



Serbian Government is not interested in strong Serbian positions in Kosovo. Chairman of the Kosovo front Alexander Kravchenko told the DespiteBorders

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Alexander Kravchenko is chairman of the Russian association Kosovo Front, which operates mainly in Russia but also Kazakhstan, Latvia and Ukraine. The organization was founded in response to the declaration of independence of Kosovo. Its main task is to help Serbians to solve the Kosovo question in an equitable manner. Kravchenko is also chief editor of the "Srpska.Ru, chairman of the Moscow Slavic, a member of the Central Board of movement "Narodny Sobor" and director of the association of military-patriotic clubs "Stjag". During the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina he was a Russian volunteer fighting for the Serbs. Thanks to these practices, in Russia he is considered an expert on Serbian issues. Editors portal DespiteBorders managed to contact him and we asked him for an interview on current developments in Kosovo.

There are still less Serbs living in Kosovo, they have moved to other parts of Serbia. The less Serbs are there, the lesser chance to recover Kosovo. In your opinion, how can they be kept there? During the era of Vojislav Koštunica there was a program which provided Serbian residents with various reliefs (e.g. exemption from communal charges). Later on, it was suspended. Should similar program be resumed? Why does the Kosovo Front (hereinafter referred to as „KF“) strive to establish some „Moscow-Kosmet“ fund (in terms of the fourth Kosovo strike of KF) and support Serbian residents in a similar way?

You know, the question is if the Serbs are supposed to stay in Kosovo or not and the answer to it is not unequivocal. Most of Serbian residents of Kosovo and Metohija would perhaps leave this Serbian Province if they had a possibility of moving to Serbia or any other place where they would find a comfortable place for living. However, they cannot do it because there is nobody waiting for them anywhere. Therefore their existence in the territory of Kosovo and Metohija is actually enforced irrespective of difficult conditions. Unconditionally, the Serbian state is obliged to grant these people dignified life in a territory which is actually a battlefield. For instance, Serbia could pay out financial compensations just because they have been living there at all. Unfortunately, compensations aren't paid out even for that. In practice the current Serbian Government is not interested in strong Serbian positions in Kosovo and Metohija.

Nowadays, the Kosovo Front doesn't have any significant support of Russian public and

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therefore it cannot burden itself with attempts to solve the long-lasting problem of the existence of Serbian population in Kosovo. We see our task primarily in assistance to Serbian patriotic forces. It is them who are meant to change the political situation in Serbia so that the Serbian state itself starts to deal with these questions.

This year at the beginning of August, KFOR mission launched a process of the handing over of Serbian temples into the hands of Albanian police structures. One of these monasteries handed over to Kosovo militia is the monastery of saint archangels, which was destroyed by the Albanians in 2004. Oliver Ivanović said he didn't see any problem in this step because policemen guarding the houses of God would mostly be Serbs. Nevertheless, monks have been reinforcing gates and strengthening walls... What is your opinion on this step? Do you identify yourself with Mr Ivanović?

International forces have already been in Kosovo for more than 10 years. In this period practically nothing has been done in order to ensure the security of the inhabitants of the province. In this context fears of their lives and property are completely justified, even despite the fact that new structures for ensuring the security in the province will appear.

The Russian Federation decided to provide approximately USD 2 million for the reparation of destroyed orthodox Serbian shrines in Kosovo in the time horizon from 2010 to 2011. However, approximately 115 temples were destroyed only during the first five years as from the invasion of NATO troops. Will you lobby for the prolongation of this program in the following years? How can be the untouchability of repaired shrines guaranteed in the future so that the history doesn't repeat?

Russia, like any other orthodox country and any other orthodox church, has to participate in the reconstruction of Kosovo shrines. Nonetheless, we insist that these questions be solved first and foremost by the Serbian state and society. As well as by Serbian Orthodox Church. That's why from our point of view the Russian Government should compel the Serbian Government to more adequate and active attitude to this question.

In the first half of September, Milan Ivanović stated that the Kosovo Serbs looked at Russia as if at redemption. He meant the fact that they were ready to ask collectively for Russian citizenship. If that was so, are you ready to help them?

The Kosovo Front cannot grant Russian citizenship because it is not a state structure. In addition, we do not regard it as suitable to transfer a considerable number of Serbs into the Russian Federation. Notwithstanding that, we back the idea of the granting of Russian citizenship to the Kosovo Serbs. All the more that similar precedent has already occurred in



the event of Transnistria, Abkhazia and South Ossetia. If many thousands of impoverished Serbian residents of Kosovo and Metohija had Russian citizenship, it would amount to further guarantee for their security for the future – an important factor for solution to the Kosovo question in a fair way.

In a statement for Serbian information portal Vesti online you said that you weren't provided with any concrete aid by the Serbian Government and you added that you had been cooperating the most intensively with the Organisation of War Veterans of Serbian Countries 1990 – 1999 "Patriotski Front" (Patriotic Front). As far as I am concerned you concluded an agreement with Patriotski Front regarding the cooperation on military and patriotic education of the youth in Serbia. In terms of this agreement you organised a summer camp in the town of Bačka Palanka. What forms of cooperation will follow?

Military and patriotic education of the youth in Russia has been developed massively. It is a very efficient means of the education of young generation in the spirit of traditional values. Current Russian military and patriotic education has its roots in Pan-Slavic Sokol movement, which was established in Bohemia and Slovakia in the 19th century. From this position we promote Russian experience in Serbia with the aim of educating Serbian youth, which will participate actively in solution to the "Kosovo question" in the near future. At present, a visit to Russia by the representatives of the order of Serbian orthodox patriotic organisations has been planned for the purpose of getting acquainted with our experience in this field. In the future, we would like to arrange a big international youth military and patriotic assembly in Serbia with the aim of providing particularly moral support to Serbian people.

