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The Kosovar "Package Test"



By Stephen Schwartz

Kosovars have experienced successive humiliations already in 2012, 13 years after the conclusion of the armed independence struggle. The recent affair in which the country was forced to accept removal of its title as a "republic" from signage and documentation used in its derisory negotiations with Serbia was shameful and will not be soon forgotten. Serbia further demanded, and obtained, insertion of the so-called "footnote" in references to Kosovo, citing UN Security Council Resolution 1244. UNSCOM 1244, adopted in 1999, declared that Kosovars would attain "substantial autonomy within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, to be decided by the Security Council of the United Nations."

Thus, Serbian control over the territory was, in principle if not in reality, reaffirmed. UNSCOM 1244 has been invoked repeatedly as a pretext to deny or adulterate the independence of the Republic of Kosovo, established by unanimous vote of the Assembly of Kosovo in 2008. UNSCOM 1244 is included typically in every reference to "Kosovo" in Wikipedia, the often-erroneous online reference... but that is another matter.

At this writing, Kosovo has been recognized by 92 nations, including the main European countries. Spain, Slovakia, Romania, and Greece, all European Union (EU) members, are exceptions. Acceptance of Kosovar self-determination has been refused by Serbia, unsurprisingly, but also by Bosnia-Herzegovina. By contrast, former Yugoslav constituent republics Slovenia and Croatia, which are EU members, along with EU candidates Macedonia and Montenegro, have granted diplomatic status to the Republic of Kosovo as a free country.

Disgracefully, the EU has admitted Serbia to candidate status, equal

with that of Iceland, Macedonia, Montenegro, and the perpetually-neglected and controversial Turkey. Albania is a mere "applicant" for the EU, and Bosnia-Herzegovina is an "associate." Kosovo has no standing with the EU except that it continues to be governed, in great part, by the so-called European Union Rule of Law Mission (EULEX). Thus Serbia, which launched the atrocious wars in former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, may attain fully-participant status in Europe long before its Bosnian and Kosovar victims.

The perpetuation of foreign control in Kosovo by EULEX, removal of the term "republic" from international discussions of the country, and the "footnote" are common topics of conversation among dissatisfied Kosovars. In particular, the Vetëvendosje! (Self-Determination!) party, led by the philosopher Albin Kurti and with 14 deputies out of 120 in the Kosova Assembly, has called on the public to protest against censorship of the word "republic" in the country's official title and imposition of the "footnote."

But these are matters of politics, and often appear abstract, notwithstanding their grating effect on Kosovar sensibilities. In practical affairs, the persistence of Serbian "parallel structures" in northern Kosovo results in Albanian deaths. Early in April a bomb placed at an apartment in Mitrovica, the divided northern city, killed an Albanian man, 38-year old Selver Haradinaj, and injured his wife and four children. Two weeks previously, Serbian police arrested the president of the Kosova metalworkers' union, Hasan Abazi, as he attempted to cross Serbia en route to a meeting in Croatia. Abazi was charged with "espionage." Other Kosovars have been detained by Serbian officials, sometimes inside the Kosova borders, and arrested in foreign countries at the insistence of the Serbian regime. On April 21, Abazi was reported released from jail in Vranje, Serbia, after payment of 20,000 euros. The Serbs called it "bail" but the more correct term would be "ransom."

If we focus attention on more ob-

scure details having to do with dilution of Kosovar recognition, we find some peculiar and outrageous facts that are seldom noted by Albanian advocacy and political organizations.

How many Kosovars, in politics, media, or elsewhere, have mentioned the difficulty of sending a package to the republic? That is, an ordinary parcel containing books or garments or other innocuous items.

The main courier services in the world, for parcels and documents, are the United Parcel Service (UPS), Federal Express (FedEx), and DHL. The first two are American - operating from one of the leading countries that recognize Kosovar independence. DHL is owned by Germans, whose government has established full relations with the republic.

But none of the three - or U.S. Postal Service Express Mail International, financed by Washington - will accept packages addressed simply to "Kosova" or "Kosovo." The U.S.P.S. website states that its "Global Express Guaranteed" service is available for addresses in "Kosovo, Republic of." But a note on page 471 of the U.S.P.S. International Mail Manual, at <http://pe.usps.com/text/imm/immctry.htm>, under the heading "Global Express Guaranteed," reads: "To determine conditions and available city destinations for the Republic of Kosovo, refer to Publication 141's country listing for the Republic of Serbia ('Serbia')." Under that rubric, no Kosovar towns are listed: only Serbian cities. The U.S. Postal Service will accept items sent to "Kosova" or "Kosovo," without mention of Serbia, for regular mail service, but with no guarantee of delivery.

