

# PeaceWatch

APRIL 2001



Vol. VII, No. 3

UNITED STATES INSTITUTE OF PEACE ■ WASHINGTON, DC

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## Kosovo Municipal Leaders Agree on Good-Governance Initiatives

Local leaders from Kosovo agree to initiate key measures in support of democratic governance in their municipalities during a recent Institute training workshop.

**F**orty-four newly elected mayors, deputy mayors, municipal assembly members, and administrators representing a wide range of Kosovo's ethnic groups recently agreed to initiate key measures in support of good governance in their province. The local leaders issued three consensus reports at the conclusion of a four-day training workshop organized by the U.S. Institute of Peace and held on February 25–March 1 in Airlie, Va. The training was led by **Theodore Feifer**, program officer in the Training Program, and **George Ward**, director. **Daniel Serwer**, director of the Institute's Balkans Initiative, and **David Steele** of the Center for Strategic and International Studies completed the training team. The workshop, which focused on negotiation and mediation exercises to enhance cooperation at the municipal level, was held at the request of the State Department.

The reports of the leaders' agreements called for:

See *Kosovo Leaders*, page 2



*Top and center:*  
Kosovo leaders  
discuss govern-  
ance issues in  
small and large  
groups.

*Bottom:* David  
Steele describes  
cycles of vio-  
lence.



Top row:  
Kosovo leaders  
at Airlie, Va.

Bottom, left to  
right: Theodore  
Feifer, Chris  
Dell, Daniel  
Serwer, and  
George Ward.



## Kosovo Leaders

*Continued from page 1*

- Adoption of a legal framework guaranteeing equal rights for minorities in Kosovo-wide governmental institutions and providing a framework to guide the operation of municipal governments.
- Establishment of an independent ombudsman office with direct authority to investigate any suspicious activity at the municipal level.
- Creation of a code of ethics for municipal officials and of civic watchdog organizations to disclose and disseminate information on candidates for municipal office prior to elections.

To help implement these decisions, the local leaders agreed to pursue the formation of a Kosovo-wide association of mayors. The reports are available in Albanian, English, and Serbian on the Institute's web site at [www.usip.org](http://www.usip.org).

### Personal Stories

In small group sessions that helped to launch the workshop, participants were asked to discuss the most significant things that had happened to them in recent years and the resources that helped them deal with those experiences. While the majority of participants were ethnic Albanians, the meet-



ing included four Serb leaders and representatives of the Ashkali, Bosniak, Egyptian, Gora, Roma, and Turkish minorities.

Among the participants, a good number had been imprisoned at various times for working on behalf of Albanian rights in Kosovo or opposing the Milosevic regime. "I went through hell in Serb jails," said one man. "The treatment of Albanian prisoners was brutal, medieval. There wasn't enough food, and food poisoning was common. The challenge was staying alive." Others spoke of physical and psychological abuses. One man recounted how, like the others, he had suffered regular beatings, "and when my wife came to the police station, they beat her in front of me, too." A young man said that his time in prison had

left him scarred. "The scars are reflected in this face and in my poor health and in many other ways," he said. "We knew we were either going to die or we had to do something," said another.

During the 1998-99 war with Serbia, a number of the Albanians had joined the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) and other workshop participants had fled to the mountains—sometimes with their entire villages—surviving on dried bread, grass, and roots for up to three months. Their homes were ransacked and burned, their agricultural equipment stolen or vandalized. Children died from a lack of nutrition and medical care. One child was shot by a sniper while being held in her mother's arms. "My niece has still not recuperated,"

*See Kosovo Leaders, page 6*



# Relations between the New Serbia and Kosovo

**S**erbia and Kosovo need to work together to establish a government that respects the rights of all citizens, says **Milan Protic**, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia's new ambassador to the United States. However, many Kosovar Albanians seem unwilling to recognize that Serbia has undergone a democratization process, he says. Leaders in Pristina and Belgrade need to better understand each other if they are to make progress in stabilizing relations and resolving the status of Kosovo, a province of Serbia that has been under UN administration since the end of the 1998–99 war.

