

KOSOVO: THE REPUBLIC BUILT FROM A KIT

WHAT CREDIT SHOULD BE ACCORDED TO THE POLITICAL CLASS OF KOSOVO?

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A government which does not manage to achieve stability, factions which tear one another apart, minorities which have been marginalised or reduced to eking out a living, a Prime Minister and former wartime leader who has a very hard time gaining credibility and confronts the noose of justice which is tightening on his former comrades-in-arms, and, perhaps, on himself, and a President of the Republic who was deposed shortly after his election! The least that one can say is that eleven years after the end of the conflict Kosovo does not present any proofs of reliability and stability!

But, in fact, where is Kosovo now? Just like Bosnia-Herzegovina, this territory which we think of generally as a sort of 'black hole' somewhere in Europe is not well known. Many people would have a hard time locating it on a map. It joins with the Republic of Sarajevo in the imagination of some, where it borders with Syldavia and Borduria, which were dear to the late Hergé. It retains a relative mystery, despite the domestic conflict which broke out there in the 1990s about which just some remember a few aspects as they were explained to us by analysts who, for the most part, were guilty of partiality.

For the sake of convenience, when confronted with the complexity of the Balkan world, we read here and there that the situation in Kosovo is similar to what prevailed in Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is true that geographic proximity sometimes causes us to take mental shortcuts. These simplistic evaluations rest on the few points in common: an especially complicated ethnic situation, which is simplified as a 'reassuring' dualism between the 'Bad Guys' (the Serbs playing, obviously, the role of the nasty ones, the drunken roughnecks of Milosevic) and the 'Good Guys' - the Albanians, innocent victims of barbarism. There are some other populations and minorities (Goranis, Gypsies, Turks, Bosnians...), but not many. The resemblance is sometimes also emphasised by the same method of settling the conflict, much less by the analogy in the difficulties of resolving a crisis locally according to the unknown criteria of leaders who are uneducated or poorly educated and of 'imported' modes of reasoning applied to the societies and modes of thinking which have been poorly prepared or not prepared at all.

Indeed, the only common denominators, which are only rarely mentioned, concern more what are purely 'Balkan' criteria: a proclivity to secrecy and conspiratorial methods; widespread corruption; grey or parallel economies; interaction between the 'Community' and

the political world; contraction of political formations, which are in general not representative of the real interests of the population, but are instead serving those of a certain number of former warlords, etc.

The situation in Kosovo is, in fact, very different from the one prevailing in Bosnia-Herzegovina. You have to have an 'historical' vision of the Balkan problem in general and there you come up against the partiality of most of the local historians, as well as of certain outside observers. You must recall that contrary to the tendency we see in our West European societies, in the Balkans perhaps more than elsewhere history is not considered just a subject for secondary schools. In this region of Old Europe, history is still experienced in everyday life and it serves as a kind of cement for the various ethnic groups. It still guides the considerations of the populations and can be used to support its most terrible expression, nationalism, above all when you mix in some factors of religious antagonism.

A reminder about the historical ins and outs would seem to be necessary¹ because, since the mid-1990s, what has been presented is, above all, the sequence of recent events.

Kosovo: its history or histories? A few reminders

Analysis and interpretation of history account for the fundamental disagreements between Serbs and Albanians. If you want to summarise them and to try to understand them, you have to go back in time and reconstruct the parallel visions of history.

- **The 'right of precedence'**

It is generally acknowledged by historians that the Slavic peoples (including the Serbs) settled definitively in the Balkans in the 7th century. When they arrived, they found there highly Romanised populations, where the many settlers who came from the Roman empire, often veterans of the legions, formed the basic stock. That is how in Kosovo, as elsewhere, in advance of the Slavic thrust, these Romanised peoples were either absorbed within various principalities or were forced to move closer to the Adriatic. On the eve of the appearance of the Turks on the scene, Tsar Dušan ruled over a territory which was unified by his predecessors in the 12th century and encompassed the totality of the Western Balkans, including the region of Kosovo.

And that is exactly where the first historic bone of contention appeared between Serbs and Albanians. In fact, the latter say they were the descendants of the first Illyrian population and, so, were the oldest local populations. This remains highly contentious, because the link with the mysterious 'Illyrians,' about whom we know very little, is rather vague. For the Serbs, however, the claim is based on an ephemeral but real kingdom of Dušan which has become, for its part, an intangible reality given that the Albanians simply 'nibbled away' at the territory of the Serbs over the course of centuries. A Kosovo which has been ethnically 'Albanian' since the dawn of time versus a 'medieval' historic Serbian Kosovo: the question has not been resolved and remains the background material for relations between the two peoples. One claims Kosovo as the cradle of their nation and the other claims this territory as the historic origin of their nation, founded in the blood spilled in battles against the Turks.

- **Kosovo Polje and the Ottoman empire**

The arrival of the Turks in the Balkans in the 14th century upset the very fragile equilibrium of the region, where the Serb and Bulgarian empires had already been engaged heavily against

¹ This historical chronology has been inspired by a recent study from the University of Laval (Canada). See the <http://www.tlfq.ulaval.ca/axl/europe/kosovo.html>

their neighbours (the Byzantine empire for the Bulgarians), their 'visitors' (various invasions, 'collateral damage' during the passage of the Crusades) or the vague impulses of the local lords. The Ottoman empire found a very propitious situation and, after having crushed initially the Christian armies, which united late, on the Bulgarian Maritsa in 1371, repeated their victory at Kosovo Polje, at the gates of Priština, on 28 June 1389. They seized and held for more than four centuries Macedonia, the Bulgarian empire and most of Serbia. Kosovo Polje is THE absolute symbol for the Serbs of the justification for Kosovo belonging to Serbia. The Serb troops were, to be sure, the most heavily represented among the Christian forces, but many auxiliary troops were also massacred (including contingents of Bulgarians, Bosnians and Albanians) during this tragic armed conflict.

The battle of Kosovo Polje, which led to the quick dismemberment of the Serbian empire and the establishment of Ottoman control, also resulted in the departure of a large portion of the Serbian people (already!) who, after having won Bosnia-Herzegovina, tried to join the nearest Christian entity and entered at times in its service, such as in the *Krajina* of Croatia, where as peasant soldiers they defended the southern frontier of the Austro-Hungarian empire. At the same time, given that Nature (and the Turks) abhor a vacuum, the Albanians returned in numbers to the territories abandoned by the Serbs, including the fertile plains of Kosovo, which were very attractive for populations which had been pushed back over the course of centuries into the arid mountains of Albania. For the Serbs who remained in place within the Ottoman empire, there was an alternative: submit and remain faithful to their religion while paying for their tranquility very dearly through various levies, including the 'blood' tax (young men taken to fill the ranks of Janissaries) or agree to convert, often in the hope of a better life and, at a minimum, to rise into the (very numerous) administration of the empire. The second choice was taken by a minority of the Slavs (above all, in Bosnia-Herzegovina), and of the Bulgars (the present Pomaks) and, at Kosovo, by a large share of the Albanians, as well as, in more marginal fashion, by a large proportion of Gypsies (the 'Egyptians' of Kosovo), on whom the Turks obviously relied. The decision to convert must be placed in the context of the Middle Ages: it was never forgiven by the Serbs and would constitute the other base for the antagonism between the two peoples.

