attacks in the previous four weeks.

Peak fighting period

Nor is Ramadan a time of peace in neighbouring Afghanistan.

The date of Ramadan changes annually. For the last four years it has fallen during the peak of the Taliban 'fighting season' against the International Security

[For] the militants who claim to be mujahedin and wage jihad against Islam's enemies, this sacred period is called the Month of Jihad. Abdullah Khan, director, Conflict Monitoring Centre.

Assistance Force (Isaf).

According to data provided to the Bureau by Isaf, August and September have seen a peak in the number of attacks by Afghan insurgents on Isaf troops since at least 2008.

This peak has also been coinciding with the end of the multi-million dollar poppy harvest, when insurgents are busy gathering and processing opium poppies into heroin.

Isaf says it does change its own tactics during Ramadan – but not directly out of any cultural consideration.

This year the alliance timed its operations as often as possible for before dawn and after sunset. This was to limit the strain on fasting Afghan soldiers who were fighting alongside Nato troops.

Lieutenant Amy Hession of Isaf public affairs told the Bureau: 'Operations continued to be aggressive but were conducted mainly during times when observant troops had access to water or food.'

CIA campaign

While the CIA, which declined



Islamic Militants in Waziristan are the target of drone attacks (Photo AP)

to comment for this article, appears to make no concessions towards Ramadan, bombing has been particularly intense through the three days of Eid this year.

Muslims in Pakistan's tribal region broke their fast on August 18 this year, a day earlier than the rest of the country. During the three days of Eid three drone strikes killed 11 to 22 people in North Waziristan. And the strikes have continued after the holiday. In all seven strikes killed 29 to 65 people in the week after Ramadan.

Among those reported killed were Badruddin Haqqani, Emeti Yakuf and Ahsan Aziz. All were described as Taliban leaders.

The attacks also saw the first firm reports of civilian deaths in some months – with Haqqani's 13-

year old son Osama, and the wife of Ahsan Aziz, both reported killed.

This was the second time during the Obama presidency that the CIA has launched strikes during Eid itself. In 2010 the CIA killed at least five people in an attack on a house in North Waziristan on September 12.

In contrast there are no records of any US drone strike in Pakistan on the major Christian celebrations – Easter Sunday and Christmas Day – since the covert drone war began in 2004.

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	Average number of CIA strikes per month	Strikes during Ramadan
2009	5	5
2010	11	15
2011	6	6
2012	4	3

Source: The Bureau of Investigative Journalism

Here is Prishtina Insight's guide to the best places in town to eat, drink, shop and be merry. We'll keep this section updated with the newest and coolest places opening in Kosovo.

Restaurants:

Liburnia 1 and 2

Rr Meto Bajraktar, tel. +381 (0)38 222 719. There are actually two Liburnias opposite each other, both very similar in style and food. Housed in a fine Ottoman abode and surrounded by pleasant walled gardens, Liburnia oozes atmosphere, whether in winter or summer. The food is a roll call of decent traditional Albanian food, including the usual stews (tave) and grilled meat. It's not the best place in town to sample local delicacies, but a good choice given the setting. Open 8 am - 11 pm

Country House

Off road to Podujevo from Pristina, right after the Muciqi Mercedes-Benz garage, tel. +377 (0)44 656 054. This rustic restaurant is a 15-minute drive outside Pristina (on a good day) and provides glorious views across rolling, verdant hills and is especially pleasant place in the summer to watch the sunset. The overall food quality is decent, with special marks for the fresh bread, straight from the wood stove, and specia me maze (peppers in cream). 10 am - 11 pm.

Princesha Gresa

23 Rr. Fehmi Agani, tel. +381 (0) 38 24 58 41. If you have a horse-size hole in your stomach to fill, this is the place to come. The meal starts with some free bread and dips and is followed by gargantuan portions of salad, meat, fish, or anything else on this varied menu. The food is sometimes great, sometimes average but always served in massive portions. Open 10 am - 11 pm.

Hemingway

Rr Ilaz Kodra, tel. +386 (0)49 145 637. Yes, you can get fresh sea fish in landlocked Kosovo. Hemingway is tucked away in an unappealing end of the city but worth a trip if you are craving food of the piscine variety. It's a pretty basic sort of set-up and relatively expensive for the setting, but undoubtedly one of the best places in town for fish. Open 9 am - 11 pm

Le Siam Thai

Rr Fehmi Agani, tel. +377 (0)45 243 588.

Stylishly designed and smoke-free, Le Siam has become a real hit for the international community of Kosovo. If you are acquainted with Thai food, you're not in for any surprises here, with the typical assortment of curries, salads and deep fried treats, delivered to decent standards. At 7 or 8 euro for a main course, it's relatively pricey compared to its neighbours. Open Monday-Thursday 11:00-14:00 and 17:45-22:30; Friday-Sunday 11:00-23:00.

