

## **The U.S. Strategy for Kosova and the Albanian Tabloids**

**By Xhavit Shala**

At the end of last year, politicians in Kosova and Albania<sup>1</sup> were delivering statements informing that the months of May and June would be of decisive importance for Kosova independence.<sup>2</sup> They also said that the U.S. would take charge over this issue. It is also true that some days ago the public opinion and international chancelleries were informed of the American concern over the stagnation of the progress towards Kosova's final status and its consequences for Kosova, the region and beyond.<sup>3</sup>

Through U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Nicholas Burns,<sup>4</sup> President Bush warned that he does not intend to keep his hands crossed and informed the public of the American strategy for the solution of Kosova status. In essence, this strategy calls for the beginning of the negotiations on Kosova's status, which would lead to a change in the status-quo. It is also interesting to note that the United States says that it does not exclude any scenarios for the future of Kosova, starting with something more than what Kosova had before the war up to complete independence.

More concretely, Mr. Burns said, "the final status of Kosova can be determined neither by the United States of America, nor by the Contact Group or any other Western European countries. It will be determined by the Albanians and Serbs in Kosova, other communities there and naturally from the government in Belgrade."

It seems that Belgrade will occupy a special place in the new U.S. Plan for Kosova and Undersecretary Burns plans to visit Belgrade and Prishtina soon. Mr. Burns warned, "the relationship between United States and Belgrade will depend considerably on how the latter will handle the Kosova issue." It appears that Belgrade was expecting to take advantage of this opportunity to draw bonuses for its Euro Atlantic integration. The announcement of the U.S. proposal was followed by immediate reactions from many

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<sup>2</sup> This article published in the daily "Express" date 21.5.2005 also in webpage [www.acnss.com](http://www.acnss.com)

<sup>3</sup> US Undersecretary of State, Nicholas Burns, said on May 18, 2005 before Committee of International Affairs at the House of Representatives that President Bush administration is undertaking a new diplomatic initiative to solve the final status of Kosova. This session in US Congress paved the way to UNSC session on Kosova.

<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Undersecretary of State for Political Affairs, Nicholas Burns, told the US House Committee for International Relations that the Administration of President Bush considers the issue of the determination of the Kosova status of decisive importance. "The status-quo of an unresolved status for Kosova is neither stable, nor desirable or acceptable. This state of affairs does not satisfy any party and leave open the possibility for a renewed flaring of ethnic violence. We are of the opinion that if we do not discuss the status of Kosova soon, this would put in danger all of the achievements made in the Balkans during the last decade." Voice of America, 19.5.2005)

chancelleries. The European Union backed it immediately. There were reactions from Belgrade, UNMIK Chief Petersen, Kosova President Rugova and other Kosova leaders.

Surprisingly, in the midst of political comments on this issue, in Tirana there was a complete silence. The U.S. strategy for Kosova does not include Albania. Politicians from all sides gave no comment on the issue, which is highly sensitive for the Albanian cause in the Balkans.

Either the Albanian authorities did not consider it appropriate to issue an official statement on the matter, or it has been decided that Minister Islami will deliver it when he comes back from his official visit to Belgrade. Perhaps, the anxiety surrounding the results of the upcoming July 3-rd parliamentary elections and international pressure, made the official authorities in Tirana decide that they would not want to make any comments at a time when the entire history of the Albanian nation is entering into a unique stage.

In the meantime, the public opinion is being daily bombarded by rose stories relating the former communist leadership and their illegitimate children. It seems that the media and the local opinion, as well as politicians, pleased with such stories or benumbed by the pre-election campaigns, are not showing any interest for the fate of the rest of our nation that lives outside of our official borders. They are more concerned why Beni quit the Big Brother show<sup>5</sup> and whether Natasha Shehu is indeed the illegitimate daughter of Mehmet Shehu (former Communist-era Prime Minister).<sup>6</sup>

Well done to Natasha, who with her brilliant story puts herself in the Albanian headlines, while she is on a “visit” to Russia! Shame on us who are more interested in Natasha’s stories than in Kosova’s future!

**Tirana, May 2005**

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<sup>5</sup> Big Brother show, News 24 Television.

<sup>6</sup> By the second half of May 2005, most of the major Albanian dailies were failing to rise up to the level of the historic moment that the Kosova issue had entered and were not grasping the US strategy for Kosova. Starting from May 17, 2005 and on, several Albanian newspapers were paying more attentions to the news regarding the Communist PM Mehmet Shehu’s extramarital daughter than to Kosova. Natasha Shehu told News24 that she was the alleged daughter of Mehmet Shehu and Hava Isai, and that for years this truth remained secret. "Yes, it is more than true. I am the daughter of Mehmet Shehu. But I had decided to find another moment to tell this story. I was astonished when I learned that my story was made public. In fact, I had decided to make it public myself in one of these days, but not in this way."