Protic, a former mayor of Belgrade and longtime member of

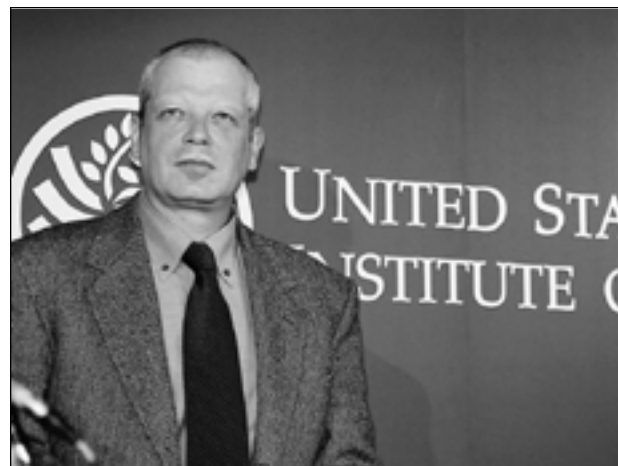
Serbia's democratic opposition, discussed issues facing the new Yugoslav government at a U.S. Institute of Peace Current Issues Briefing on March 15.

The overwhelming political objective of most Kosovar Albanian leaders is the independence of Kosovo, Protic said. "They believe independence will solve all of their problems. We in Serbia know how difficult it is to take responsibility for the future of a country. I'm not sure Albanian leaders fully understand."

While the status of Kosovo remains unresolved, ethnic Albanian rebels from Kosovo and Macedonia fighting in southern Serbia and western Macedonia are creating a "drastic and dangerous situation" that threatens the stability of the region, Protic said. Although the militant Albanian leaders in Macedonia say they are fighting to improve the status of Albanians in Macedonia, Protic and other observers believe they are trying to separate western Macedonia and join it with an independent Kosovo.

Protic said that with the continued fighting, it is unlikely that Serb refugees from Kosovo now living in Serbia will return to their homes in Kosovo. "They escaped out of fear or were expelled. They would have to get guarantees that they would be going back to a friendly environment, and that's not the case. Serbs in Kosovo are under daily pressure. Almost daily they are being killed. That does not encourage refugees to go back."

Indeed, the fate of perhaps 1,500 Serbs in Kosovo who have been kidnapped since the end of



Above:  
Milan Protic

the war remains unknown. According to Protic, leaders of the NATO forces in Kosovo (KFOR) and the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) admit off the record that the missing Serbs are presumed dead. Their families have been demonstrating in Belgrade, demanding to know their whereabouts. They are angry that UNMIK and KFOR are not investigating the disappearances and have not protected Serbs from attack by extremist ethnic Albanians seeking to drive non-Albanians from the province. "The missing are all civilians—teachers, laborers, people who trusted KFOR and remained in Kosovo," Protic said.

The issue of missing Serbs has become entangled with the issue of about 2,000 Albanians held in Serb prisons since the end of the war. Members of the missing Serbs' families argue that the prisoners should not be released until the whereabouts of their relatives is known, Protic said. However, the new Serbian government had released about 1,600 Albanian prisoners by the end of March and is expected to release others soon.



*Peace Watch* (ISSN 1080-9864) is published six times a year by the United States Institute of Peace, an independent, nonpartisan federal institution created by Congress to promote research, education, and training on the peaceful resolution of international conflicts. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect the views of the Institute or its board of directors.

To receive *Peace Watch*, write to the Editor, *Peace Watch*, United States Institute of Peace, 1200 17th Street NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20036-3011. For general information call 202-457-1700, fax 202-429-6063, e-mail: [usip\\_requests@usip.org](mailto:usip_requests@usip.org), or check our web site: [www.usip.org](http://www.usip.org).

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# Kosovo Stories

Kosovo's local leaders face the hard realities of post-war conditions with a mixture of hope and determination, despite setbacks and ghosts from the past.



**Desimir Petkovic** is a proud man. A Serb and the mayor for the last nine years of Zvecan, a small municipality in northern Kosovo, he lists among his many accomplishments fostering harmony between local Serbs and ethnic Albanians. He mentions such things not to boast, but to hold them up as examples of how he and his neighbors have lived honorably, especially during the last dozen troubled years under the autocratic regime of Serbia's Slobodan Milosevic. Petkovic and the people of Zvecan always opposed the Milosevic regime, he says. "I'm still not sure how I've managed to stay alive."

