** United Nations Office in Belgrade**

**Daily Media Highlights**

**Friday, 11 April 2014**

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**LOCAL PRESS**

**Kosovo Serbs on one list? (*Novosti*)**

Kosovo Serb political representatives do not exclude the possibility of participating on one list at the provincial parliamentary elections. This way they would prevent the scattering of Serb votes, and the number of won mandates would be higher. The prerequisite for that would be for Pristina to allow the right to vote to internally displaced persons and not to abolish reserved seats in Assembly. The leader of the Serbian (Srpska) Civic Initiative Vladeta **Kostic** says that a united list is “theoretically” feasible, but points out that election rules in Kosovo and Metohija are quite liberal, because they enable candidacy with only thousand signatures: “Because of that, even if more relevant parties would join together, there will probably be Serbs who would make separate lists.” Rgearding an option for the Serbian list to be joined with the Independent Liberal Party (SLS), which is already active in the Kosovo institutions, Kostic says: “We could have a joint caucus, which would be desirable.” Petar **Miletic** from the SLS, who is the vice president of the Kosovo Assembly, tells ***Novosti*** that a joint list would be an “ideal solution”: “It could also be a quite realistic option if personal interests would be suppressed and an agreement on distribution of mandates would be reached.” Deputy President of the SDP Civic Initiative Ksenija **Bozovic** tells Novosti that they will not be deciding on the manner of participation in the elections before 27 April, when “they expect Oliver **Ivanovic** to be released pending trial.”

**North Kosovo Serbs: EULEX criminalizes Serbs (*Beta*)**

Nowhere in the world are the police so marginalized and reduced to the function of regulating traffic as they are in northern Kosovo and Metohija, while an entire nation is treated as a suspect for various crimes, constantly criminalized and accused of avoiding to implement rule of law, reads the statement on the occasion of EULEX’s action in Zubin Potok, ***Beta*** reports. At an extraordinary meeting of representatives of local self-governments of four municipalities in the north of the province and representatives of the North Kosovo Police region with EULEX representatives, held in Zvecan, it was requested that numerous launched investigations be conducted completely. “We insist that numerous investigations, which have been only opening for years but not concluded, finally be conducted completely and that the suspects be interrogated in line with the law and that those who are determined to be guilty to be processed so to avoid politicization of these processes,” reads the statement. At the meeting it was assessed that “EULEX continues the policy of disrespect of the requests of the legitimate representatives of the Serb people for respecting the Kosovo Police as the only structure responsible for security and implementation of rule of law in northern Kosovo and Metohija”. The participants of the meeting have noted that “such practice by EULEX, which completely excludes the Kosovo Police, may lead to its members in northern Kosovo leaving it”. “By continuing such a policy and mode of action, EULEX is seriously endangering general safety in the north considering that the Serb people are treated as an unequal interlocutor, unprepared for cooperation towards establishing rule of law,” reads the statement. “The manner in which EULEX implements the rule of law in northern Kosovo, including excessive use of force without any responsibility for such acts, doesn’t correspond to reality, demonizing one nation in a unique manner,” reads the statement. The meeting was attended by mayors, presidents of assemblies and interim bodies of the municipalities of Kosovska Mitrovica, Leposavic, Zubin Potok, Zvecan and the Management Team for the Union of Serb Municipalities.

**Tadic denies he is candidate for UN Secretary General (*Tanjug*)**

The leader of the New Democratic Party (NDS) Boris **Tadic** dismissed Thursday the allegations published by certain media that he is a candidate for the United Nations (UN) Secretary General, adding that Serbian former foreign minister Vuk **Jeremic** is his rival in the matter. Tadic said at a news conference after a meeting with leader of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) Aleksandar **Vucic** that he has not thought about this as the new UN Secretary General will be elected in a few years. “I am not a candidate for the UN Secretary General, and I would like to dedicate all my energy to Serbia so that it could solve its economic, existential and political problems,” Tadic said. Commenting on the media allegations that his ambition is to become the UN Secretary General and that his rival in the matter is Vuk Jeremic, Tadic explained that it is not possible for one country to have two candidates for the office, so such rivalry is impossible.

