
Kosovo, the Current Phase:

The Conflict Over Status and Ethnopolitical Implications

On November 27th 2012, the Master of Arts in Interdisciplinary Research and Studies on Eastern Europe hosted another inspiring lecture, titled «Kosovo, The Current Phase: The



Conflict over Status and Ethnopolitical Implications». The speaker, Leonas Tolvaišis, recently defended his PhD at the Vytautas Magnus University of Kaunas, Lithuania. Former tutor and experienced MIREES public lecturer, Tolvaišis delivered a lecture which fully reflects his research interests, namely ethnopolitics in the Balkans and Eastern Europe at large.

During his presentation, the speaker displayed the abundant photographic material he collected in several years of field research in the area and selflessly shared his personal experience with the audience. The lecture was largely devoted to the socio-economic situation and humanitarian security in the so-called ghettos or enclaves populated by Kosovo Serbs.

Tolvaišis extensively described the conditions in the ghettos south of the Ibar river, dominated by insecurity, fear and different limitations to the freedom of movement, telecommunications, electricity and water supplies.

According to the young scholar, the unilateral declaration of Kosovo's independence marked a «point of no return» for the Serbian community: the process of violent ethnic homogenization of the



Southern part of the country forced many Serbs to flee and significantly deteriorated the living conditions of those who stayed. On the other hand, the Northern part of Kosovo, which is mostly inhabited by Serbs, remains beyond Priština's control, creating a situation of «incomplete independence». This further weakens the Serbian community, divided between Belgrade and Priština-based institutions.

The officially proclaimed multicultural policies and international presence do not seem to affect the present regime of two de facto separate ethno-political realities divided by the Ibar river. Loyalty and participation to Priština based institutions are the only means of assuring a long-term sustainability of the Serbian community in Kosovo. The speaker emphasized how the respect of human rights is conditioned by the acceptance of new political realities, which makes the Kosovo stabilization model a «special case».

The lecture was followed by an interesting and fruitful discussion.

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