Renaissance II

Rr George Bush (behind the Pro Credit Bank HQ), tel. +377 (0)44 118 796. Renaissance offers arguably the best overall dining experience in Prishtina. It's quite an experience just to find the place. Tucked away along a tiny alleyway, you enter the homely, stone building through heavy wooden doors. It's 15 euro per head, and for that you will be kept fed, watered and supplied with booze for at least a three course meal, including a wonderful meze starter and a delicious main course cooked on embers. Open 11 am - 11 pm.

Bars:

Crème de la Crème

Rr Robert Doll, tel. +377(0)44259912. Crème is probably the best all-round bar in the city. It's run for the amusement of the young, arty owners and not for profit, which explains the more-than-generous pricing arrangements, especially for the perfectly executed cocktails. Its five tiny floors heave on Fridays and Sundays with Pristina's cool to the variety of beats. Every Wednesday, Friday and Saturday from 8pm to 3am.

Filikaqa

Rr Mujo Ulqinaku BL 4/1, Pejton, website www.filikaqa.com; 038 244 288. Whistle, as it translates from Albanian, offers a dizzying array of televisions on which to watch your sport of choice and eat the best burgers in town. Select a booth, ask the amiable staff to tune into your match and grab a 'double decker' or 'triple burger', which look like American fast-food classics but taste better. Friday night Karaoke is a must-see, must-see event.

Hard Rockers Club

Road Ilaz Kodra, contact: vraja_fatos@hot-mail.com. It's one of the few places in Prishtina where you can catch regular live acts and the only place which caters for those who like their rock served up heavy, or hard. On a quiet night, it's quite a comfortable venue to grab a beer, even if you are not being entertained by hirsute musicians.

The Cuban

Road Luan Haradinaj Tel: +377(0) 45 620 620. This is a decent addition to the city's drinking scene, even if the place can be full of spivs and tarts who aren't going to a fancy-dress party. The Cuban-themed décor is decadent Havana, the food is average, and not very Caribbean, but the cocktails are good. 8 am - 1 am.

Xhoni's Bar

Rexhep Mala, Pristina, tel. +377 (0)44 750 720. Xhoni's is, without doubt, a Prishtina institution. It's small, friendly and smoky, plays excellent soul, disco and classic rock music from vinyl and is open until the last man or woman staggers out. Arrive by 11pm at the weekend to secure a corner, or even better a seat, if you intend to make a night of it. Next to A&A restaurant and has round windows. Opens: 8pm-to late. Shut on Sundays.

Fastfood:

Bel Ami

Rr Luan Haradinaj, Tel: +377 (0)44 133 848, +386 49 133 848. The ideal town-centre stop for a quick lunch or takeaway snack, Bel Ami unceremoniously serves some of the best chicken doner in Prishtina in a surprisingly un-greasy, smoke-free environment. Ask for a "komplet" to get the classic doner packed with salad and sauces and wrapped in tin foil. Monday-Friday 9 am - 7.30 pm; Saturday 9 am - 8 pm.

Clubs:

P1

Fehmi Agani, +377 (0)44 608 669. If you're looking for cool, then P1 is probably not the spot for you. The decor is pretty uninspiring, the music is bog standard and the atmosphere reminiscent of a cattle market. But if your thing is scantily clad young women or packs of amorous boys, than it's an excellent choice. And, in the venue's defence, it does have a pleasant outdoor area for summer dancing. Working hours Wednesday, Friday, Saturday from 9 pm to 3 am.



Hot Food:

NOMNOM, Rr Rexhep Luci, Prishtina. A superb edition to Prishtina's dining scene. Its London chef serves up food fit for a high-end eatery in the Big Smoke. The excellent variety of ingredients on offer is particularly pleasing, as is the extensive wine list. The outdoor area is also great for people watching while you sup a cocktail or two.

PAPIRUN(LEFT). Tel. 045 26 23 23. Papirun has seating at two perpendicular counters in what's basically a hole-in-the-wall just off Mother Teresa Boulevard, near the Grand Hotel. The menu has 13 options: 6 pizzas and seven sandwiches. The sandwiches are the stars, though. Every component is handled with care. The bread alone is good enough to make just about any sandwich into a glorious feast. It's freshly baked and seasoned with rosemary.

Hot Shop:

SACRO(ABOVE), Rruga Garibaldi, Behind Metro Caffe, Prishtina, tel. +377 44 234 499, www.sacrobio.com Where in Pristina can you buy dried Kamenica mushrooms? Lentils to help with a vegetarian/vegan diet? Marshmallow root? Sacro, the newly-opened shop in central Prishtina, is an education and a delight.



Where to pick up Prishtina Insight?

Prishtina Insight has teamed up with these excellent venues to offer a limited number of complimentary copies of Kosovo's only English-language newspaper. Grab a copy of the publication and settle down with a drink or a meal to read it.

A taste of Napoli in Prishtina.