**Vucic: Visit to Sarajevo very important for several reasons (*FoNet*)**

Aleksandar **Vucic**, mandate holder for the new Serbian government and leader of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), after a meeting with Boris **Tadic**, asked to comment on yesterday’s statement that the first city he would visit after becoming Serbia’s PM would be Sarajevo, said that the visit is important for regional stability and a number of other issues. “I said that I think I’d go to Sarajevo, I haven’t been in Sarajevo for a year and a half and I think that this visit is very important for regional stability, relations between Serbia and B&H, relations of sincere friendship and partnership that we must build. We, of course, respect the Dayton Accord, love Republika Srpska, but really respect and will always respect the integrity of B&H and the peoples of B&H. For us it is important that the peoples of B&H agree, but for us it is also important that citizens in B&H live well, and that we have excellent economic cooperation and that we improve this economic cooperation, if possible,” said Vucic. He said he believes that the two governments in the course of this year could organize a joint session. At yesterday’s address to the media, after construction started on a commercial complex for the German firm Dr. Oetker, Vucic said that he would accept the invitation to visit Sarajevo sent by Chairman of the B&H Presidency Bakir **Izetbegovic**. “The first visit of the new government, if I am at its head, will be a visit to Sarajevo,” said Vucic.

**A Reflection in a Distorted Mirror (*NIN*, by Dragana Pejovic)**

Was anyone surprised by the fact that the U.S. President, in his intention to refute Russian comparisons of the Crimean and Kosovo epics, referred to the non-existent referendum on Kosovo’s secession? When in need of some image from life in the battle of arguments, for his own interests, Barak **Obama** will easily tackle Kosovo, a terrain where he was challenged by his Russian counterpart Vladimir **Putin** when the latter asked the US President why the right to self-determination, given to the Kosovo Albanians, should be denied to the Crimean Russians. The Russian President has started the global trend of comparing Crimea with Kosovo, while the U.S. President has tried to dismantle it by demonstrating that, whatever the historical and legal analogies of these two cases, their essential similarity comes down to denying the further need for international law. Abusing United Nations norms, abundantly used by the great powers, has brought international law to an absurdity – today it doesn’t serve as the border of the permitted, but examples of its violation become a law in itself. The strained Putin-Obama discourse has nevertheless opened questions as to whether these two cases can be compared and what do Kosovo and Crimea mean to each other.

“The Kosovo minority has fought for secession for decades and it hasn’t been satisfied even with the status of an autonomous province, which is best illustrated by the 1981 rebellion. The Russian majority in the Crimea has never demanded secession,” political science professor Slobodan **Samardzic** underlines the first difference. “Then, the act of secessionism in Kosovo was carried out with the help of the terror of the KLA armed formation. It is another question as to whether the referendum in the Crimea was sufficient reason for independence, which is regulated by legal documents in every country. The Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), in which Kosovo was a province, for example, did not offer this as a possibility. The Crimea was an autonomous republic, which had the right to self-determination, but it doesn’t mean it had the right to secession,” explains professor Samardzic, who has compared one more difference – the merger of Crimea into Russia – with the annexation of East Germany to West Germany.

That step that makes a significant difference in comparing Crimea and Kosovo is called annexation by some. For Dragan **Djukanovic**, the vice president of the Foreign Policy Centre, the Kosovo case is an example of secession. “The NATO aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) didn’t have the consent of the UN Security Council, and on the other side, in the Crimea, we had entrance of a neighboring army that helped annexation. Apart from that, NATO arrived in Kosovo after the Kumanovo Agreement and Resolution 1244, so some kind of negotiations had been conducted over a longer period.

Secession, to which Pristina had no right according to the Serbian Constitution, however, didn’t occur after a referendum, but it acquired broader justification, thus more recognitions from other sovereign states, after the International Court of Justice (ICJ) delivered on 22 July 2010 an advisory opinion based on which the declaration on independence of Kosovo doesn’t violate international law, because it doesn’t ban such declarations. The response to an awkwardly phrased question got a very fast implementation through the interpretation of the State Department sent to the world (especially to states that were fluctuating to recognize Kosovo), but also in the first subsequent Crimean Declaration on independence on 11 March, whose preamble refers to the ICJ decision in regard to Kosovo.