Petkovic was one of 44 mayors, deputy mayors, municipal assembly members, and administrators representing a wide range of Kosovo's ethnic groups who attended a four-day training workshop organized by the U.S. Institute of Peace and held on February 25–March 1 in Airlie, Va. (See the story on page 1.) *Peace Watch* interviewed several of the participants for this article.

**Daniel Serwer**, director of the Institute's Balkans Initiative, noted in an interview that Petkovic and other Serbs routinely risk their lives opposing the Serb extremists in northern Kosovo, which includes the ethnically divided and troubled city of Mitrovica, on the eastern border of Petkovic's home region of Zvecan. The Serb extremists do not want to share political power with ethnic Albanians or to let them return to their homes north of the Ibar River.

Many parts of northern Kosovo are inhabited primarily but not exclusively by Serbs. Like municipalities throughout Kosovo, Zvecan (with a population of 17,000) comprises a town and surrounding villages. Some 5,000 people live in the town and the rest in its 36 villages. The municipality's 350 Albanians, most of whom live in three of the villages, travel throughout the municipality without fear, Petkovic said. "No one has ever touched them, nor has anyone any interest in harming them, and they have no fear that anyone ever will." If Serbs and Albanians have been able to live together all these years—not just in Zvecan, but throughout Kosovo—"I don't see any reason why we can't live together peacefully again. We have to live together," Petkovic said. "The problems here have been made by filthy politicians—on both sides, Serb and Albanian."

However, should Kosovo gain independence from Serbia, Zvecan will hold a referendum to secede from Kosovo and join Serbia, Petkovic said. "I'm convinced that [Kosovo independence] is never going to happen," he added. Secession would be an answer only for Serbs living along the border with Serbia, but not for other Serbs in Kosovo. And it would not resolve the overriding need for peace and cooperation among



ethnic groups in the Balkans, he said.

While Petkovic is optimistic about both past and future relations between Serbs and ethnic Albanians, **Daut Krasniqi**, an ethnic Albanian member of the municipal assembly of Malisheve, has serious doubts. A member of the Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), a political party founded by the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) after the war, Krasniqi believes that the new regime in Belgrade will not behave any differently toward ethnic Albanians than the Milosevic regime did. "The Serbs have always done genocide against the Albanians," he said. They may "give in" on some things only to gain favor with the European Union. But after every negotiation with Serbs, there remain "a hundred hidden things," he said. "We have proof that Serbia is not democratic. They are still keeping Albanian prisoners in jail. In the Balkans, the stronger ethnic group wants to destroy the weaker. We have history, experience to prove this. Every 30 or 50 years there has been a program to destroy the Albanians in Kosovo." For this reason autonomy for Kosovo inside Serbia instead of outright independence "is absolutely not acceptable," he said.

While Krasniqi and many other ethnic Albanians continue to distrust Serbs generally, violent tensions have erupted in Malisheve between Albanians locked in a power struggle. In Kosovo's October 2000 election, the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK), headed by moderate ethnic Albanian leader Ibrahim Rugova, won 50.2 percent of the vote in Malisheve, and Krasniqi's party, the PDK, headed by Hashim Thaci, former head of the KLA, 49.8 percent.

The parties have been feuding bitterly over the distribution of council and administrative positions. Shortly after the election, an LDK assembly member was seriously wounded in a drive-by shooting. The PDK has boycotted the assembly meetings, and the parties are trying to negotiate a power-sharing compromise. Meanwhile, the people of Malisheve, a municipality that suffered severe damage during the 1998-99 war with Serbia, struggle to get by.

**Remzie Thaci**, deputy mayor of Malisheve and member of the LDK (and no relation to Hashim Thaci), says the feud between the two political parties has been costly to Malisheve, whose town and 43 surrounding villages are home to 62,000 ethnic Albanians. Malisheve is about 30 miles southwest of Pristina, Kosovo's capital city. "In my village, not one house was left intact. Malisheve was more than 90 percent destroyed in the war," she said. "But even before the war we had only agriculture, vineyards, and even that was destroyed. There is no investment, the economy is not functioning, there is no infrastructure, no water pipes, no sewage, the electric wires are bad, and there

are power shortages. This is a common fate of the villages." Most inhabitants are unemployed, except for teachers and a few who run small businesses. She is eager to resolve the political dispute and start working in the assembly to find investment capital from the international community to address economic problems.