After ten years of making pizza in Napoli, and with only love to blame, Fatmir, the head chef, returned to Prishtina. His pizzas, made in a woodburn stove, are definitely genuine napolitanas. Fatmir also has several delicious pastas on offer, a true joy for the taste buds. Napoli has an excellent selection of red and white wines or, for the more ambitious, one of the region's best quince raki. Napoli makes for delicious lunch, dinner or even after-theatre time out in the centre of Prishtina.



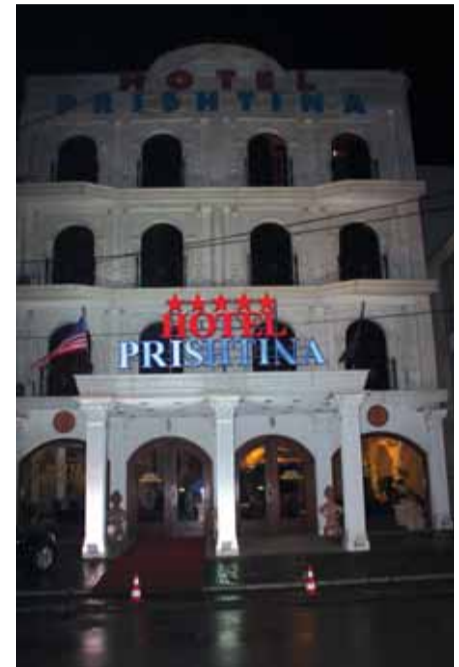
*Pizzeria Napoli
off Luan Haradinaj, opposite Newborn
044/409-402402*

Hotel Prishtina

Hotel Prishtina's 43 charming guest rooms and suites are reminiscent of a small hotel in the European tradition. You'll immediately feel at home in our living room, sipping a glass of wine in our fine restaurant surrounded by a gallery of paintings by local artists.

The hotel offers free, fast wifi internet, complimentary breakfast, conference room, swimming pool, sauna and laundry service.

*Hotel Prishtina,
St. Vaso Pasha nr. 20
+381 38 / 22 32 84*



Hotel AFA

Located in a quiet neighbourhood just outside the city centre, Hotel Afa can guarantee guests a peaceful night while being within walking distance of all the action. The venue has won a host of awards for its excellent service to customers and offers a good range of facilities, from an exclusive restaurant and VIP bar to pretty, tranquil gardens. Rooms start at 45 euro for a single, and luxury rooms and apartments are available. The hotel's rooms are well appointed and comfortable.

*15, Rr Ali Kelmendi,
Sunny Hill, Prishtina
+381 38/225 226
www.hotelafa.com*



Te Komiteti

Te Komiteti's large trees and a beautifully garden, which surround the small outdoor terrace, give you an impression of an exclusive place for ordinary people. And this is exactly what it is. From brunch to lunch-time snacks and special evening meals, this restaurant offers dishes comprising quality, varied ingredients, combined to perfection. Alongside one of Prishtina's best 'modern European' style menus, you'll also find a good selection of wine, and great sangria and cocktails.

*Te Komiteti
Qamil Hoxha Street
Prishtina
+381 38 24 96 63*



Restorant Brasserie Lura

At 450-metres squared Restaurant Lura is as spacious as you get in Prishtina. It's also surrounded by the towering trees of Germia and offers a pleasant garden where, in the summer, this eatery prepares food al fresco. It's large meeting room is also ideal for that private lunch or dinner.

The combined style of classical and modern interior leaves you with an impression of refined taste.

The newly opened restaurant is already famous for its Mediterranean specialties, exquisite seafood and fine selections of Italian, French and local wines. But that's not all, for music lovers, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday night dinners are accompanied by jazz, whereas on Saturdays local patriots can enjoy live traditional Albanian music.

*Lura Restaurant
Str. Nazmi Gaffuri • 10 000 Prishtina • +381 (0)38 763 763 ;
+386 (0)49 763 763 • www.lurarestaurant.com
info@lurarestaurant.com*



Paddy O'Brien's

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

And with its warm atmosphere, fantastic range of drinks and excellent food, it is easy to see why.

There have been many attempts to establish a proper Irish pub in Prishtina, but this is the only one to hit the spot.

From classic coffees to cocktails, via, of course, Guinness, you really won't find it difficult to select the perfect drink.

A mouth-watering menu of Irish specialties is also on offer, spanning from all-day breakfasts to Irish stews at night.

Options include shepherd's pie, bangers and mash, fish 'n chips, and whopping great burgers.

Thursday is pub quiz night, but there is always something going on at the pub, whether it is sport screenings or just a good shindig.



*Paddy O'Brien's
Tringe Smajli Street, by the Illyria Hotel
Prishtina: 045-420900*

Papillon Bistro Bar

This newly reopened bar in Prishtina, Papillon, offers more than 60 types of wines from France, Italy, Spain, and Kosovo with great prices and delicious dishes.

They serve pasta, sandwiches, salads and different appetizers.