“Western countries recognized Kosovo’s secession and declared it a special case, meaning they didn’t include it in international law,” says professor Samardzic. “They created a precedent and since then international law has been destroyed, in view of the right to self-determination. On the occasion of the Kosovo case, the ICJ has demonstrated that it is not credible anymore. The position of the judges was distributed exactly according to the position of the UN member-countries from which the judges came. And if the death of the Chinese judge didn’t occur, that opinion would not have been the same.”

Historically viewed, ever since Josef **Stalin** expelled the Tatars, who had cooperated with the Nazi fascists, the ethnic structure of the population in Crimea hasn’t changed significantly. That is not the case with Kosovo, from which more than 4,000 Serbs were expelled massively as recently as on 17 March 2004. So, it could be said that the Russian-majority Crimea voted for independence with the help of the Russian Army, while the ethnic Albanian majority in Kosovo won independence with the help of NATO and the U.S. The Russian Army, in agreement with Ukraine, was present in Sevastopol, as the U.S. Army has been in Kosovo following NATO’s 1999 unprovoked bombing of Serbia.

Professor Samardzic thinks that the case of the Badinter Arbitration Commission was an example of turning international law upside down. “Examining the right of former Yugoslav republics to secession, the Badinter Commission didn’t refer to the case, but to the principle that operated at the moment when Asian, African and Latin American countries were being liberated from colonists. Despite the fact that the constituent republics of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) were not colonies and the legal order didn’t recognize the unrestricted right to secession.”

In an extended interpretation of the right to a territory, it should be mentioned how the “West,” so to say, imitated Brezhnev’s doctrine of limited sovereignty, which served to justify the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and of Afghanistan in 1979. Modeled on the idea of this Russian (of Ukrainian origin) Communist leader, the NATO aggression on FRY, Afghanistan, Libya, Iraq were declared – humanitarian.

Putin and Obama may interpret someone else’s sovereignty as it suits them, because, anyway, there is no one to protect international rights and obligations except those armed forces that these two manage. Without these armed forces, neither Crimea nor Kosovo would be asking for anything more that they are already have. From this rare analogy, the conclusion is that Serbia and Ukraine are in the same boat, but yet, they are not. The EU doesn’t have a united stand towards Kosovo’s secession, which is not the case with Crimea, still, Serbia is expected not to recognize Crimea’s annexation, while establishing diplomatic ties with Pristina would bring a handful of points to the new Ukrainian leadership in Kiev. Thus, every analogy denies itself, but that doesn’t mean that the imposition of these analogies will be given up. On the contrary, it will continue to be used from both directions according to free will, proving to us yet again that international law abides by only two interpretations – the one that suits the Russian and the other that suits the Americans.

**REGIONAL PRESS**

**Izetbegovic, Zeybekci meet: Turkish government will continue to encourage companies to invest in B&H (*Dnevni Avaz*)**

The Chairman of the B&H Presidency Bakir **Izetbegovic** met with Turkish Minister of Economy Nihat **Zeybekci**, who is on an official visit to B&H. Izetbegovic expressed gratitude for the wholehearted support the Turkish government offers B&H on the political and economic plane. He especially emphasized the significant results achieved by implementing the favorable Turkish loans for returnees, whose funds thus far have employed more than 2,000 people, and provided livelihood for thousands of returnee families. Minister Zeybekci stressed the consistent commitment of the Turkish government to continue to motivate and encourage Turkish companies to invest in B&H, by a singular model that is not assigned to any other country.  
  
**Selakovic and Dodik on strengthening cooperation between Serbia and the RS (*Srna*)**

The Republika Srpska (RS) President Milorad **Dodik** and outgoing Serbian Justice Minister Nikola **Selakovic** have discussed in Banja Luka ways of improving the cooperation between the RS and Serbia. The two agreed that the joint meetings of the RS and Serbian governments should be more efficient, and that there was willingness on both sides to act together on many issues, like legislation and joint market appearances. The cooperation can be particularly visible in the judiciary, since many of the laws both sides have can be harmonized, Selakovic noted, according to a release from the Ministry of Justice and Public Administration. Right after the formation of a new government, Serbia faces extensive and painful reforms, for which it requires the full support of its people, he pointed out.