In Skenderaj, the birthplace of the KLA, the biggest problem is recovering from the war. **Ramadan Gashi**, a lawyer who was the civil director of the KLA during the war, now serves as mayor of the municipality, located 12 miles southwest of Mitrovica and 36 miles northwest of Pristina. Skenderaj is home to 70,000 people, mostly ethnic Albanians who live in the town and 50 surrounding villages. Two other villages are home to some 300 Serbs. During the war, 1,200 residents of Skenderaj were killed, 1,300 children orphaned, and 8,000 houses destroyed, Gashi said.

Most villagers used to farm on one- to two-acre plots, which were destroyed during the war along with their homes. The three local factories were also destroyed—one manufactured plastics, another hunting ammunition, and a third construction materials. Skenderaj has a reputation for fighting oppression over hundreds of years, Gashi said. During the recent war, "we were targeted because of our activism."

Now Skenderaj has received less help than other municipalities because investors prefer to invest in places that have suffered less damage, he said. Nevertheless, in the spring, a Japanese construction company and the European Agency for Reconstruction are slated to begin work on rebuilding Skenderaj's infrastructure.

The town has no funds of its own for such work. The new municipal government has just started assessing taxes, and new laws, created in line with UN administration suggestions, await ratification at an upcoming public hearing.

Gashi said that trying to get the destroyed town and villages on their feet is more daunting than his work during the war, when he oversaw logistics such as providing housing, food, and clothing for the rebel army. Still, he says he is definitely happy the war is over. The people of Skenderaj are optimistic about the future, especially because they trust that the United States and the rest of the international community will help them. "People here appreciate the international community, in particular the United States," Gashi said. "At a critical moment, you helped for the humanity of the people. You helped people who were fighting for their rights. We appreciate this very much."

**Agim Hyseni** has a happy story to tell about his

*See Kosovo Stories, page 6*

*Opposite page, top, left to right: Ramadan Gashi, Daut Krasniqi.*

*Center: Remzie Thaci.*

*Bottom, left to right: Desimir Petkovic, Agim Hyseni.*

## Kosovo Leaders

*Continued from page 2*

villagers, injuring and killing some. They had all buried somebody: brothers, cousins, nephews, friends, and neighbors. "I cannot forget those who were murdered," said one man. "Everything else can be replaced."

What kept them going during those difficult times? The Albanians all agreed with the man who said, "My source of strength was that the Albanian people and I were determined that some day we would see justice happen, that we would have freedom in Kosovo as our country."

The Serbs in the group understandably found listening to the stories difficult. "I have deep respect toward all victims in Kosovo," said one Serb. "I would like to point out that there have been victims on all sides, though more on the Albanian side." He mentioned the 1,500 or more innocent Serbs who have been kidnapped since the end of the war and are presumed dead. "They are never coming back," he said. "The last 10

years have not been years of Serb repression, they have been years of repression by the repressive regime of Slobodan Milosevic."

Albanian participants said at various times throughout the meeting that only the guilty should be punished. They said they were determined to create a multi-ethnic society in Kosovo, one that would respect everyone's rights, including those of Serbs. The group reports reflect and support these goals on the part of all participants.



## Next Steps on North Korea

**Wendy R. Sherman**, the Clinton administration's senior policy coordinator on North Korea, discussed "North Korea: Past Progress and Next Steps" at a U.S. Institute of Peace Current Issues Briefing on March 6.

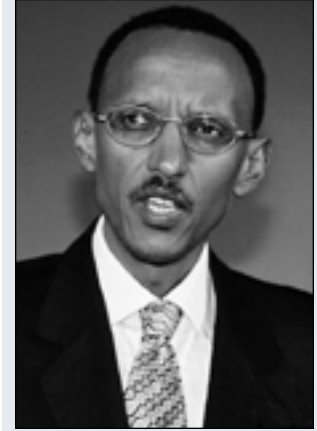
## Kosovo Stories

*Continued from page 5*

130,000 in its town and 28 villages. While most inhabitants are ethnic Albanian, perhaps 1,000 are Ashkalli and about 65 Roma. Hyseni—one of 13,000 Ashkalli Kosovo-wide—has served for two years as an Independent in Podujeve's municipal assembly.