You can also try different types of local or international beers.

The bar, with its stunning new design, is located in the centre of Prishtina, near ProCredit Bank headquarter, RTK radio centre, and the Mother Teresa cathedral.

*Papillon
Mother Teresa Str. Nr. 51 A
info@caffepapillon.com
044 103 310*



+

Apple Product Repair in Prishtina



By Douglas Morris

If you have dropped your iPhone in water, shorting out the circuit boards, sat on your iPad and cracked the screen, crunched your iPod in a car door, had the hard drive on your MacBook crash, or any other manner of problems associated with your Apple products, then I have just the person you should contact in Prishtina: Sabedin Makoli.

Macintosh tech for US Ambassador Dell, former head of the repair department at the local Apple store — Molla (which is, you guessed it, Albanian for “apple”) — Sabedin is a technical wizard. All he lacks is a cape with funny symbols on it, a pointy hat, and a wand. What he is able to do with Apple technology is nothing short of brilliant.

“I used to work at Molla, the local Apple store,” he explained, “but I left to start my own business because it seemed to me they only wanted to sell more products, not repair the ones they had already sold. Me, what I really like doing, is bringing broken technology back to life.”

Thank god for that, as my hard drive crashed here in Kosovo recently. Despairing, I thought I had

lost a 50,000-word manuscript I had been working on since arriving in Kosovo, but had neglected to back up to my external hard drive. When I had given up all hope of recovering the file, a local friend recommended I visit Sabedin.

Finding his shop was a cultural experience in, and of, itself. On the first floor retail area of a modernist apartment building, the first thing that came to mind was the movie Blade Runner. It was night, lights were flickering in the darkened hallways, some of which seemed to lead to nowhere, populated by empty store fronts, with shadowy figures following me with their gaze as I passed.

Any moment I expected an android Darryl Hannah to cartwheel around the corner. Well maybe that is more of an ongoing fantasy, but at first glance the scene was freakishly futuristic.

Entering Sabedin's store only added to the surreal. His place was a shambles. It was as if someone had upended all the drawers on the floor, and for good measure dumped bits and pieces of technology everywhere. Despite having spent my entire work life in the hi-tech world, surrounded by folks who have a less than neat approach to their workspaces, Sabedin's workshop took chaos to whole new level. Which is not a bad thing with techies. From my experience, that sort of work-

space clutter indicates someone focused on results rather than being tidy.

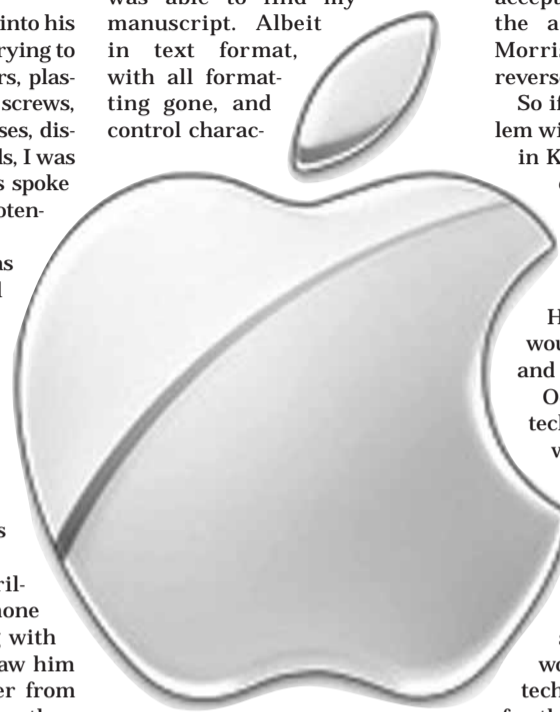
So, as I crunched my way into his hole-in-the-wall workshop, trying to avoid ultra thin screwdrivers, plastic containers of itty-bitty screws, circuit boards, computer cases, disassembled iPhones and iPads, I was actually relieved. This mess spoke volumes about Sabedin's potential tech cred.

Over the next few days, as he used one software tool after another to try and resurrect my hard drive, I watched him in action. Juggling three, four, five activities at once, Sabedin remained calm, focused and able to locate needed pieces of hardware, screws, and components in the chaos he called his workshop.

The man was simply brilliant. I saw him get a phone working that was dripping with water when it came in. I saw him cobble together a computer from parts scavenged from others then sell it onto a happy customer. I saw him replace components in an iPad that had been virtually crushed and got it working again. And throughout all of this, he was able to re-image my hard drive, give me 30GB of data — containing about 30,000 completely renamed files — to search through and

locate the one file I needed.

After some creative searching, I was able to find my manuscript. Albeit in text format, with all formatting gone, and control charac-



ters strewn about the document. But bottom line, I had my 50,000-word manuscript back. All thanks to Sabedin.