**Exclusive: Angela Merkel to host conference on the Western Balkans (*Oslobodjenje*)**

German Chancellor Angela **Merkel** is organizing a conference on the Western Balkans, ***Oslobodjenje*** has learned. It is planned to be on 28 August, sources confirmed for Oslobodjenje in Berlin, and the prime ministers, foreign ministers and finance ministers of Slovenia, Croatia, B&H, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Kosovo and Albania will be invited to the conference.  
From B&H, along with the Chairman of the Council of Ministers Vjekoslav **Bevanda**, Zlatko **Lagumdzija** and Boris **Tucic**, the ministers of foreign affairs and foreign trade respectively, will be invited. The conference host, Chancellor Merkel, as Oslobodjenje has learned, wants to show that Germany has not lost interest in the Balkans – in the region’s economic and political opportunities. Chancellor Merkel will meet with country leaders in mid-July, in Dubrovnik, within the framework of the Brdo Process. By way of reminder, last year’s host of the regional meetings of the Brdo Process was Slovenia, and French President Francois **Hollande** was the guest; this year’s host is Croatia, and the special guest is the German Chancellor. Chairman of the B&H Presidency Bakir **Izetbegovic** will travel to Dubrovnik from B&H.

**INTERNATIONAL PRESS**

**Kosovo: Approve Special War Crimes Court, Says HRW (*Eurasia Review*, 11 April 2014)**

Kosovo’s parliament should approve the establishment of a special court located abroad to try alleged war crimes and other serious crimes committed during and after the 1998-1999 Kosovo war. The parliament should also agree to extend the mandate of the European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX) and allow it to continue investigating and prosecuting serious and politically sensitive crimes in Kosovo.

The EU is seeking to extend EULEX and to establish the specialized court within the Kosovo court system but with a special chamber based in an EU member state. The Kosovo parliament plans to review the proposal before it dissolves for elections planned for May 2014.

“The proposal to establish a special court and extend the EU law mission is Kosovo’s chance to advance justice and individual accountability for very serious crimes,” said Lotte Leicht, EU director at Human Rights Watch. “The parliament should vote yes, to show that it takes the rule of law seriously and is committed to justice for serious abuses.”

Under the proposal before parliament, the specialized court will have a seat in Kosovo, but proceedings will take place in a special chamber abroad. The separate judicial chambers will hold filings, and sensitive records and be operated by international staff. EULEX will appoint the judges and prosecutors. If parliament approves the court, it will still need to adopt new legislation and perhaps amend the constitution to allow for the establishment and operation of the special judicial chambers.

Under the proposal, international judges and prosecutors in the broader EULEX mission will be “embedded” in Kosovo institutions. EULEX judges and prosecutors will not take on new cases, with some exceptions. When EULEX judges sit on mixed panels, Kosovo judges would be in the majority, again with some exceptions. The exceptions are not elaborated in the proposal, but should include all cases involving war crimes, terrorism, organized crime, and serious corruption, Human Rights Watch said.

Despite progress, the justice system in Kosovo remains weak, with inadequate security for judges, court staff, prosecutors, and plaintiffs. The lack of adequate measures to protect witnesses is of particular concern and makes the need for an EU-based chamber pivotal.

The inability of Kosovo’s justice system to protect witnesses in sensitive cases, even with international involvement, led the EU in 2011 to establish a special investigative task force to conduct a criminal investigation into alleged crimes identified in a 2010 Council of Europe report prepared by Swiss senator Dick Marty.

Previous war crimes cases in Kosovo and at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY) have been marred by threats and even the deaths of witnesses.

To protect witnesses and information, the task force based its operations in Brussels and employed only international staff.

The Marty report accused some members of the Kosovo Liberation Army, the wartime ethnic Albanian rebel group, of abductions, beatings, summary executions, and in some cases, the forced removal of human organs on Albanian territory. The victims, according to the Marty report, were mostly Serbs and Roma from Kosovo but also included ethnic Albanians suspected of having collaborated with the Serbian government before or during the war, or members of rival armed groups. After the war, some leaders of the rebel group entered politics and now serve in high positions.