Podujeve suffered severe damage during the war. Its agriculture was destroyed, as well as its three small factories that produced shingles for roofs, plastics, and lumber. After the war, Hyseni founded the Democratic Hope of Ashkalli of Kosovo, which, in conjunction with local Albanians and with help from international organizations, rebuilt homes and roads in his part of the municipality. "More than 90 percent of the homes have been rebuilt. This is a good example for others. We should live together and build our future together to have a democratic society."

But right after the war, Hyseni had a hard time convincing nine Ashkalli families with 65 members to leave the mountains where they had been hiding. With the help of local Albanians, Hyseni organized 13 meetings with family elders in their village. "After long discussions, we calmed people down," he said, smiling broadly. "They have returned to their homes where they belong."



## Reconciliation in Rwanda

Ethnic conflict in Rwanda, as in many other countries, has in the past been stirred up by unscrupulous political leaders who set one group against another to advance their own political agendas, says Rwandan president **Paul Kagame**. Under his leadership, Rwanda has focused on uniting ethnic groups, and "our efforts have shown that a reunification program can work," he said. Kagame discussed "The Challenge of Reconciliation, Justice, and Renewal in Rwanda" at a U.S. Institute of Peace Current Issues Briefing on February 2.

While there are still people in Rwanda who are stuck in the past and need time to heal, education and programs that get people to work together are succeeding, Kagame said. That success is evident, for example, in local elections where citizens have voted for leaders regardless of their ethnic backgrounds. "People are looking for the person who can solve their problems," Kagame concluded.



# Confronting State Terror

Newly democratic countries face conflicting goals when dealing with past atrocities, say two Institute grantees.

Countries dealing with past atrocities must balance complex and sometimes conflicting goals: seeking the truth, pursuing justice, upholding the rule of law, and holding the society together during a time of transition and rebuilding. **Ruti Teitel**, the author of *Transitional Justice* (Oxford University Press, 2000), and **Priscilla Hayner**, the author of *Unspeakable Truths: Confronting State Terror and Atrocity* (Routledge, 2000), addressed these challenges in a discussion at the U.S. Institute of Peace on January 25, sponsored by the Rule of Law Program, headed by **Neil Kritz**. Both books were funded by Institute grants. (The books are available from your local bookseller.)

In *Transitional Justice*, Teitel analyzes how law enables transitions to democracy from a prior abusive regime through a variety of legal mechanisms. These mechanisms may include traditional criminal punishment for perpetrators, reparations to victims, and administrative justice such as purges of perpetrators from positions in the government, police, and military and screening out perpetrators from new jobs. Also, historical inquiries and truth commissions serve to examine the facts surrounding abuses and make them publicly known, creating a reliable and indisputable historical record.

Teitel examines the fundamental dilemmas that traditional criminal justice encounters in times of transition, including the emphasis on individual responsibility in the face of crimes carried

out as a matter of state policy and the universally recognized prohibition against prosecuting individuals for acts that were not crimes at the time they were committed. Indeed, many states seeking to prosecute the perpetrators of past abuses confront the danger that doing so may require them to abdicate the very rule of law principles that the new government is trying to introduce and uphold. However, Teitel stresses, there is significant value in trying even a



Left to right: Priscilla Hayner, Ruti Teitel, and Neil Kritz

small number of perpetrators. Such trials demonstrate that some punishment has been meted out, and they isolate and stigmatize the perpetrators, thus liberating the collective from guilt and relegating the abuses to the previous regime.

In *Unspeakable Truths*, Hayner examines 20 truth commissions, analyzing the impact such commissions have on the victims, the investigators, and society, and capturing lessons for future exercises about how to discover the truth. As a flexible body that can be crafted to meet a country's par-

ticular needs, a truth commission can help promote justice in the courts and encourage the use of reparations as a tool of transitional justice. Most of all, truth commissions shift how individuals and society understand and speak about the past by bringing forth the facts so that they cannot be denied.

Hayner emphasized the importance of a cooperative relationship between seeking truth through non-judicial mechanisms

such as truth commissions and seeking justice in the courts. She decried the misconception that truth commissions interfere in the work of the courts and are therefore used only as a second-best alternative when trials are not an option. In fact, she concluded, truth commissions can provide critical support to judicial trials through the development and preservation of evidence, such as in Argentina, where the commission provided files to the prosecution. The prosecution used those files to build its case against the army generals on trial.



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