The ethnic map of present-day Kosovo was practically redrawn in the 17th century and the Serbs remained in just some well defined areas, the 'mixed' settlements being not very numerous.

- **End of the Ottoman empire and the emergence of nationalisms**

When Serbia regained its independence in 1878, a very long time after its disappearance from the international stage, it was without Kosovo, which remained within the Turkish empire until 1912, following the Second Balkan War. That constitutes, for the Serbs, another historic motive for not respecting the Albanians of Kosovo, who are not only seen as traitors to Christianity since the Middle Ages, but who are reproached for having remained 'Turkish' for an additional forty years. It should be noted that already at this time Albania claimed Kosovo but under pressure from Russia it was Serbia which got assigned the province. Perhaps the international community made its first error when it did not want to see an overly large Albanian state! The arrival of Serbian forces in Kosovo was considered to be an occupation by the Albanians, while the Serbian minority celebrated their 'liberation.' Serbia, and then the new Yugoslav state, repressed without mercy the various uprisings which took place until 1919 and expelled Albanians for the sake of the territory's settlement by Serbs (already!).

In 1918, Kosovo was officially integrated into the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the future Kingdom of Southern Slavs or 'Yugoslavia.' In this first Yugoslavia, there was no mention of Albanians as a 'nation' within a resolutely Slavic state. Despite their numbers, the Albanians were just one of the minorities among a couple of dozen others which lived within the kingdom. Thanks to support from neighbouring Albania, they made claims to a more

'substantial' existence, but without any result. In fact, it was Mussolini's Italy which in 1942 gave life to the dream of a 'Greater Albania', the essential claim of the Albanian nationalists which called for all Albanians (of Albania, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro) to be united in a single state. As proof of their loyalty to the Nazi camp, an Albanian SS division² was set up in April 1944 (rather late compared with Bosnia-Herzegovina, where a Division was created as from February 1943³). Thanks to German support and acting with impunity, some Albanians carried out massacres of Serbs in Kosovo, forcing many of them to leave the province (yet again).

This episode from the modern history of Kosovo is not often mentioned these days in the province but the Serbs, who filled the ranks of the partisans, would remember it at the time of the liberation. For them, the Albanians had clearly shown their true face by openly claiming to belong to the 'Albanian nation.' Their descendants would take up this claim by refusing to accept that they belonged to Serbia. When the partisans led by Josip Broz 'Tito' definitively destroyed the last pro-Nazi forces⁴, Kosovo became an integral part of the Republic of Serbia within the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). At first it had the status of an autonomous region but then in 1968, after new disturbances, an autonomous Province.

- **Kosovo within Yugoslavia: a second tier province**

The accession of Kosovo (just as in the North, of Vojvodina, another region where the Serbs were in the minority) to the status of autonomous Province was a first step forward accorded with pragmatism by Marshal Tito. De facto, Kosovo, with its own administration and parliament, enjoyed extensive benefits of decentralisation. On the other hand, this decision was not well received by the Serbs living in Kosovo, who felt marginalised and became, in their view, victims of a veritable ethnic cleansing. In the period of the 'autonomous Province,' Kosovo saw that many hundreds of 'mixed' villages became 'ethnically pure.' But Tito yet again struck successfully (clearly to the detriment of the Serb minority) by silencing Albanian claims to 'Greater Albania,' without even having to raise the very low economic level of the autonomous Province.

In March 1989, the abolition of the Province's status of autonomy was decided unilaterally by Belgrade, and on 28 June, on the occasion of the six hundredth anniversary of the tragic battle, Slobodan Milosević, at the time President of the Republic of Serbia, delivered a speech with especially nationalist overtones at the memorial of Kosovo Polje before tens of thousand of enthusiastic Serbs. He denounced there a 'physical, political and cultural' genocide against the Serbian community in Kosovo perpetrated by the Albanians and the Bosnians with the complicity of Tito's communists. In reaction to what was considered to be a provocation, but above all in imitation of the movements which made possible the secession of the constituent republics of the SFRY, the Albanians of Kosovo published a declaration proclaiming independence on 2 July 1990. On the same day, the regime of Milosević organised a referendum asking whether Serbia needed a new constitution or new elections. The result was in accordance with the hopes of the initiators! On 5 July, the Serbian parliament withdrew all power from the parliament and the authorities of the former autonomous Province. As from 19 March 1991, Belgrade assumed direct administration of the Province. It was only in 1995 that the Serbian president proposed to reopen the parliament in Pristina... on condition that the Albanians not have a majority in it! With the Albanians representing more than 80% of the population (estimated to be 1.9 million in 1991), you had to be daring to make such a proposal!

² 21st Mountain Division of the Waffen SS 'Skanderbeg'.

³ 13th Mountain Division of the Waffen SS 'Handschar.'

⁴ Including members of a clan about whom we will speak later, the Jashari.

From this point, it was obvious that a clandestine Kosovo government would appear, because on the ground the Serbian authorities unleashed a veritable *'reconquista,'* with effective control by the federal army. It was neither the embryonic Constitution voted in on 5 September 1990 in Priština, nor the referendum organised on 30 September on 'Kosovo, a free and independent state' which bothered the Serbian authorities. On the contrary, with the pendulum of history swinging in their direction, they organised the forced eviction of the Albanians (again...!). However, Milosević experienced right afterwards a semi-defeat in his plan to re-populate Kosovo with Serbs who had in the meantime fled Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. It is true that the latter, who had to leave their homes under very difficult conditions, were not pushing to return to a region where everything easily became volatile! It turned out that the Serbian president had yielded largely to the pressing demands of his supporters to free the capital and its surroundings from these 400,000 refugees.

It is obvious that the young Albanians of Kosovo had no choice but to emigrate (people speak of 250,000 departures between 1991 and 1993), or to join the ranks of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), i.e., the UÇK (*Ushtria Çlirimtare e Kosovës*) created in 1992, which began to show itself at the beginning of 1996 when it staged a series of bomb attacks.

