



KOSOVO

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Pristina, still under «colonial tutelage», celebrates its new Constitution

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Kosovo has its new anthem in the wake of the new Constitution passed on Sunday, an anthem without words, adopted not without some discussion. Opposition members of Parliament, especially those from the party of the Swiss Kosovar millionaire Behxhet Pacolli and those of the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK) of former KLA commander Ramush Haradinaj, have strongly condemned the speedy procedure with which this piece of music was adopted by the Parliament of this former province of Serbia.

Since the declaration of independence on February 17th, members of Parliament have indeed been adopting scores of laws at an almost frenzied speed. The goal was to make laws that would include the most important layouts planned by former UN Envoy Maartti Ahtisaari. That is why the Albanians had to give up many of the symbolic measures taken since 1999. For example, some of the towns whose names were too close to the Serbian toponimic origin, had been rebaptized but, after independence, they got back their old names - in an "albanized" Serbian form.

Kafka-like situation

«The Albanians follow the rules of the game», international officials unanimously acknowledge. The two coalition parties in power, Prime Minister Hashim Thaci's Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK) and the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) have understood that those unpleasant measures were the price to pay for "independence under international supervision".

Nevertheless, the most difficult part remains as yet to be resolved. The Parliament will have to adopt decentralisation measures, and that means they will have to set up new Serbian communities, even though the Kosovo Serbs are boycotting all the new institutions. The situation has become Kafka-like in the existing Serbian communities where there are Albanian town councils elected on November 17th 2007, but not recognized by the population, as well as "illegal" Serbian town councils, elected on May 11th.

Kosovo is involved in a game of partition which seems to be accepted even by the international community. Since ten days or so, the International Civilian Office (ICO), to be officially in charge of the European "supervision" of Kosovo, has been organizing a promotion campaign with concerts, balloon distribution and explanation of the "European values" and of the mission's goals. But last week, as it went through



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Mitrovica, it took care to avoid the Serbian, northern part of the city. While the music could be heard on the other side of the Ibar River, which divides the city into two sectors, one of the clients in a small cafe nearby made this ironic comment: "The Albanians really do need it. One must explain to them in music how a State of law functions. As for us, we know very well how the institutions of Serbia function". As UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon gave Thursday his green light to the European mission, called EULEX, explaining it in a letter to the Serbian and Kosovar leaders - a letter whose content, however, has not entirely been revealed - it is now clear that, on a short term, the mission cannot be deployed in the Serbian zones.

In the wake of the compromises that the Kosovo Parliament will have to accept, opposition parties, especially the AAK of Ramush Haradinaj, the man against whom the Hague Tribunal has recently dropped all charges, are raising the tone of their voice. However, the movement Vetevendosje («Self-determination») is the only one to denounce the new «colonial tutelage» that, after the UN, the European Union is about to set up in Kosovo. "The western powers still have a positive image as liberators in the eyes of the Albanians. The speech of Albin Kurti (leader of Vetevendosje) remains of marginal importance», explains a journalist in Pristina. For the moment, Albanians hope that the adoption of the Constitution will give concrete shape to their independence which has been recognised by about 40 states in the world, only.

Will the new anthem be successful? Saturday night and Sunday, many of the Albanians were planning to celebrate the new Constitution - a celebration to be all the more boisterous as many Albanians living abroad are coming back home for the summer. But the odds are that, as always, it will be the national anthem of Albania that will be played, not the one without words of Kosovo.