Even though this whole process took two to three overnight sessions of his computer churning away crunching data, and hours of dealing with me in his store, the

price I ended up paying was so incredibly reasonable I would not accept it until he added 20 euro to the amount. That's me, Doug Morris, the world-renowned reverse bargainer.

So if you ever encounter a problem with your Apple products here in Kosovo — iPhone, iPad, iPod, or Macintosh computers — certainly, use the local Apple store, Molla. They are a fully licensed Apple distributor after all.

However, if I were you, I would first head over to Sabedin and let him work his magic.

Oddly enough, for a super techie, Sabedin prefers dealing with people face to face. So you can call, text, and email him, but I am pretty sure he will ask you to come to his store so he can check it out your malfunctioning device in person. The visit will be well worth it. Not only to get your technology working again, but for the whole cultural experience of visiting his store. A Blade Runner meets Clockwork Orange meets Star Wars bar scene all rolled into one.

Sabedin Makoli, 044 (or 049) / 316-159, Bregu i Diellit, Qendra tregtare lokali 64A, Prishtina, Kosovo. sabedin.m@gmail.com.

Thousands Watch “Tito” Speak

Some 2,000 people gathered in a burnt out section of the Boro Ramiz shopping centre, Prishtina, on Saturday to experience a remarkable piece of performance art.

Using the relics they had found in the charred space — ID cards, documents from the 80s and shoes — artists set about taking over the space, and exploring the history of

Boro and Ramiz, Serbian and Albanian partisans representing the “brotherhood and unity” of Yugoslavia who gave their names to the modernist centre in central Prishtina.

The event, called “Prishtina — mon amour” including a speech by an actor playing Tito. (Photo by Mersina Xhemajli)



Prishtina through the Eyes of:



Thomas Schmidinger

former research fellow at the University of Prishtina

What surprised you most about Prishtina?

The nice night life in the evenings — and even in the afternoons. I visited Prishtina the first time in 2006 and I have to say that the bars, coffee houses and restaurants really improved since then.

What's your favorite hangout?

Difficult to say, because there were many nice places, but to be honest, the open air coffee houses in the city park.

Do/did you do anything cultural?

Yes, I went to a movie, but I was very disappointed about the quality of movies they show in the only cinema in town. And I also went to some of the concerts at the bars

along Rexhep Luci.

What is the most annoying thing about Prishtina?

The quality of the air and the not very well organized public transport system.

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

I am not sure if the mayor would be able to change everything that would be needed. However, it is obvious that the social differences between rich and poor are one of the most urgent things that have to be addressed. I also hope that one day Prishtina will have a good public transport system and downtown Prishtina will be not full of non-accessible compounds of inter-

nationals anymore, but full of public cultural spaces, like good theatres and cinemas, open air concert halls and so on.

How many macchiatos do/did you drink a day?

Between 7 and 15. Kosovo is a paradise for coffee-lovers.

What's the tastiest Kosovan food?

There is lots of tasty food in Kosovo, but I especially love the general balkanese Skënderbeu and what I really miss is my daily Salat Shope.

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

Varrezat e dëshmorëve.

Green Pages: A Guide to Green living in Kosovo



By Elizabeth Gowing

If you're reading this column then you're someone interested in sustainable living in Kosovo. (Or the person you're due to meet is just really late and you've run out of other things to look through while you wait? That's fine, I shall work to make you interested in sustainable living in Kosovo. I aim for this column to be like a tomato: it starts off green but it ends up read...)

But even when you want to be green in Kosovo, it's not easy. You conscientiously separate your home and office waste, and then can't find out how to have the rubbish recycled; you want to use public transport, but can't find information



available on bus or train times; you're interested in holidaying locally with a light carbon footprint, but you don't know where to go.

If this sounds familiar, then the Green Pages; a guide to green living in Kosovo offers you an easier - maybe even a better - life!

It's been published this week in a joint project by The Ideas Partnership NGO and UN Volunteers, and includes sections on recycling in Kosovo, the country's second-hand shopping, green office services, Kosovo resources for reducing packaging, buying local here, eco-tourism in Kosovo, public transport and green volunteering. This is no nannying attempt to tell you that you should turn the lights off when you leave a room; this is a practical compilation of contact details and local resources specific to where we live.

The recycling section, for example, offers contact details of people who will collect and recycle your plastic bottles, cans and batteries. There's information on finding homes for your unwanted books, clothes and furniture through various NGOs, and details of the plastic bottle top, 'Kosovo cap' project.

This section is followed by an extensive directory for second hand shopping, helping you to treat yourself to quirky, retro, or just plain cheap clothes (and also books and bikes) that have cost no additional resources from the planet to produce. I dare you to name even three of the dozen second hand clothes shops with which I now realise Prishtina is so blessed.