Civil war or war of liberation?⁵ The rise in power of the UÇK

The UÇK never had more than 35,000 men, including a core group of former soldiers of the Yugoslav Army and security services (UDBA), some Kosovars and around 1,000 'auxiliaries,' principally Muslims coming from Bosnia, Croatia, Saudi Arabia, Yemen and Afghanistan, as well as citizens of Western countries. But it quickly became unavoidable for the Westerners, who were often quick to grow enthusiastic for poorly armed (initially) guerillas, in the pattern of the 'myth of Ché,' who, at least on the surface, seemed only interested in freeing themselves from the heavy control of the Serbs. For the Serbs, obviously, these partisans were none other than terrorists, 'irregular' forces who had to be treated as such. It is true that in the wake of the Dayton/Paris accords, the moment seemed to have come for NATO and the major Western powers to definitively force Serbia to bend to their will over its disputes with its minorities. Except that in Dayton, there was no mention of Kosovo, for the simple reason that it sealed the fate of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

Between 1996 and 1998, actions led by the UÇK clearly had 'terrorist' aspects: attacks on the security forces, executions of 'collaborators,' targeted attacks, ad hoc attacks. Beginning in mid-1998, the UÇK undertook large-scale operations against the Serbian Army. Thanks to foreign 'advisers,' it was better organised. It was also better armed after breaking into Albanian arms and munition stores⁶, as well as due to financial aid from Muslim countries, from Islamist networks and from certain Western countries. Thus, the organisation was able to diversify its actions on the ground.

From this point on, the Albanians of Kosovo wanted to place the question of their independence at the front of the international stage, because they felt they were supported by the United States and by NATO. They launched a veritable war of liberation. But the situation was somewhat different from the one led by Bosnia-Herzegovina at the implosion. Indeed, there were no surprises in Kosovo. In the meantime, Slobodan Milosević had become the president of the Yugoslav Federation and knew perfectly what awaited him. There were few

⁵ Read the analysis in the book *'First do no Harm: Humanitarian Intervention and the Destruction of Yugoslavia'* by Professor David N. Gibbs on the site *Mondialisation.ca* dated 3 September 2009. At times iconoclastic, this disturbing analysis presents a new view which is often more closely in conformity with the events of Kosovo.

⁶ The plundering has been very seriously questioned. Tirana aided the rebellion indirectly without compromising itself while it maintained active negotiations over an association with NATO!

arms and munitions depots ready to be taken over (the lesson had been learned by the Yugoslav Army) and both the military and security forces that Belgrade deployed in the province and access points to it were present in numbers, were well armed and on their guard.

However, the UÇK could not abandon the match and beginning in January 1998 it announced that its goal was the creation of a 'Greater Albania' which would encompass all the territories with a majority Albanian population, including a Kosovo cleansed of the Serbs. What we see here is Mussolini's Albania.

A major Serbian offensive got underway in February 1998 which led obviously to bloody counter-attacks from the Albanians. The numbers which we have are mostly those furnished by the Kosovo authorities. It is nonetheless true that the military operations resulted in many hundreds of deaths and caused an exodus of nearly 300,000 refugees and displaced persons. But it is only very recently that we have begun to estimate the number of Serbian victims. As for other minorities said to be the allies of one or the other side, there remains great uncertainty. It is true that at the time the liberation of the Albanians of Kosovo from 'Serbian barbarism' was the stated objective of American and European policy in the region.

The United States found that it had to get more directly involved on the ground, especially after the reverses experienced by the Kosovars at the end of the summer in 1998, meaning making contact with the UÇK...and by supporting the creation of the new Armed Forces of the Republic of Kosovo (AFRK), which reported in theory to President Rugova. This AFRK would become an object of great distrust among the UÇK, who went so far as to fight against its 'allies' using all means at its disposal....

The United States believed it was essential to establish the credibility of NATO as a force of response. Therefore it was necessary to prepare international opinion for armed intervention by the Organisation, and this meant also convincing it that Milosević was turning down all concessions. These allegations later turned out to be partly unfounded, because in October 1998 the Serbian president accepted a partial but significant withdrawal of Serb forces from Kosovo, with its verification by an international mission. However, this accord, which was obtained by the late Richard Holbrooke with great difficulty, quickly revealed its limitations. Although in a conflict the wrongs committed are often shared, in this specific case it was the Albanians (and not the Serbs) who broke the agreement, as the German General Klaus Neumann testified in 2002 during the trial of the former Serb leader.

Nonetheless, at the time very few would have dared to say this and, on the contrary, media coverage of a massacre of Albanian civilians in January 1999 was heavily exploited. The following month, talks were held in Rambouillet, under pressure from the United States, Russia and the European Union. These negotiations ended in failure, but the reasons given in 1999 (Serbian refusal) must now be revised based on the faint light cast by assorted testimony gathered since then, including by prominent individuals who cannot be characterised as being pro-Serb, such as Madeleine Albright. Initially, the Serb delegation accepted nearly all the American and European demands. It was when the Western mediators, without warning and without dialogue, proposed to add a 'military appendix' providing for the deployment of NATO forces with unlimited access and free transit in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia that Belgrade broke off contact. These clauses were not foreseen initially and this kind of abandonment of sovereignty was not acceptable for Milosević. At the time, the American authorities denied any intention of sabotaging the peace talks. However, this proposal could only lead to a virulent reaction from the Serbs and the American strategists knew that very well. This determination to enter into confrontation has been clearly stated by John Gilbert, former Secretary of State at the British Ministry of Defence. However the case may be, it is clear that the American Government sought and found the means of conducting war operations in Serbia. Rambouillet was thus a failure and the Kosovars alone signed the text, knowing that the autonomy being proposed must be

followed by a referendum on independence three years later, the expected result of which left them in no doubt.

The situation of the UÇK became so difficult that most of its staff left Kosovo in order to reorganise, receiving materiel and technical assistance from the United States. At this point, the influence of Maoist currents within the UÇK was reduced to nearly zero. 'Volunteers' from the diaspora were 'invited' by the Kosovar nationalists to come forward and also 'to pay in contributions.' The numbers advanced for this period are edifying: in Germany and in Switzerland – 2,000 DM per month, and in France – half of their salaries.

But 'saving Kosovo by arms' as the United States wanted turned out to be completely ineffective and unproductive. In the days following the Rambouillet meeting, the Serb rejection of the peace plan resulted in the start of bombing campaigns directed against Serbia (24 March 1999). These strikes were sometimes badly prepared and executed: the 'blunder' attack on the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, the destruction of model tanks and military materiel... These revealed a certain number of lapses in intelligence: approximate geo-locating, and 'forgetting' about one of the great specialties of the East – the technique of deception and production of decoys. It also showed up poor knowledge of certain fundamentals of the Serbian nation, which is never so strong as when it is under attack: in these circumstances it unites, in reaction, behind its chief.