The proposed special court would adjudicate criminal prosecutions arising from the work of the special task force. The task force says its investigation is coming to a close, but it has not announced whether it will issue indictments. Indictments hinge in part on the creation of a court operating outside Kosovo but under Kosovo jurisdiction, where witnesses will feel secure enough to testify. Some prominent Kosovo politicians may be among the potential indictees.

In addition to the EU, the United States has expressed support for the establishment of a special court based abroad, saying it would help Kosovo build its “international credibility.” The US helped fund the special investigative task force and sent a senior former official to serve as lead prosecutor. US and European diplomats have said that if Kosovo’s parliament rejects the special court, the UN Security Council will address the issue.

“The establishment of this special court outside Kosovo is critical for the integrity and credibility of the process,” Leicht said.“Given the known record of witness intimidation and deaths, it’s likely anyone with information would feel unsafe to testify in Kosovo.”

Human Rights Watch documented systematic war crimes by Serbian and Yugoslav forces during the 1998-99 war, including forced expulsions, rape, and killings. While some cases have gone to the ICTY or the Serbian war crimes court, much more is needed to hold those responsible for the most serious war-era crimes to account, Human Rights Watch said.

Since EULEX was established in 2008, its international prosecutors and judges have played a pivotal role in investigating, prosecuting, and adjudicating cases involving public officials, war crimes, and corruption in Kosovo. But with its mandate due to expire in June, the Kosovo government and some EU officials contend that the mission should scale down its operations, stepping away from direct responsibility for investigations and trials and moving toward a more advisory role.

In January, 17 international judges from the EULEX mission said, however, that international lawyers should remain in charge of war crimes, organized crime, and corruption cases in Kosovo. “We believe that we have not yet reached the stage where the more complex and very sensitive cases, such as war crimes, serious corruption and organised crime should be completely handed over to the local judiciary,” the judges wrote to the head of the EULEX Executive Division.

Human Rights Watch also believes that cases involving war crimes, organized crime, and serious corruption should fall within the exceptions to “no new cases” and majority Kosovo-judge panels in the proposal before parliament. EULEX prosecutors should continue to prosecute such cases before panels in which EULEX judges are the majority.

As part of the agreement on EULEX’s future mandate in Kosovo, the government and the EU should also make it an immediate priority to enhance witness protection and security across the justice system as part of the overall strengthening of the rule of law in Kosovo, Human Rights Watch said.

“Kosovo has come a long way in the 15 years since the war,” Leicht said. “But when international judges there say the justice system is not ready to handle sensitive cases, Kosovo’s parliament needs to listen and to act on behalf of Kosovo’s people to advance protection and justice.”

**Macedonia Readies for Pre-Election Silence (*BIRN*, by Sinisa Jakov Marusic, 11 April 2014)**

The pre-election silence for Macedonia’s first round of presidential elections begins on Friday at midnight and lasts until Sunday’s vote.

Campaigning for the presidential election will halt in Macedonia ahead of Sunday, when more than 1.7 million registered voters will choose between four candidates.   
Voters will choose between incumbent President Gjorge Ivanov who is running for a second five-year term for the ruling VMRO DPMNE party and three other hopefuls.   
Ivanov’s main challenger is Stevo Pendarovski from the opposition Social Democrats, SDSM.   
Iljaz Halimi, candidate of the opposition Democratic Party of Albanians, DPA, as well as Zoran Popovski, running for the new opposition party, Civil Option for Macedonia, GROM, are also running for office.  
A second round, involving the two best-ranked candidates, takes place on April 27, alongside snap general elections.  
Authorities say that all is set for the voting on Sunday.  
The State Electoral Commission said it had started distributing the election materials to the 3,480 polling stations. The police aim to engage some 7,000 officers on election day, to guarantee safety.  
For their part, domestic and international observers will field over 3,000 election monitors for the first round of voting.   
During the campaign, observers noted that three of the four presidential candidates started their campaigns prematurely.  
OSCE monitors said Ivanov visited some 70 villages and published a report on his achievements before the race had begun.

