

# **The Fever of Kosova and the Suspiration of the Balkans**

**By Xhavit Shala**

While opening the traditional European<sup>1</sup> forum titled, "Myths, History and Politics," held at the Austrian town of Allbah, the Foreign Minister of the Union of Serbia-Montenegro, Vuk Drashkovic, a specialist on myths and history, attempted to transplant Serb epics into Real politics.<sup>2</sup>

Referring to Kosova as the "Serb Jerusalem," Drashkovic sought to find the solution of the Kosova status only in compliance with the Serb myths and history, adding that Kosova in 1389 was the spiritual and administrative center of the Serb state and that the Serbs measure time with before and after Kosova and not BC and AD.<sup>3</sup>

The presentation of such theses by Drashkovic, who apparently shall be one of the first fiddles representing Serbia in the talks for the final status of Kosova, only demonstrates how difficult these talks shall be and how important it is for the Albanian party to be well prepared. Drashkovic, the other Serb religious and official figures and their international allies seem united on the point of Now or Never for Kosova.

During the proceedings of the Forum Drashkovic is quoted by Serb daily "Danas" of August 30, 2005, to have said: "For the Serbs history can not be left outside the solution... The Serbs agree that Kosova will achieve a status that is more than autonomy and less than independence while the Albanians demand independence."

Developments in Kosova, Macedonia, Albania and the rest of the Balkans appear directly or indirectly related to the fever over the future of Kosova.

As the outgoing French KFOR commander, General Yves De Kermabon, was saying "that the obstacles in the freedom of movement were more psychological rather than real and were a result of the disinformation of the public,"<sup>4</sup> near the border between Kosova and Macedonia two young Serb were killed and two others wounded. The criminal act was unanimously condemned by Kosova's government, political forces and international authorities.<sup>5</sup> The Serb authorities and the media presented the incident as an ethnic crime,

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<sup>2</sup> The article was first published in the daily "Korrieri" 02.09.2005

<sup>3</sup> "Greater Kosova, a new formula for Greater Albania" 30.08.2005, Vuk Drashkovic for daily Danas.

<sup>4</sup> De Kermabon: "the obstacles in the freedom of movement are more of a psychological character" "VOA" 24-08-2005.

<sup>5</sup> "The Police consider this an isolated tragic incident," Kai Vitrup, the international police commissioner said to the media. He rejected all allegations made that this was the beginning of a terrorist campaign

a threat to the free movement of Serbs and failure of the authorities to meet the required standards in Kosova<sup>6</sup>. Even though the Albanian government was on vacation mood, President Moisiu took time to condemn the criminal act.

The Department of State and the EU issued a reaction to the incident. Sean McCormack, the State Department spokesperson, warned that “whatever the motives behind the crime, the leaders of Kosova should continue their efforts to improve freedom of movement and to make the minority population feel secure. The ability of Kosova institutions to prevent such killings from happening in the future will be a significant test for Kosova ability for self governance.”<sup>7</sup>

The Kosova problem and the failure to arrest the main fugitives wanted for war crimes has caused friction between the Serbian government and President Tadic. The Serb President said that “the Serb government is not doing its job well. The country needs a democratic pro-European government with a coherent program and clear vision.”<sup>8</sup> For President Tadic, Prime Minister Kostunica represents the non-European forces in Serbia. He is now trying to boost Serbia’s western profile and his own ratings on the eve of Kosova status talks.

Prime Minister Kostunica on the other side has tried to stir nationalist sentiments to shore up his support. “Serbia is facing today the problem of state formation and the messages of our forefathers are valid for us today. In order for Serbia to have a future it must have a properly regulated state,” Kostunica said in an improvised government meeting held at the Monastery of Voljevça, near Kragujevac, the place where the first meeting of the Serb government was held 200 years ago.<sup>9</sup>

The Serb Church is doing all it can to provide its own support in lobbying Western governments ahead of the status talks on Kosova. It has already undertaken two important steps. On June 18, 2005, father Sava Janjic asked the forgiveness of ethnic Albanians in the province for the suffering that they had experienced during the war. “We are truly sorry and fully understand the sufferings experienced by the Albanians during the war in this region,” Janjic said.<sup>10</sup> Putting all the blame for the crimes on Milosevic, Janjic said,

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against the minorities. “There is nothing to indicate that in the investigation we have made so far,” Vitrup said.

<sup>6</sup> “VOA” 29-08-2005 *Kosova* Serbs protested today in the enclaves under the motto, “The Serbs are being killed daily.” There were protests in Gracanica, near Prishtina where candles were lit for all the Serbs that have lost their lives in Kosova since 1999. Demonstrations took place over the main road linking Prishtina with Gjilan, which remained close for the duration of the demonstration and in Shterpce and Northern Mitrovica.

<sup>7</sup> “VOA”, 30.8.2005: The US Condemns the murder of the two Serbs in Kosova.

<sup>8</sup> © Lajme.Net, 29.08.05

<sup>9</sup> Kostunica: Serbia is facing the problem of the formation of a state. © Lajme.Net, 29.08.05

<sup>10</sup> Radio B92, FoNet - 17/06/05; B92, Kosova Live - 18/06/05: “Serb Church officials ask for the forgiveness of the Albanians in Kosova.”

“we greatly regret the fact that the Church was not able to prevent the tragic events and could not change the general policy of the regime of that time.” The negotiations undertaken by senior figures of the Serb Church to facilitate the surrender of Karadzic also seem to be part of the same action to boost Serb standing among the Western powers.

Kosova’s fever seems to have also affected Macedonia as well. The Now or Never motto seems to have had an immediate effect there as well. Despite assurances given by the U.S. and the EU that no one will dare to play games with Macedonia’s security, certain circles in Macedonia perceive the independence of Kosova as a threat to their security. These circles have directly or indirectly attempted to undermine Kosova’s efforts to achieve independence.