Serbian acts of revenge were exacerbated by the Western strategy (American in this instance) and their operations of ethnic cleansing were accelerated. There was no lack of warning by the Serb authorities, who said that the bombing of Serbia would lead to a policy of expelling all the Albanians from Kosovo. And that is exactly what happened for a majority of them (once again...), as they fled to neighbouring or West European countries. At this time, between 80 and 90% of the Kosovars had become refugees or displaced persons. The moves were often accompanied by physical violence. Some people put forward the figure of 10,000 summary executions. There was the destruction or confiscation of Kosovar property, and also of their identity documents. But NATO continued its strikes for eleven weeks and an agreement was reached on 9 June 1999 which led to the peace. Certain points could only result in drift from initial positions, among them the substantial independence which was granted, but without ending in a referendum on independence (as the Kosovars wanted). The accord also provided for the demilitarisation of the UÇK (which was difficult for them to envisage and illusory for the Serbs). As regards disarming the UÇK, the members of the organisation were clear from the beginning⁷: *'Don't you believe that we will give up anything at all, unless it is scrap. We have already moved all our heavy arms to Albania, and the people will hide their light arms. There are not going to be any more massacres of civilians in Kosovo.'*

From the day after the signing of the accord, Serb forces began to withdraw from Kosovo and the UN approved resolution 1244, under which Kosovo gained enlarged autonomy, but within the Yugoslav Federation. The immense frustration of the Kosovars expressed itself in acts of revenge and plundering and the international organisations (especially the OSCE) gathered dozens of accounts of atrocities by one or the other side where the Serbs and the Gypsies, as well as other minorities were obviously the victims. In the case of the Roma, certain chroniclers, following the Kosovars, place them in the category of collaborators. But it was not love for the Serbs which motivated them, because in the Balkans these populations have always placed themselves at the service of the authorities in order to gain advantages⁸. In fact, the great majority of non-Albanians fled Kosovo and the objective (unstated but obvious) of an ethnically pure Kosovo was nearly entirely reached.

⁷ Proposal of Kosovar leaders during talks with KFOR.

⁸ Read *'Le Pont sur la Drina' [The Bridge over the Drina]* by Ivo Andrić, where the executioner commissioned by the Turkish occupier is an unscrupulous Gypsy who is held in contempt ...by the Serb population

But the many international observers who witnessed the abuses have most of the time highlighted only those committed by the Serbs. To be sure, these cases were more numerous than the ones committed by the Albanians, but the latter were still very real and were no more 'acceptable' than what was done by their enemies. The UÇK had at least as much blood on its hands as the Serbian forces. Nevertheless, it is curious to note that during the investigations into the war crimes launched in 2009 by the TPIY initially no accusations were brought against members of the Army of Liberation. A certain number of proofs of threats to witnesses were reported, it is true, and these dissuaded persons who otherwise could have brought concrete elements to the attention of the investigators. When you know the *modus operandi* of the Albanian Community in general, including that within the diaspora (European police do not speak otherwise), one can understand why potential witnesses hesitated! The UÇK, which had permitted many leading 'personalities' from the Albanian underworld to gain a certain respectability at slight cost, protected its own members in the same manner. Even Carla del Ponte, the former Chief Prosecutor of the court was especially cautious when discussing certain subjects.

End of the war, but beginning of a chaotic situation

Having become from one day to the next a sort of provisional protectorate under the rule of a UN-appointed administrator, Kosovo woke up in a nightmare-like state. Already the most miserable province of ex-Yugoslavia, the years of war had left it battered. In order to maintain a situation as calm as possible and to avoid the cycle of massacres/venge/reprisals, more than 45,000 men had to be deployed within the International Force (KFOR) on a territory measuring just 10,800 km², i.e., smaller than Jamaica or Gambia.

The initiation into political life turned out to be fragile. The start of the period 2001-2010 was marked by the election of the first assembly on 17 November 2001 and of the first president of Kosovo, Ibrahim Rugova, on 4 March 2002. But these happy events (for the Kosovars) were quickly replaced by pro-independence calls from the entire local political class, when Rugova himself, a moderate nationalist, spelled out clearly his position and his views: an independent Kosovo, free and integrated into Europe. The death of the president on 21 January 2006 opened the way for new political leaders who were often more radical than the one whose erudition, love of the country and wisdom caused people to characterise him as the 'Gandhi of Kosovo.'

But during the years of Rugova's presidency there was no major change put forward and the intercommunity freeze continued, if it did not worsen. More and more, it appeared that the impossibility of living together was clearly setting in. A solution which had long before been envisaged began to be explicitly defined as THE solution: independence. The UN administrator himself said in March 2007 that 'for a transition period' an international representative should be named by the EU and assisted by NATO. But his vision of a multiethnic society was no doubt an illusion, because minority groups, including the Serbs, had, with rare exceptions, almost no voice in affairs for a good long time. To say that one had to guarantee normal and realistic representation within a Parliament seemed like attempting the impossible. The most anxious were obviously the Serbs, who feared they would de facto be forced peacefully or, more likely under threat, to leave the South of the province. At the same time, the Albanians in the North of the province also had reason to be afraid.

The situation appeared to be definitively blocked, which led the province to declare its independence unilaterally on 17 February 2008. Manifestly relieved, most of the great

Western powers recognised the new state⁹ and took comfort in the decision of the International Court of Justice in the Hague which certified that this declaration of independence did not violate international law or resolution 1244 of the UN Security Council or the constitutional framework. In fact, the Court essentially played the role of a registration chamber, making reference to international law in which nothing prevents the recording of this declaration, hence, recognising the independence. Incidentally, this was also recognised by many developing countries thanks, according to certain sources, to certain cash 'gifts' - the case of the Maldives. The subsidies granted by... the future (and ephemeral) Kosovar president Behxhet PACOLLI is, in this regard, characteristic....

The reaction of the Serbian leaders, supported by Russia, was immediately of a populist nature: 'the independence of Kosovo would never be recognised.' But then it changed after some months and negotiations began with a view to normalisation, the contours of which, it is true, were not clearly defined. However, it is not very likely that the Kosovars would one day reconsider the independence they had won and it seemed improbable that the Serbs would agree to see Kosovo and all the symbolism attached to it escape from their control. At least wouldn't a promise of accession to the EU, to NATO and to the great international institutions carry the day? But the improbable remains a constant in Serbian history, with the tendency to push things to the extreme in this as in much else; and so it is not certain that promises would make them give up what had been the foundation of Belgrade's Kosovo policy for decades. Moreover, without exaggerating their importance, the extreme nationalist fringe still remains very much alive in Serbia and renunciation of Kosovo would represent a very concrete danger, both political and physical, for Serb leaders who took such a decision.