The OSCE also said that Pendarovski and Halimi also started prematurely by attending party rallies and meetings.  
The campaign saw one televised debate, staged by Macedonian Television. Ivanov refused to appear at other debates organized by independent organizations and media, however.  
The economy, over which the President has little say, as well as issues of democracy, the rule of law, and the long-standing dispute with Greece over Macedonia’s name, dominated the election campaign.  
According to the constitution, the President is significantly less powerful than the Prime Minister. The President is the supreme commander of the armed forces and, together with the Foreign Ministry, shares responsibility for foreign policy, having the final say on appointments of ambassadors.  
In domestic affairs, the presidential role is largely ceremonial. However, the President has the power to block bills that parliament has passed, by refusing to sign them.

One stain on the presidential race has been the insistence of the DUI, the junior party in government, that it will dispute the legitimacy of the next President, whoever his is.

The ethnic Albanian party had wanted the country's main Albanian and Macedonian parties in parliament to agree on a presidential candidate in advance.

The party has since urged ethnic Albanians who make a quarter of the population to abstain from voting in the presidential race.

**Bosnia Plenum of Plenums Protest in Sarajevo (*Liberty Voice*, by Day Blakely Donaldson, 10 April 2014)**

In what is being called the Plenum of all Plenums, a symbolic gathering took place to protest social grievances in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The gathering was staged in protest of the selling off of public assets in the wake of privatization of many companies–and a review of all privatizations so far conducted and prosecution of the parties and individuals responsible–as well as demanding the resignation of the government and a cessation of the criminal proceedings being laid against the citizens who took part in the violent protests that erupted Feb. 5.

The Plenum included participants from cities all over Bosnia and Herzegovina. The participants made their ways to Sarajevo Wednesday in buses from Mostar, Maglaj, Tuzla, Zenica, Srebrenik and other locations. Several participants complained in anger that Sarajevo’s citizens turned up in the smallest numbers.

The protesters spoke through microphones and displayed banners such as “Freedom is my nationality.” Srebrenik citizens, who were the most visible contingent at the protest, held a banner reading “Srebrenik is Ours.”

Anti-government protests began to take place in several cities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Protesters began to call the movement Bosnian Spring, after the Arab Spring revolts and revolutions that began in 2010–which is in turn a reference to the 1848 Springtime of the People and the 1968 Prague Spring.

The Bosnia and Herzegovina revolts began in early February in the northern town of Tuzla. The impetus was high unemployment and unpaid salaries and pensions. Workers from factories in the town united to demand compensations after the factories were privatized. Four large national companies were sold to private owners in the early 21st century, on the expectation that the private companies would invest in the businesses and make them profitable. The private companies, however, sold off the assets and declared bankruptcy. The workers–hundreds were laid off in a labor market that already had a 27-47 percent unemployment rate–were not paid.

The protests spread to the rest of the country, which was similarly affected by the government policies of privatizing businesses. Around 20 towns were the sites of protests. There were several clashes between protesters and police—particularly between protesters who bore a grievance against a bankrupted company that had not paid them.

In Tuzla on Feb. 4, 600 protesters attempted to storm the local government building. The revolt became violent after demonstrators threw eggs and stones at windows and set tires of fire in the roads. Police forced the demonstrators back, but they later gathered at the cantonal government building to request governmental attention to their healthcare and pension payments. At the end of the day, 22 people (17 of them police officers) had been injured and 24 arrested.

The violence outraged the citizenry, who turned out in larger numbers the following day, when 100 police men were injured by rocks and other weapons. In following days, the unrest spread to other cities and neighboring countries. Government buildings were seized and burned, mayors were held hostage. Several dramatic scenes took place when police forces lowered their shields and took off their helmets and were greeted by cheering and welcome from the crowds.

The more violent expressions of revolt subsided within a few days, but protesting has continued.

The main focus of these groups is the overthrow of the government. Protesters have blamed local officials for allowing the state-run companies to become privatized and collapse.

**Bosnia the Surreal: Emir Kusturica's Fantasy Town Erasing the Brutal Past (*International Business Times*, by Gianluca Mezzofiore, 11 April 2014)**

Entering Andricgrad, the controversial and ambitious "town within a town" built by filmmaker Emir Kusturica in celebration of literature and culture, is like something out of a Jorge Luis Borges book.