For work, the Green Pages offers information on where to buy recycled paper, how to recycle your cartridges, get publications printed on recycled paper with recycled ink, and suggestions for local suppliers and creators of office furniture. The 'buy local' directory tells you where to find locally-produced jewellery, antiques and cosmetics, as well as foodstuffs (including organic suppliers). And if you're tempted



to explore the places where some of these products come from then the eco-tourism section introduces you to kullas and homestay in Decan, Dragash, Junik, Novo Brdo, Rugova, and Velika Hoca. There's even a section on environmental volunteering opportunities.

Even more wonderfully, the Green Pages, available in English, Albanian and Serbian, is free of charge. It's been published with a short print run (printed on recycled paper), but - more sustainably - it's also available for you to download, add to and comment on the entries at the www.KosovoGreenPages.wordpress.com site.

It's a great resource, however long you've lived here, but it will be particularly useful for new arrivals, including in induction packs or office intranet systems, or just leaving with a cheery smile on your new colleague's desk or inbox.

And now there's no excuse...

Elizabeth Gowing is a founder of The Ideas Partnership, a Kosovan NGO working on educational, cultural and environmental projects. She is also the author of Travels in Blood and Honey; becoming a beekeeper in Kosovo. She can be reached on theideaspartnership@gmail.com

Outside In The Kingdom of Looting



By Kreshnik Hoxha

There is a phenomenon that is readily associated with swathes of Kosovo's post war politicians. In diplomatic terms it is known as "corruption". For me and many of my fellow citizens it is nothing short of robbery. Sadly, this phenomenon not only has become entrenched in our daily lives, but it has also been nurtured as a vital mechanism in state consolidation.

If the true scale of corruption in this country was fully known, I believe many of our 2 million people would be on the verge of packing everything up and heading towards the border.

The previous statement might sound melodramatic, especially because it brings bitter memories of the agony that Kosovo went through thirteen years ago, but it is unfortunately true.

Those close to the government would, of course, brush off the claims of widespread cronyism. They would even attempt to refute it by referring to the praise lavished on them by the international community as supervised independence officially ended. During the two-day events this week in Prishtina, our international partners held up Kosovo as a role model of state building, social and inter-ethnic cohesion. It is also interesting to note that international media resorted to putting these words in inverted commas, challenging subtly the over-effusive claims.

In an interview given to the German international broadcaster, Deutsche Welle, PDK's Arsim Bajrami claimed that the end of Kosovo's supervised independence means more responsibility for Kosovo institutions for combating organised crime and corruption. The statement of Mr Bajrami is logical. However, the reality suggests that the government has neither the courage nor the interest to fight what it has tolerated and nurtured for years - robbery and looting.

The fact that this phenomenon has now reached uncontrollable levels is demonstrated with the hopelessness of Kosovo's youth. Most youngsters keep an eye out for the first opportunity to take a ticket abroad and head to the western world for employment. Others chose asylum-seeking or illegal immigration.

A senior politician who decides to treat a group of women to a trip to Albania for International Women's day, costing tens of thousands of euro, could easily be seen as playing fast and loose with the Kosovo budget.

Using a private jet to return from holidays in Turkey at a cost of 20,000 euro is perhaps a worst example of excessive spending.

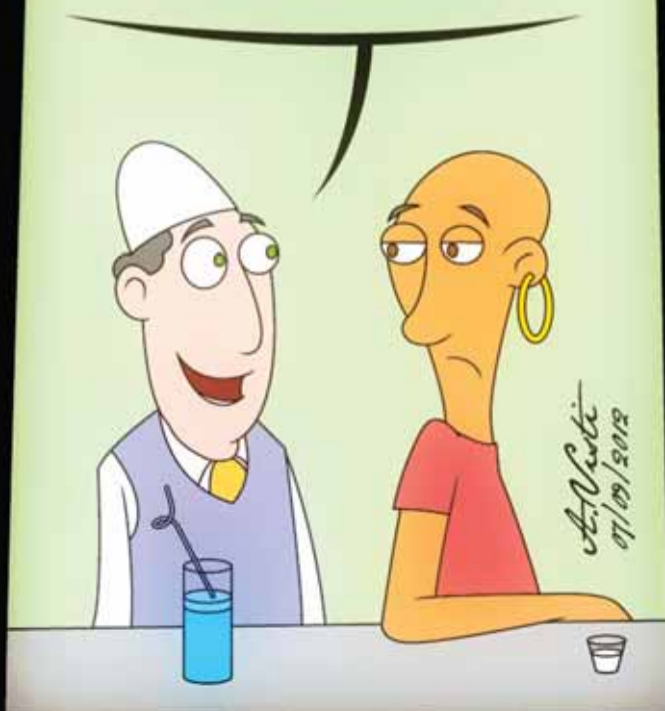
You might be wondering about the names of these protagonists. I purposefully choose not to name them in order to test our collective memory. The examples refer to two different governments of Kosovo, the former currently in power and the latter of 2005. If we struggle to remember the names, our apathy is confirmed.

We need to understand the fact that even if these acts have now faded into history this does not dilute them, nor does it legitimise the situation Kosovo is in. But, what legitimises this Kosovo-wide looting is the apathy of society, which allows this phenomena to turn into a lifestyle.