Are the Republic of Kosovo and its political class credible?

The period of war saw the emergence of a 'political' class which came directly from the ranks of the UCK¹⁰. The death of Ibrahim Rugova, who was the sole (or nearly the sole) representative of a Kosovo intelligentsia which was not 'marked' by its having belonged to the ex-LCY (League of Communists of Yugoslavia), left the field free for these new 'politicians,' who were suspected, for the most part, of having links with the Community of organised crime. For those who might be astonished by these (strong) suspicions, it is appropriate to recall that a movement which was described as a liberation movement, as a revolutionary or subversive movement must, to be effective and visible, have its agitators on the ground; but to survive, it must also have a system of recruitment, of political, strategic and above all financial structures outside the territory. And in the latter case, it must 'know how to write,' to speak discreetly.... Thus, the UÇK, which was well organised, very quickly understood all this and prepared to take power in a very skillful manner with the assistance of a certain number of Western 'advisers.' Having a large diaspora in which the Community handed down the law without sharing power, the Kosovar nationalists drew from it the necessary human, financial and logistical resources. This organisation outside of Kosovo enabled the nationalists to have the financial means and the arms suited to guerilla fighting, as well as the

⁹ Beginning with the United States, President George W. Bush said on 19 February 2008, during a tour of East Africa, that the independence of Kosovo 'would bring peace' to the Balkan region and he added that 'now it is up to us all to help the Kosovars to achieve their peace.'... The day before, Condoleeza Rice had announced that the 'United States today formally recognises Kosovo as a sovereign and independent state,' adding in a press release that the United States and Kosovo were going to 'establish diplomatic relations' which would 'reaffirm the special links of friendship' between the two countries. One cannot be more clear.... (AFP Dar-es-Salam dated 19.02.08)

¹⁰ To understand the origins, the functioning and the mafia links of the UÇK, read the numerous and remarkable publications of Christophe Chiclet on this subject, in particular 'The lost soldiers of the UCK' in *Confluences Méditerranée [Mediterranean Intermingling]*, 2001/3 N°38, p. 25-30.

policy of terrorism programmed from the beginning of 1996, according to some, and in gestation since 1991, according to others.

The origin of the UÇK suggests that it should be attached to the National Liberation Front of Kosovo, which carried out terrorist acts in Yugoslavia beginning in 1974. An amalgam of various groups (including the NLFK) or mini-groups of opposition, mostly having Marxist or Maoist roots and inspired by the Tirana of Enver Hodja, operated during the 1980s and gave rise to the Movement for the Albanian Republic of Yugoslavia (LRSHJ), then to the People's Movement of Kosovo (LPK), from which the UÇK emerged in 1992.

Officially, the UÇK was financed by 'voluntary donations' from the Kosovar diaspora in Europe, *via* organisations which, like the LPK or Democratic Alliance of Albanians in Germany (DVAD) gathered donations for the 'Vlendindja Thërret' (the Call of the Fatherland) based in Switzerland. It was 'strongly recommended' that members of the diaspora put aside 3% of their monthly revenue for the cause. At the time, these donations represented an inflow of around a million dollars per month. The biggest donors would be repaid later on and the case of Bexhjet Pacolli is most typical in this sense.

Trafficking of all varieties constituted the other source of revenue for the UÇK, thanks to the many interconnections between its leadership and the Albanian Community. The mafia networks, which were heavily involved in drugs trafficking, in prostitution and in fraud, knew how to protect themselves against indiscretions by applying terror. They permitted the donors who were active in these domains to buy for themselves both credibility and positions later on. At the end of 2010, the 'discovery' was made that trafficking also concerned the very lucrative domain of human organs, which were sold 'on order' for transplant operations to very wealthy clients.

Meanwhile, beginning in the year 2000, the connections between the UÇK and the mafias have come to light. It was 'discovered' that many networks of the Albanian Community had been used to move around not just drugs, prostitutes and clandestine workers but also arms, money and volunteers. But this trafficking was nothing new. The Kosovar agitators had contacts with Organised Crime: one can mention the well-known case of the Gervalla brothers and the Yugoslav services of the UDBA which liquidated them in 1982. Already in 1987, the first laboratory for processing heroin linked to the LPK was dismantled in Priština. Soon after the creation of the UÇK, in 1994, many arrests of Albanian drug and arms traffickers took place in Macedonia, temporarily cutting these flows. But the organisation's need for money was growing and to top up the revenues coming from drugs, various types of fraud were 'put into operation.' In 1997, the 'Sentier affair' in Paris was a perfect example of this. Many members of the LDK were questioned, including Besim Elshani, whom we will discuss later on.

But the UÇK had other ambitions in 1997 and decided to move on to the phase of 'national liberation.' The need for arms was now very great and, whereas the first 'deliveries' came from Albanian arsenals which were supposedly plundered¹¹ (more than one million weapons were handed over to mafia 'transit' staff heading for Kosovo), the next cargo was 'imported' from various European countries thanks to Balkan or Italian mafias. One must not forget that the 'Yugoslav' Community had been very active in Western Europe since the 1960s and still has remained in contact, if not united, despite the vicissitudes of history. Beginning in March 1998, the great Albanian and Kosovar mafia godfathers began to acquire a certain legitimacy (all the while making their fortunes, obviously...). You will find among them such personalities as Princ Dobroshi, Besim Elshani (involved in the Sentier affair), Hajdin Sejdiha, Agim and Ekrem Gashi, one of the Jashari brothers (boss of the Kosovar mafia of Munich whose older brother is the number one hero of the UÇK), Ekrem Lluka, Ethem

¹¹ While in active negotiation over association with NATO, Tirana could not allow itself to admit to 'guilty liaisons.'

Ramadani... and a certain Behxhet Pacolli! It is obvious that the business was doing very well, since when the assets of the LDK were (briefly) frozen in Switzerland in 1998, the war chest amounted to 8 million Swiss Francs! The UÇK had 'just' 1.8 million!

In order to get around the bank prohibitions, 'bag-carriers' followed one another on the road to Kosovo. For at least one of them that ended badly because after having been given the task of taking a simple plastic bag containing 100,000 Deutsch Marks which he was supposed to 'hand over to a third party,' one young Kosovar aged 26 and residing in Germany forgot his freight in a snack bar where he had rested for a few minutes. To be sure, no one admitted to seeing the bag when he came back to claim it!!¹²

At the centre of the gigantic spider's web which goes from the Afghan poppy fields to the Western extremities of the European continent, you find the 'Zeka' networks of Xhavit Haliti, former chief of Special Services of Tirana (Sigurimi). Among the innumerable activities of this individual, some are official (he was one of the representatives of the UÇK in Rambouillet), while others are under official cover (representative of Hashim Thaçi in Tirana) concerning directly the secret activities of the UÇK ('procurement service'). Presently, Haliti is often identified as 'the power behind Hashim Thaçi.' It is said that when the resources linked to the war effort dried up little by little, he had to turn to large-scale organised crime to maintain the living standard he acquired during the war (drugs, prostitution, arms trafficking). *Persona non grata* in many countries, including the United States, he appears to be the real 'boss' (or godfather) of the Kosovar Community. Even if 'the Snake'¹³ has always known how to surround himself with 'competences,' his position alongside Hashim Thaçi is no less shocking.