Every stone in the town, from the 19th century-like Spanish 'Francisco Goya' café to the Orthodox Church that rises like a lighthouse on the Drina River, echoes The Bridge on the Drina, the 1945 masterpiece by Nobel prize-winning writer Ivo Andric.

The book, published in 1945, captures the history of the uneasy relationship between the cultures of Christian Europe and the Islamic Ottoman Empire through the bloody story of the 16th century Mehmed Pasa Sokolovic Bridge that was built in Visegrad.

Cannes double winner Kusturica (Underground, Time of the Gypsies) conceived Andricgrad, which is due to be inaugurated on 28 June, as a tribute in stone to the great writer.

Everything from Thomas Mann Street to the multiplex cinema "Dolly Bell" breathes art and literature. Andricgrad also features an Austro-Hungarian academy of fine arts, a wine-tasting bookshop promoting Kusturica's own book, an opera house dedicated to Italy filmmaker Luchino Visconti where Kusturica plans to stage the premiere of his opera, based on Andric's masterpiece.

A joint project between Kusturica (who has 51% of the share) and the government of Republika Srpska, the Serbian enclave carved out after the 1992-95 war, the theme park cost between €10m and €12m.

Fantasy town

Statue of Nobel prize winner Ivo Andrić dominates Andricgrad main squareIBTThe project is controversial to say the least as it has been raised on the site of a sports centre that was used as a detention camp during the war. About 3,000 Bosnian Muslims were killed in Visegrad on or near the 11-arched bridge. Before the war 63% of the town's 25,000 inhabitants were Bosnian Muslims. Despite the Dayton Peace Agreement, which called for the Bosnian Muslims (known as Bosniaks) to be able to return to their homes, only around 5% have come back.

Bosniak activists such as Bakira Hasecic, who was raped at Visegrad police station by Serb paramilitary leader Milan Lukic and after the war founded the Association of Women Victims of War, say they would never put a foot in Kusturica's fantasy town.

"I would never enter Andricgrad even if my life depends on it," she told IBTimes UK. "On 26 May 1992 along [what has become] the access road to Andricgrad the first buses for Bosnian Muslims who were forced into exile [by Serb forces] used to pass. In the sports centre where we took our kids to play there was the biggest concentration camp for Bosniaks."

Supporters of Andricgrad dismiss those claims as propaganda. They maintain that the construction provided much-needed jobs to Bosniaks and Serbs alike.

The mayor of the town, Slavisa Miskovic, accuses media of political manipulation. "No one in Visegrad is against Andricgrad," he told us. "Andricgrad is supported by the majority of Visegrad inhabitants."

But his remarks are dismissed by the president of the Islamic community, Bilal Memisevic. "The mayor lies. The mayor does not support Andricgrad. His 'grace' still has not had a coffee in Andricgrad."

Rationalist architecture and metaphysical art

Erected on a stretch of land between the emerald green Drina and a tributary, Andricgrad strikes the visitor as a pastiche of Bosnia's different history and stiles, where rationalist architecture and metaphysical art meet literary theme park.

Labelled a "time machine" by the official guide, it resembles more a nightmarish but fascinating caprice of genius. Behind a Serbian castle, Ottoman houses lead to a Byzantine tower; the main street is a clear example of Austro-Hungarian style.

Music pours out of Goya café into the empty Nikola Tesla town square, built in Renaissance style, where Ivo Andric's black figure stands, unaware of controversies.

Kusturica himself is a controversial figure. He renounced Islam, despite being born Bosniak, and aligned himself with the Serbs. Local papers described project as "the unfortunate encounter between a limited imagination and poor knowledge of the past".

Memisevic says: "It is politically dangerous because once the construction work has finished, Emir Kusturica is planning to shoot a movie based on Ivo Andric's novel.

"The novel itself is a masterpiece in literary terms, but ideologically it is very dangerous work, because as every educated Bosnian Muslim knows it was commissioned by the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts of that period."

Memisevic says that in the book and in the film script the role of Bosniaks "will be mocked in relation to what we really are".

"We are native European and with the Ottoman Empire we have nothing in common besides religion," he says.

"The director says that Andricgrad is a time machine through Visegrad. Every culture is represented there besides mine. What kind of time machine is that?"

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