Greece is also following closely these developments. Their perspirations demonstrate that Kosova’s fever is having multiple effects there as well. On April 25, 2005, the Military Analyses Institute, a body funded by the Greek government, published a study titled, “Recent developments of the Albanian element in Kosova and Macedonia.” The document advises the Greek government that “in the current situation the danger for Greece does not come from Skopje but from the reactivation of the Albanian element from the north. In the event of the cantonization of Kosova, Greece must try to prevent the creation of a new independent Albanian state in the region or its unification with Albania.”<sup>11</sup>

The Greek military strategists go even further. To confront the imaginary Balkan Islamic axes Turkey-Albania-Bosnia, they seek the establishment of the Orthodox axes Greece-Bulgaria-Macedonia-Serbia. “Serbia and Macedonia, they instruct their government, play an important role in containing the reactivation of the Albanian element. Good neighborly relations and cooperation with Bulgaria, supporting Macedonia and the strengthening of Serbia would mean an isolation of the Albanian element in the region. Greece must make use of its strategic advantages (EU membership, internal political stability, powerful Armed Forces and a developed economy) and play a role that is fitting for an important factor in the region.”

The current stance of Greek policy in support of the Euro Atlantic integration of our country and the efforts to increase economic and commercial cooperation between us, indicate that Greek decision-making circles have not taken seriously the advice provided by the Greek military strategists.

Bulgaria also is following closely the expected developments in the Balkans. According to the Albanian press, there are about 600 Albanian citizens who have recently discovered that they have Bulgarian blood in their veins and gotten Bulgarian

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<sup>11</sup> Military Analysis Institute, Athens, Greece. January 7, 2005 <http://www.iaa.gr/aa/item.asp?ItemID=238>  
April 20, 2005

citizenships. Another two thousand are currently undergoing the “blood tests” and are certain to get Bulgarian citizenship. The Bulgarian consul reassured them through a TV interview a short while ago where he basically said that any citizen had the right to take his “blood test.” Bulgaria has been even more successful in discovering large numbers of new compatriots in Macedonia. According to the Macedonian News Agency, during 2004 alone, 8.000 Macedonian citizens have applied for a Bulgarian citizenship and one third of them were already granted citizenship. It is to be expected that when Bulgaria will become an EU member in 2007, the number of Macedonian and Albanian citizens that will get a Bulgarian citizenship may grow significantly. It seems likely the certain circles in Bulgaria still hope “to bathe” in Lake Ohrid and have their borders touch its waters, a dream that does not fit well with their European and Western aspirations.<sup>12</sup>

As it has been the case often in the past when Kosova was under fever, Albania has happened to catch “the flu.” Having occupied itself for several months with its long drawn electoral campaign and a marathon of complaints and accusations over stolen mandates, Albania must now continue to take advantage of its delicate and moderate position on Kosova. Serb concerns of Now or Never about Kosova and Kosova’s groans will not be heard in Tirana. It is only to be hoped that the political changes that took place in Albania over the last election will provide new impulses to Kosova.

“The Now or Never” movement is not understood properly by Kosova’s political class. As the final status talks are approaching, the Kosova politicians mandated to represent Kosova must get themselves prepared for a very important period that lies ahead of them.

The head of the U.S. Office in Prishtina, Mr. Goldberg, called on the Kosova Albanian leaders to get ready for the final status negotiations. “They must really sit down and get to work. I think that part of the problem is that what should be a joint effort becomes an issue of debate for the political parties. At this point, this is, according to us, intolerable. It is the time for political and party differences to diminish, it is time for a unified position to emerge.”<sup>13</sup>

It will be the Kosovars who will represent Kosova in these talks. The Kosovar political class must understand that Now or Never applies first of all to them. It is now incumbent upon them to set a record that can be similar to that of the founding fathers of America or be remembered with shame by generations that will follow.

During the close of his remarks at the forum “On Myth, History and Politics,” Drashkovic used the following threat: “what we are faced with is either the

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<sup>12</sup> The assimilation of the Macedonians into Bulgarian is a problem that continues to persist. Even former Macedonian Prime Minister and his wife Ljubço Gjeorgjevski applied and received Bulgarian citizenship at the end of 2006. He is now a member of the Macedonian Parliament on the ticket of the Popular Party VMRO. (Makfax, Telma TV - 01/02/07)  
<http://www.balkantimes.com/cocoon/setimes/xhtml/sq/newsbriefs/setimes/newsbriefs/2007/02/02/nb-09>

<sup>13</sup> Goldberg called on the Albanian leaders of Kosova to prepare themselves for the final status negotiations.-”VOA”, 22-08-2005

Europeanization of Kosova or the Balkanization of the Western Balkans and of Europe with it. There can hardly be a third solution.”<sup>14</sup> And a third solution shall not be found. The Serbs will never dare to Kosovize the Western Balkans, much less the whole of Europe. NATO and the June of 1999 are too near to be forgotten so easily.

Only an independent European and pro-American Kosova, with established and unchangeable international borders, that respects the human rights and the rights of minorities including the rights of Serbs to return to their homes and to feel safe, can put an end to the fevers of Kosova and the suspirations of the Balkans. Besides the state authorities, the citizens of Kosova also must understand their obligation to ensure the security and safety of the Serb minority in Kosova. The Serb minority, on their side, must learn to pay less attention to advice from Belgrade and work together to with the Albanians to build a European Kosova. There is no other way apart from this.

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<sup>14</sup> “Greater Kosova –the new formula for Greater Albania” - “Danas”; 30.08.2005