Certain personalities of the PDK apparatus were content to remain more or less in the shadows and to busy themselves with finance, but others, directly coming from the organisation chart of the UÇK, have a weighty past: Sabit Gashi, former chief of a band of hooligans (in 2000, Minister of Culture...), Ramush Haradinaj (Prime Minister until 2005), former nightclub bouncer, Ghani Thaci, elder brother of the present Prime Minister who was responsible for money laundering in 2000, as well as Menduh Thaçi, the number two at the Albanian Democratic Party, member of the governing coalition in Macedonia in 2000, reputed to be the big 'godfather' of the trafficking between Macedonia and Kosovo.

The rise to power of organised crime may be blamed first of all on the United States and the EU, because the UÇK, their favoured interlocutors who rapidly became inescapable partners of the great powers, felt that they sprouted wings and were given a free hand. Once again, the bet was made on a group whose terrorist strategy and true aims were no secret for anyone and it failed at the end of the day! Lord Paddy Ashdown, who was very involved in the Balkans (Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo) testified to this during the trial of Milosević. The Kosovar nationalists were given perfect guidance in the communication strategy of their chiefs and had no difficulty boasting about their excesses before many journalists who were keen for 'scoops.' These operations obviously were intended to provoke reprisals by the Serbs who, despite the very special attention which was paid to them in this regard, did not avoid counter-attacks, sometimes with still greater intensity, thereby attracting firm condemnation and worldwide disapproval.

For a long time, it has been admitted that the Serbs perpetrated more abuses during the entire conflict. But some well-informed observers, like Lord George Robertson, former British Minister of Defence, have commented that up to January 1999, i.e., till the very eve of the meeting in Rambouillet, 'the UÇK was responsible for more deaths in Kosovo than the Yugoslav authorities'!

¹² AFP dispatch dated 7 March 1999.

¹³ Nickname of the present Prime Minister within the UÇK.

Because prior to its effective accession to power the UÇK pulled the strings in domains by relying on 'sister' structures of the Albanese mafias of Macedonia and of the various regions of Albania, the new state became a veritable 'mafia paradise' where the mob enjoyed the most complete impunity due to the total infiltration of the institutions. It was thus right up to the Police Academy which was created in September 1999, where the Western instructors discovered a certain number of dangerous criminals or top level gangsters sought by Interpol! At the same time, the UÇK, which was supposed to disarm its troops, continued to purchase arms in a clandestine manner. It took a conference of Ministers of the Interior from the Alpine region¹⁴ to write up an alarming report on the situation and to demonstrate clearly that the leadership of the UÇK were themselves completely involved in the 'economic dismemberment' of Kosovo¹⁵. At the beginning of the new millennium, the settling of accounts became all the more numerous as a 'territorial' redistribution proceeded and the 'godfathers' killed were close to the top ranks, even if they were not the leaders. In 2000, the Tetovo-Tirana-Priština triangle was correctly described as a 'little Colombia.'

Beginning at the start of the month of July 2010, the European mission EULEX, which took over from the administration of the United Nations, arrested Fahrudin Gashi, who was accused of war crimes in Lipjan. Then, at the end of July, it proceeded to search the residence of Azem Sylja¹⁶, the uncle of Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi. Indeed, the two facts are linked to the 'confessions' of Nazim Bllaca, one of the former 'Black Eagles,' who had just admitted to numerous murders, attempted assassinations and acts of intimidation, acting as the arm of the SHIK, the unofficial secret service of the PDK, the party of the Prime Minister and a spin-off of the UÇK. He denounced 'a very tight group of profiteers and criminals,' including Kadri Veseli, the chief of the SHIK; Azem Sylja, uncle of Hashim Thaçi; the minister Fatmir Limaj, among others. It turned out that this killer, Gashi and Sylja worked together and that their assignment seemed to consist of making the political rivals of the PDK disappear or keep quiet, including those loyal to the LDK of Ibrahim Rugova. Bllaca asserted that he had received an assignment from Azem Sylja to kill a witness who was annoying Fatmir Limaj. For his part, Fahrudin Gashi also caused a potential witness against the same Limaj to fall silent.

The latter, Minister of Transport of the next to last government, nicknamed the 'Corruption Commander,'¹⁷ was worried in 2005, but he was acquitted 'for lack of proofs' of the charges of war crimes directed against him for the murder of Serb and Kosovar civilians in the UÇK's prison camp at Lapušnik in 1998.

And at the end of 2010, a certain number of revelations exposed the real personality of some of the 'historic' leaders and their activities before, during and after the 'war of liberation.' Under the title 'The Dirty Case Files of the UÇK'¹⁸, the media took a close look at those whom the international community had promoted for the previous ten years to the forefront of the political stage, making them closely listened to interlocutors and presenting all the guarantees of honest respectability.

Some had even gotten into trouble with the law previously, but always got away without too many problems. Just a few underlings were obliged to settle accounts with the law. Ramush Haradinaj, Fatmir Limaj, Fahrudin Gashi and Azem Sylja enjoyed total impunity up to then,

¹⁴ 'Bürgenthau Process,' joining together France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Italy and Liechtenstein.

¹⁵ It is true that the mining and steel manufacturing complex at Trepça is worth paying attention to... In 2007, George Soros (and he knows the situation) estimated the value of the single industrial site of Kosovo to be 5 billion dollars.

¹⁶ Former political boss of the UÇK.

¹⁷ Suspected of embezzling 80 million Euros together with those close to him, he has been the subject of a parallel investigation by EULEX for this reason.