The time has come to seriously ask ourselves: are we simply unable to react or are we not able to understand where we went wrong? Why do we remain silent while being robbed? And finally, we need to address one issue: how did we accept a leadership who should have been confined to the cells of Dubrava Prison, rather than the glass buildings of government?

STRIPI I VOGËL, PA SHKUMË
GazetaJNK.com

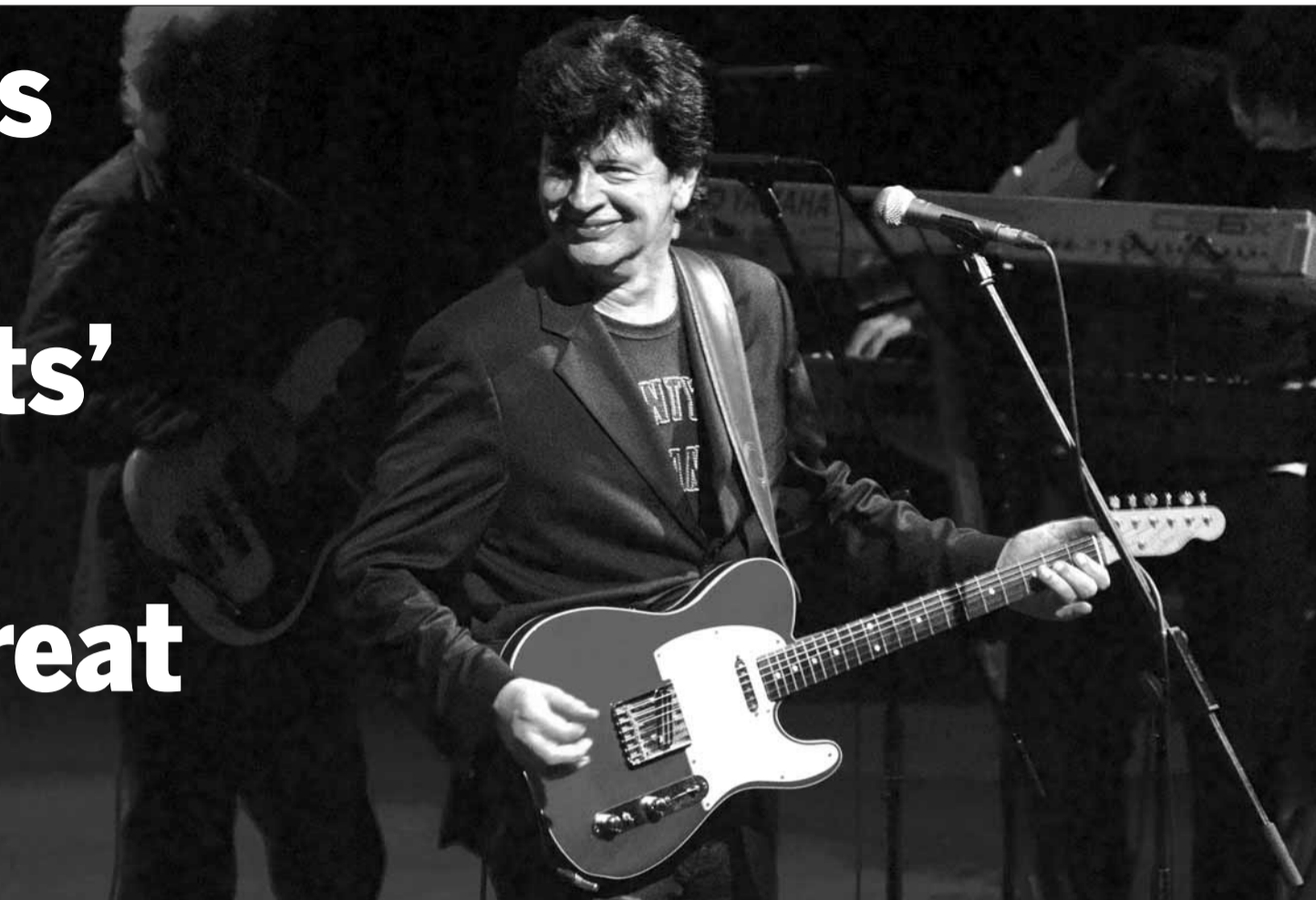
HI THERE!
GLAD WE ARE FRIENDS NOW!



I DON'T THINK
I RECOGNIZE YOU, MAN!



Serbia's New 'Patriots' Revive Old Threat to Art



By Nemanja Cabric

If statistics were ever compiled on which words were most misused in post-war Yugoslavia, patriots and patriotism would surely rank at the top.

For more than two decades, conflicting understandings of the meaning of the word patriotism have been a leading cause of division in society.

Over these years the term has become a convenient shield, hiding all manner of personal ambitions on the part of certain individuals, which have often been harmful to the public interest.