The Universal Postal Union, which administers international mail services, currently accepts mail from Kosovo with stamps issued by the "Republika e Kosovës - Republika Kosovo - Republic of Kosovo." Previously, Kosova postage stamps carried a complex block of type with the full title "United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo" in English, Albanian, and Serbian. With the replacement of UNMIK by EULEX, it appears the degrading wording on the stamps was abandoned. But the U.P.U. still states in its guidance to "Postal addressing



systems in member countries," at <http://www.upu.int>, that mail to Kosovo should be addressed to "Kosovo (UNMIK)." And, according to the U.P.U., the capital city's name should be spelled "Pristina," with neither the Serbian diacritical nor the Albanian "sh" indicating that it is pronounced, by both nationalities, "Prishtina."

Returning to the courier services, their advantage is usually their guarantee of delivery and tracking. Yet the UPS website, at www.ups.com, lists "Serbia" as a destination, but neither "Kosova" nor "Kosovo." Merchandise handed to UPS agents in the U.S. must be addressed to "Kosovo, Serbia." They will arrive in Kosovo, but are conveyed through Belgrade. The Dutch-based TNT Express, which is in process of merger with UPS, offers services to Serbia, but neither Kosova nor Kosovo.

The FedEx website, at www.fedex.com, follows a similar practice. So does DHL - officially, "Deutsche Post DHL," at <http://www.dhl.com/en.html>. All list "Serbia" on their popup rosters of delivery locations, and on all, "Kosova" or "Kosovo" are missing. This should not infer that UPS, FedEx, or DHL decline to accept packages from Kosovo, where they maintain offices. Presumably, their employees pretend they are in Serbia. Whether openly or not, they derive income from the Kosovars while insulting them. And some are Kosovars themselves.

Similar entries are found on the websites of global online sales firms. Amazon.com in the U.S., as well as Amazon.co.uk in Britain, and other Amazon services in Italy and Spain, will send books, CDs, DVDs, and other merchandise to Kosovars if they are addressed to "Serbia." "Kosova" and "Kosovo" are absent from their lists of receiving states.

Amazon.es, serving Spain, adds to the insult by promising delivery to "Serbia" with instructions in Spanish and in Catalan - in the latter instance, a language spoken by some 11 million people, or almost a quarter of Spain's total population of 46 million, with a strong movement for independence. Amazon.es is sensitive to the feelings of Catalans about their culture, but insensitive to the identity of the Kosovars.

Curiously, Amazon sites for France (Amazon.fr), Germany (Amazon.de), and Austria (Amazon.at) list neither Serbia nor Kosova or Kosovo as delivery options. Barnes & Noble, the chief competitor to Amazon.com, lacks listings for either Serbia or Kosova or Kosovo.

Since books and documents are the items I most often wish to send to Kosovars, I have no idea how other online merchandisers handle this



matter, and will leave to others the task of researching them. Nevertheless, I am aware that some Kosovars will decline to accept packages that arrive in the republic via courier services with addresses in "Kosovo, Serbia." And I cannot blame them.

Is this a minor issue, compared with the membership void presented to Kosovo by the EU, bloody activities of the Serbian "parallel structures" in northern Kosovo, the "footnote," the maintenance of UNSCOM 1244, and the Ahtisaari scheme for large and permanent Serbian enclaves inside the Republic of Kosovo?

I think not. The failure of national postal agencies, international courier services and online sales enterprises to recognize the independence of Kosovo indicates something more than lassitude in updating their databases. Serbia, masquerading as a "new democracy" to facilitate its entry into the EU, exercises influence everywhere it can. Under Titoite Yugoslavia, Belgrade and Serbia were the "federal" centers of banking, state services, and other functions requiring international treaties and commercial agreements. Numerous foreign companies might find it inconvenient or even lose profit if they adjust their delivery practices to accommodate the two million residents of the Republic of Kosovo.

The lesson appears to be that diplomatic recognition is an insufficient recourse for a recently-liberated country to attain the respect it deserves. Albanians in the diaspora should consider turning their attention to publicity campaigns, including boycotting, against courier and online sales firms that do not recognize Kosovo but maintain the fiction that it is a "province" of Serbia. After all, we are told the world's governments decide these things, rather than private businesses. Enough of the world has decided in favor of Kosovo that delivery embargoes without a "Serbian" address, no less than the interference of EULEX and the rest of the Brussels coterie of meddlers, should cease immediately.

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