¹⁸ Read, among other things fr.novopress.info/.../les-sales-dossiers-de-l'uck-par-michel-arnaud www.valeursactuelles.com/.../sales-dossiers-de-l'uck20101028.html

occupying respected positions like national heroes (obviously, by the Albanians alone). To be sure, the first was forced to give up his post of Prime Minister in 2005, but without being unduly disturbed.¹⁹ However, he has just been overtaken by his past and by the courts: in July 2010, the TPIY ordered that he be retried, together with his co-accused, Idriz Balaj²⁰ and his uncle, Lahi Brahimaj.²¹ Only the last-named had gotten a six year prison sentence during the first trial in 2008; the first two were acquitted, whereas a punishment of twenty-five years in prison had been sought by the prosecution for war crimes and crimes against humanity! One must say that twenty or so witnesses were subjected to pressure by the accused and their friends and refused to testify until compelled by the Court (four of them subsequently died in murky circumstances). The three men were placed in detention in The Hague awaiting the trial where they must answer many charges including the murder, cruel treatment and torture of more than sixty Serb and Albanian civilians.²²

On 28 February 2011, the trial of two other former leaders of the UÇK was expected to begin.²³ Sabit Geci and Riza Alijaj are accused of having run the prison camps of Kükës and Cahan in the North of Albania, where presumed ‘collaborators’ of the Serbian regime and sympathisers of Rugova’s LDK were detained and tortured. However, it began after a two week delay.

Witnesses were cited. Some testified to having seen various high officials in the camp of Kükës.²⁴ All denounced the bad treatment and barbarous acts to which they were subjected during their detention. Many directors or right-hand men of the UÇK were directly concerned by this affair, including Liman Geci, Xhemshit Krasniqi, Milaim Zeka of Obri, Kadri Veseli of Likoc, Azem Sylja of Kishnareka, Jakup Krasniqi (President of the Kosovar Assembly and acting president after the forced resignation of Behxhet Pacolli at the end of March 2011 !!), Fatmir Limaj (who claimed to belong to the SHIK), Bedri Halimi, a certain Haziraj (first name unknown) from Llausha, the driver of Sabit Geci, Pjetër Shala, nicknamed ‘Ujku’ (the Wolf), Agron Krasniqi, Haki Drenica, Agim Çeku, Osman Kryeziu (former Prosecutor General in Priština !), Bashkim Lama, Ramadan Selimi (pseudonym – ‘Commander Dani’), ‘Loçka,’ Daut Hajredinaj (not to be confused with Daut Haradinaj). Some of these persons have already completely rejected the accusations: the emblematic Agim Çeku says that he never stayed in an UÇK unit in Albania (sic !) and... that he must have been confused with someone else ; the journalist Milaim Zeka claims these are the usual lies fabricated by the Serbian special services to discredit him (re-sic); the former Prosecutor General Osman Kryeziu confirms that he was a member of the UÇK, but tells us: ‘I worked and helped and I contributed what I could to the state, because it was a duty and nothing else.’ Not much which is credible up to this point...

On 14 March, this trial finally opened, but there is still uncertainty over whether the witnesses will be present or not. The fear is still palpable and threats are still effective. The ‘blows of feet to the anthill’ have continued however, and on 16 March, eight persons were arrested, not without some difficulty (due to the obstruction of the police officers of Prizren) by the EULEX police, accompanied by a unit of special forces from the Kosovar police. Within the context of the same operation, a ninth person is being arrested ‘abroad.’²⁵ The

¹⁹ He even enjoyed the support of MINUK, whose boss, Mr .Jessen-Petersen, said at the time: *‘Personally, I am disappointed that I no longer am working with a close partner and friend.’*

²⁰ Former head of the special unit of ‘Black Eagles.’

²¹ Former commander of the Jablanica prison camp.

²² <http://www.lemonde.fr> > Europe

²³ Article appeared in Koha Ditorë, an Albanian language publication in Priština. See www.contre-info.com/lhorreur-des-camps-de-luck-au-kosovo

²⁴ One of them acknowledged having seen Hashim Thaçi, Jakup Krasniqi, Fatmir Limaj, Agim Çeku, Kadri Veseli, Azem Sylja, Sabit Geci, Milaim Zeka, Bedri Halimi, Xhemshit Krasniqi, etc.

²⁵ <http://www.bruxelles2.eu/...kosovo/8-1-personnes-arretees-pour-crimes-de-guerre-au-kosovo-non-sans-difficultes.html>

nine are suspected of murders and torture directed against Kosovars, Serb civilians and prisoners of war in 1999. And recently, in a more surprising manner, Blerim Kuçi, the mayor of Suhareka, was arrested by EULEX²⁶ but in his case it was for refusing to reply to the court's questions... In fact, he is a former member of the FARK of Ibrahim Rugova who had been arrested by the UÇK and escaped from a death sentence pronounced by one of the organisation's 'tribunals.' This was not his first refusal to answer questions concerning crimes committed at Kleçka (near Mališevo), which remains to this day a detention centre of the UÇK with sinister associations.

The Kosovar 'elites' thus give us a sad vision of this country whose recognition was supposed to ensure stability in the region! And this is not the last episode around Behxhet Pacolli, who said he would restore confidence in the international political world! An especially atypical personality in Europe of the 21st century, this billionaire entrepreneur²⁷ based in Lugano, Switzerland who has been one of the big financial backers of the UÇK appeared on the political scene at the end of 2010, at the head of his own party the AKR (Alliance for a New Kosovo). The party has relations with most of the leadership of the Kremlin (and belongs, *es qualités* to the local oligarchy), but also with Muammar Gaddafi, as well as the presidents of various Central Asian republics and has as its stated models, curiously, Marshal Tito...

Behxhet Pacolli is a *self made man* without any political training. His electoral programmes, which are very populist, have attracted a certain number of politicians, but his creation does not reach out very far and only obtained a very few votes during the elections of 2007. After the proclamation of independence in 2008, he crafted a very active campaign for recognition of the new republic.²⁸ In Russia, he was mixed up in most of the financial scandals of the Yeltsin period, and he also made the news programmes for these same 'specialties' in Switzerland where, apart from his activities providing financial support to the Kosovar nationalists, he was associated with numerous corruption scandals and money laundering cases at the end of the 1990s without the Swiss courts ever managing to prove anything at all against him. On 22 February 2011, with some difficulty²⁹ he was finally elected. The main point of his programme was the intention to turn Kosovo into a free economic zone. He came out clearly for the opening up of Kosovo, not only to the United States, but also to Russia and the Arab countries. But Behxhet Pacolli did not have the time to savour his victory, because his election was invalidated on 28 March by the Constitutional Court of Kosovo.³⁰ His leaning towards Moscow is perhaps not so totally strange....