Serbia should have learned from its past that those who declare themselves the greatest patriots often use this cover to hide their own aspirations.

However, these lessons are apparently hard to learn. Instead, every once in a while, a new self-style patriot tries to fulfil his personal dreams, using populist rhetoric to make himself more attractive – much as the malevolent prince Richard III did in the Shakespeare play.

A recently appointed deputy minister has employed a similar mechanism in a recent article he wrote, titled: "Time for the first Serbian cultural uprising".

In the article, the deputy minister of culture responsible for media, Dragan Kolarevic, divided Serbian artists into two groups that are all too familiar to people who lived in the Milosevic era - patriots and traitors.

Kolarevic didn't hesitate to single out some of the latter by name, though his main criteria for defining "unwanted artists" appear only to have been their support for rival political options, namely the Democratic Party and the Liberal

Deputy minister's attack on 'unpatriotic' artists shows that Serbia has not learned the lessons of the Milosevic era, when, as now, patriotism was shamelessly abused to advance people's careers. Nemanja Cabric asks if singer Bajaga (above) is really a spy or traitor? Democratic Party.

Kolarevic called on the masses to join a "cultural uprising" against those that presumably think differently from the ruling Serbian Progressive Party, which took power following May's general election.

Most of the Serbian media, as

Even if those institutions weren't already in the ownership of his boss, the culture minister, Bratislav Petkovic (which they are: The Museum of Automobiles, and an alternative theatre "Modern garage"), one might ask what such institutions can do to make Serbian art "more patriotic", as Petkovic

had named were followers of the anti-Serb mindset allegedly established after the First World War, which has mostly manifested itself in culture.

This anti-Serb tradition, Kolarevic wrote, continued under the Communist regime of Josip Broz Tito, and kept existing thanks

fectly well for the new deputy minister.

The ever-divided Serbs seem to long for new divisions, and it is always easy to spark new flames in the everlasting fires of Serbian nationalism.

And the deputy minister may have even scored some political points for his patriotic art idea, having in mind that new minister first came up with it.

In Serbia, the comfortable lives of functionaries depend on ministers. And you know what you may get when you flatter the king. Just don't tell him his new suit is invisible.

So, perhaps Kolarevic should not be held entirely to blame for his "patriotic" call. As a former journalist in Milosevic's state TV in the Nineties, he has already shown he knows all about naked propaganda.

He might have never have written his "Nazi-like" article, as former President Boris Tadic called it, had he not felt encouraged to do so by the earlier "patriotic" statements of Petkovic himself.

Although Petkovic spoke out in reference to one controversial play, "Zoran Djindjic" by Croatian director Oliver Frljic, his statement could have served as a guide to those who wished to make a political profit out of it.

Thus, Kolarevic may have only wished to secure his position in the ministry by using well-rehearsed tactics.

The real lesson is that the future culture minister should never have made his "patriotic" art statement in the first place. Or rather, a person with this kind of an attitude should have never been chosen for such a function.

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Questions are being asked about Minister of Culture Bratislav Petkovic's appointment of Dragan Kolarevic as his deputy

well as former president Boris Tadic, have declared that the article revealed "the real intentions" of the new government – to use "patriotism" once more to win popularity for the ruling party among the masses.

However, it's not a sufficient explanation of the phenomenon, when one considers what Kolarevic's cure for the art world's "anti-Serbian politics" implies.

Specifically, he called for the establishment of an alternative theatre where nationally minded actors could work, as well as for the reconstruction of the Museum of Automobiles.

himself urged the art world to be, before he was appointed minister.

We might ask whether Kolarevic only wanted to draw the attention of the newly appointed minister by setting out an ideology and an action plan for Petkovic's undiplomatic call for "patriotic" art, which he backtracked on shortly after becoming minister.

Having in mind that Petkovic then changed his mind, on realizing that a culture ministry must support all kinds of art, it seems that his deputy has gone too far with his article.

In his text, Kolarevic speculatively inquired whether the artists he

to modern traitors and Serb-haters like the afore-mentioned artists.

But what does Kolarevic mean, exactly? Is the singer Bajaga a spy, or the actor Predrag Ejdus a traitor?

According to Kolarevic, all their work should be considered an expression of the national hatred felt by traitors for patriots.

So, does this mean that civil rights in Serbia now mean nothing for the authorities? Where is the right guaranteed by the constitution to think and to express one's own opinion?

Knowing the circumstances of Serbia, it might all work out per-

Rita Ora Shines Her Light on Prishtina



Prishtina-born singer Rita Ora filmed her latest music video in Kosovo on Sunday, September 9, 2012.

During a press conference she said that she was very happy to be back in her homeland and shoot the video for "Shine your Light" from her chart-topping first album, Ora. Rita was chased throughout her trip by hordes of fans and was surrounded by Kosovo children during the video shoot.

The closing footage of the video was taken in the Prishtina bar Zone Club.



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