In 2007, as the head of the association of military and patriotic clubs "Stjag" you took part in the signing of the Treaty on Pobratimstvo (Brotherhood) between the Union of Faithful Cossacks and the Federation of Serbian Sokols at the town hall of the town of Kragujevac. Before, in April 2007, you visited Serbian Sokols in Kragujevac in order to acquaint yourself with the state of military and patriotic education in Serbia. The Union of Faithful Cossacks works as KF contact agency in Kyiv. What have you achieve in terms of your trilateral cooperation since 2007 and what are your plans for the future like?

All of our projects in the field of military and patriotic education in Serbia after 2007 (namely, the organisation of camps, visit of Serbian delegation to Russia and Russian one to Serbia) are the fruits of those first contacts.

Do you collaborate with the Convention of Towns and Villages from the Autonomous

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Province Kosovo and Metohija or with the President of the Serbian National Council of Northern Kosovo Milan Ivanović? What character does your collaboration have?

Unfortunately, we don't. It is necessary to point out that many organisations in Serbia avoid contact with the Kosovo Front. On the one hand it is understandable, but on the other hand we are disappointed in this respect.

In your projects you deal with the bishop Artemije (see interview on KF website). Are you in contact with him? If so, how would you characterise your mutual relations? How do you assist Vladyka Artemije in the fight for Kosovo? Do you cooperate with him also by virtue of your position of the top representative of Serbian National Council of Kosovo and Metohija? How do you assess the unlawful removal from his function? And how do you assess the November events in the monastery in Duboki Potok?

The Kosovo Front is a non-confession organisation. In our ranks there are atheists, Catholics or Muslims, although most of KF activists are orthodox believers of course. We are open to cooperation with all forces which are adherents to the preservation of Kosovo in terms of Serbia and, obviously, we have cooperated actively with bishop Artemije. But general opinion of our activists inclines to the fact that the events linked with bishop Artemije were and are aimed at the weakening of Serbian positions in Kosovo and Metohija. In our opinion, what happened to Serbian Orthodox Church in the eparchy of Raska and Prizren is undignified for people of orthodox denomination.

In the past, on the internet there were banners of the Tsar Lazar Guard, in the right lower corner of which the internet address of one of your project, srpska.ru, was shown. Have you ever cooperated with Hajji Andrej Milić? Or is that banner his private initiative?

The placement of our banner was a private initiative of Mr Milić. In 2007, however, we were in contact with the representatives of the Saint Tsar Lazar Guard, but we waived contact with these people for many reasons.

Kosovo Front is known for sending humanitarian aid to the Kosovo Serbs and gifts for the children of the Kosovo Serbs. On the basis of what key do you select concrete families? Are they selected on the basis of cooperation with citizen-action publics? If yes, with which?

Gifts gathered by the activists of the Kosovo Front are sent to the addresses of appointed organisations in Serbia. For instance, we used to send consignments to the address of the



eparchy of Raska and Prizren in the town of Gračanica before. Serbian organisations appoint the recipients of gifts and humanitarian aid by themselves.

Oliver Ivanović advises the Kosovo Serbs not to boycott the elections. They have done it notwithstanding that (they have reserved 10 seats in the Parliament) Serbian holy power in Kosovo is lamed – Belgrade cancels slowly the parallelly (just on paper in some places) existing local bodies (for which it was criticised by the Serbian Radical Party and the Serbian National Council of Kosovo and Metohija). What would you recommend the Kosovo Serbs? What is better in this case: passive or active resistance?

According to us it is active resistance. The history, distant or not so distant, teaches us that solely in this case there can be certain hope here.

By the way, what do you think of Oliver Ivanović? Are you satisfied with the activity of the Serbian Ministry for Kosovo? According to available information it is practically dead...

My point exactly.

If Serbia wanted to enter NATO, it has to recognise the independence of Kosovo. Dmitry Rogozin said that if that happened, the Russian could not be greater Serbs than the Serbs themselves and they would have to recognize the independence of Kosovo. What do you think about that?

Prior to the NATO entry, Serbia would have to enter the EU. By entering into the EU, Serbia would also have to recognise the independence of Kosovo. We are convinced and we hope that Serbia will never be accepted to the EU, not to speak of NATO. And therefore we will never be tempted to recognise the "independence" of the quasi-state "Kosovo". Mainly because the last opinion polls in Serbia show that for the Serbs the question of the country's EU accession isn't thus much attractive.

According to certain Albanian analysts great Albanian state will be established in 2013. In December, a party, the leader of which Albin Kurti (and the party itself obviously) pushes through the establishment of a common state of Kosovo and Albania, took the third place (12 percent of votes) in parliamentary elections. What do you think about this idea? If this really happens, what measures will you take?

Great Albania has been factually established. And our steps remain the same, namely to compel the Russian Government to tougher steps in relation to the lawlessness of Albanian



bandits.

In 2003, the UN declared a gun amnesty in Kosovo for the purpose of disarming the Albanians. They even paid out financial compensations. According to the then estimates the Albanians possess approximately 300 thousand weapons, but only 155 weapons were returned. Do you think that there is a threat of another war – this time the second stage of the war for Great Albania...

The threat of war is always present here. However, Great Albania is not the target any longer today. (It exists in fact, as it has been already said). The eyes of the Albanians are fixed on the southern provinces of Great Serbia, where reduction of the number of inhabitants is under way in view of the difficult economic situation. And Albanian society perceives the inability of the Serbs to resist as the inability of the very Serbian nation. That's why Albanian expansion will focus its economic or military means on these fields in the following decades in order to attach them to Great Albania.