After the stormy general elections of September 2010 and numerous scandals of fraud and corruption, the future of the PDK-AKR coalition already seemed to be very compromised. The decision of the Constitutional Court has once again plunged Kosovo into crisis and weakened the Government, because the sole objective of the AKR was the presidency of the republic, a post which is honorary but happens to be especially useful to the development of the aura of its chief. Meanwhile, the PDK may explode and its chief may see a certain number of defections or attacks. Fatmir Limaj, who was recently arrested by EULEX, seems to be out of the running. However, in his fall he could bring down other former barons of the UÇK and,

²⁶ balkans.courriers.info/article17249.html

²⁷ MABETEX, his company, obtained a multitude of very lucrative contracts in Moscow thanks to the friendship of its founder with Pavel Borodin, a member of Boris Yeltsin's entourage; it also won many contracts linked to the construction of Astana, the new surrealist capital of Kazakhstan and... in Libya, where he was engaged in the renovation of Tripoli on the eve of the NATO strikes in the month of April. Two thousand Kosovar workers were employed in the Libyan capital (numbers provided by Pacolli himself in December 2010).

²⁸ The scandal of Malé, in the Maldives, mentioned above, was just one of the episodes.

²⁹ www.rfi.fr/.../20110220-behxhet-pacolli-homme-kremlin-tete-kosovo An alliance was found *in extremis* with the PDK of Hashim Thaçi. A certain number of their representatives in the Kosovo parliament showed themselves to be very critical of him.

³⁰ <http://www.taurillon.org> > Actualité

why not, the Prime Minister. This would no doubt be rather logical, but it would open the way for other 'sharp-toothed wolves,' because the democratic opposition does not appear to be capable of putting forward a single credible alternative. A large part of the Kosovar political class must without doubt be affected and the trials against the former leadership of the UÇK may weigh heavily on the future of the republic, especially if the explosive Marty report is confirmed during these sessions. As all the economic and social indicators are equally in the red, which the rumours of a sell-off of the Trepça mines by the government allow us to understand, Kosovo's march towards Europe must still be very long...

The report³¹ written by the Swiss deputy Dick Marty could constitute the death warrant of the system put in place by the PDK and, before it, by the UÇK. Adopted on 25 January by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe³², it brings out of the shadows an old story about which rumours have long circulated: the trafficking in human organs removed from persons held in detention (Serbian prisoners of war; Serbian, Kosovar and Roma civilians, as well as those of other European nationalities), organised by the UÇK beginning in 1999. One must note that Shaip Muja³³, who was at the centre of this trafficking according to the accusations, was until recently an adviser to Kosovo Prime Minister Hashim Thaçi for matters of health! According to the Marty report, he played an 'essential role' for 'more than ten years' in international networks specialised in trafficking human beings and in illicit surgical acts.

The first indictments have been handed down, and the first arrests in the context of this affair as well. Formal proofs are still missing³⁴ as are confirmed and convincing testimony. The affair of the Kükës/Cahan camps (accusations against Sabit Geci and Riza Alijaj) mentioned above are expected to constitute the first act of revelations concerning a somber period and to contribute to the demythification of the UÇK, whatever some may say. Whether the accusations are founded or not, the courts will decide, on condition that the witnesses and their incognito are genuinely protected. There are not less than several hundred persons who disappeared after the withdrawal of Serbian troops from Kosovo and there are, no doubt, one or two responses. The discovery of common graves, as happens after every conflict, will no doubt shed some light, but what about the others?

If the charge of trafficking in human organs is confirmed, that would be one further horrific step in a region which has already known many just in its modern history. Without a president, with a government about to 'explode,' with a discredited political class which is blighted with mafia connections, with all the indicators in the red and a supine economy on the drip...and now, with the discovery of especially reprehensible misdeeds committed by 'the heroes of independence,' the future of Kosovo, this republic 'made from a kit,' created from odds and ends, is presently on the dotted line. The wager on the stability of Kosovo to guarantee the stability of the region becomes more of a utopia with each passing day.

So what can be the follow-on to this story? The arrival of a 'surprise' president on 8 April 2011 after the resignation of Behxhet Pacolli is certainly not a panacea. A police general aged 36 (!), Madam Jahjaga was clearly imposed by the United States, and some speak³⁵ at present of 'Dell...ocracy' at Priština, making reference to the name of the American ambassador, Christopher Dell... The compromise between the major rival factions (PDK, ARK and LDK), which was inconceivable just a few days earlier, was obtained during a meeting called by Ambassador Dell. It took concrete form in an understanding over Ahtifete Jahjaga, who thus

³¹ <http://www.la-croix.com/.../Rapport-de-Dick-Marty-sur-un-traffic-d-organes-NG-2010-12-16-560485->

³² www.lematin.ch/.../adoption-rapport-marty-kosovo-378164

³³ http://www.letemps.ch/Facet/print/.../Les_spectres_du_Kosovo

³⁴ A house located in Fushë-Krujë, some 30 kilometres from Tirana and described in the report as one where the 'operations' were carried out, has been searched, without yielding any results.

³⁵ *Courrier des Balkans* dated 8 April.

becomes the first woman president of a republic in the Balkan region.³⁶ After completing her legal studies in Priština, she served as an interpreter with the Police of Kosovo, then continued her education in the United States, in particular within the FBI and in the Department of Justice, all of which provides a guarantee that she is serious. Though preceded by an excellent reputation, she nonetheless had no political experience, which in this case may perhaps be an advantage. Her swift rise in the police ranks is also subject to discussion and it is not certain that in a country which is still very traditionalist the fact of being a woman is an argument which will reconcile the enemies of yesterday. One must note that the other candidate was also a woman. The presidential functions remain very marginal and whatever the case, Madam Jajhaga is not expected to be more than a transitional president, because the constitutional reform under way (like many others, incidentally...) foresees a presidential election under conditions of universal suffrage before the end of the year.

Ever since the Clinton administration and above all during the presidency of George W. Bush, Washington has had a strong presence in Kosovo. But are the threats directed (not always very firmly) against the underground economy and the sacrifice of old friends on the altar of the search for stability sufficient to calm the debate and introduce a semblance of serenity and respectability in the Kosovar institutions? Nothing could be less certain. Unless the call of the greenback is here as elsewhere the argument which will bring together the actors on the Kosovar stage. But for Europe, the 'black hole' of the Balkans is far from being filled and the threat of a return to instability cannot be eliminated, above all if certain actors who are specialised in agitation and manipulation enter the game by exploiting the internal dissensions and the fragility of the states of the region (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Macedonia and, to be sure, Kosovo), or if they play on religious aspects to achieve their objectives. As regards Kosovo, this danger is matched by a risk of seeing the mafias refuse to accept the loss of one of their main hubs, especially in the trafficking of drugs, arms and human beings.

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³⁶ The deputies of the 'Vetëvendosje' (self-determination) movement have quit Parliament to protest the direct involvement of Christopher Dell in the negotiations between political groups. According to Behxhet Pacolli, he warned the representatives of the parties by speaking thus of Madam Jahjaga : 'You had better accept her, otherwise you are going to lose a great friend and the American agenda for Kosovo.'