

## Ana's Writings

### 1) Toy Cars for the Young Patients

ZAGREB - It was unusually cheerful and lively in the bone marrow transplantation department of Zagreb's main hospital on Wednesday. The Croatian Leukemia and Lymphoma Association made the wishes of the young patients come true as Father Christmas appeared with a bagful of gifts. The excitement was overwhelming as Father Christmas handed out pirates, airplanes, cars, and books to the rightful owners. While the young patients were full of joy, the older patients only wished to be discharged from the hospital to spend their holidays at home. The association secretary, Mrs. Jadranka Santini, thanked all the sponsors who made this holiday gift giving possible and those who donated the Christmas trees and decoration to the bone marrow transplantation department, as well as to the Sisters of Mercy Hospital.

**Ana Rukavina**

**(Published December 22, 2005)**

**Probably Ana's last article that was published in Vjesnik.**

### 2) Pickpockets Target Women

***There were at least 20 pickpocketing incidents reported in just the first five months of this year in Šibenik. A 27 year old woman from Čakovec has recently been arrested and is believed to be responsible for at least half of these offences.***

**Ana Rukavina**

ŠIBENIK – Pickpocketing, and theft in general, is not a crime that presents a major safety threat. However, given the frequency of recent pickpocketing incidents and the fact that the tourist season is at the doorstep, we can expect this number to increase. The general way of thinking is that these things happen to someone else. The police are trying to raise awareness and emphasize that prevention is crucial. Citizens should do all they can to protect their wallets, cell phones, cameras and cash so that these items don't change owners. We learned from Jadran Škugor, the chief of the police in the County of Šibenik that during the first five months of this year, there were 20 reported pickpocketing incidents in the Šibenik area. Nearly half of these "incidents" were due to a recently arrested 27 year old woman from Čakovec.

"Crowds present the perfect opportunity to take advantage of unsuspecting victims and steal their wallets. The most dangerous places are markets, public transport and beauty salons. The latter was the favored place by the woman from Čakovec. Generally, women are more often the targets of pickpockets," Škugor says. He also points out that most of the pickpockets do not actually live in the county where they "operate". Last year, citizens from Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, and Bosnia and Herzegovina were arrested while attempting to pickpocket.

Five aggravated crimes of breaking and entering have been recorded in the Šibenik area in the last ten days. "People usually tend to keep their windows and doors open when it gets warmer, which is also an open invitation to thieves. Therefore, I recommend that citizens keep their lights on when they leave their apartments for a longer period of time. If you plan to travel, you should inform your neighbors. Also, you should alert the police of any strange telephone calls by calling 92 or informing your neighborhood patrol policeman," Škugor says. As the number of tourists on the Adriatic Coast increases, so does the number of robberies. Škugor points out that even though people are on holiday they must act more responsibly. There are a number of actions that people can take to reduce the opportunities for thieves to break into their apartments or cars. "The highest risk areas are hotel rooms and apartments which tourists tend to leave unlocked, and cars parked on the side of the highway. Tourists enjoy discovering remote and private beaches, from which they can not see their cars. Leaving cameras and cell phones in the car increases the chances that the car will be broken into," Škugor says. If you insist on swimming at those types of deserted beaches, the least you can do is hide your valuable possessions, not leave them on the car seat. In order to minimize the number of felonies in the Šibenik area, from the beginning of July the police patrols will be more frequent along the highway from Brodarica to Primošten, which has already proved to be an excellent deterrent.

(May 16, 2005, Vjesnik)

### **3) The Last Resting Place for 300 Victims of Partisan Crimes**

**Marko Kalajdžić: It wasn't until after the declaration of the independence of Croatia in 1990 that people endeavored to find out the real truth about the crimes committed by the partisans on the local population. The locals and the families of those who had been killed launched the initiative to exhume the innocent victims from a mass grave near Pirovac. It will be hard to discover exactly how many people were killed as many of the perpetrators are dead.**

**Ana Rukavina**

PIROVAC – Some 15 years ago, the ditch Golubinka was discovered in the rocky terrain of Tišnjan near Pirovac. It is actually a mass grave which is estimated to contain the remains of roughly 300 Croats who were killed by the partisans in September and October of 1943. An initiative has been taken by the local people and the families of the murdered victims to exhume them. "The locals have known about this ditch for years, but the real endeavor to uncover the truth about the crimes began only after the declaration of Croatian independence in 1990. A systematic historical research is still pending, but, according to information that I have gathered by talking with the victims' families, they were all civilians, local farmers who had the strength to stand up against the tyrants, regardless of their origin," says Marko Kalajdžić, a speleologist and Croatian veteran.

Together with the Commission for War and Post-war Crimes from Vodice, Kalajdžić has taken on the initiative to exhume the remains from the twenty meters deep ditch, identify the victims, give them a proper burial, and finally mark the location of this mass grave. They will soon begin the proceedings to attain the necessary permits to exhume and identify the victims. They hope for a positive answer from the state institutions to whom they have applied for assistance.

Details of the unfortunate happenings during World War II are difficult to elicit, because, as Kalajdžić points out, witnesses are unlikely to divulge that type of information. "It will be very hard to determine exactly how many people were killed. Most of the perpetrators are dead, and the surviving ones deny that this ever happened. Nevertheless, we are not looking to prosecute anyone. Our intentions are purely humane. Besides, there is no statute of limitation for war crimes. If there is a will to punish the culprits, it is never too late for justice to be done," Kalajdžić says.

The ditch, which is nearly inaccessible due to dense shrubs and its remote location, is marked with a huge cross and only dry flowers show that the families of the victims have found their way to their loved ones.

According to Kalajdžić's estimation, in addition to Golubinka, there are another ten, albeit smaller mass graves of partisan victims within a circle of about 30 kilometers.

### **4) Kalmeta: Billion Kuna to Support the Islands**

**Ana Rukavina**

ZLARIN - "Our islands have good prospects because ours is a generation that has been raised to face the greatest challenges. Therefore, we support the implementation of the Law for the Islands and the state development programs to save and revitalize the islands," said Prime Minister Ivo Sanader at the meeting of the Council for the Islands on Zlarin. He pointed out that prior to joining the EU, part of our task is to protect our islands' demographics, stop the sale of our islands, and improve the connection between the islands and the mainland. He supports the decision to stimulate employment on the islands. Every employer will get a government incentive for every job opened on the islands: a gross annual salary for underdeveloped islands and half of a gross annual salary on developed islands.

"I am satisfied that the islands have been moved to the top of everybody's agenda and that we are taking concrete measures to prevent their further deterioration," Sanader said. Very often, a priority is given to improving the connection between the islands and the mainland but, according to Sanader, it is of equal importance that the islands themselves are interconnected. Afterwards, he officially opened the newly reconstructed dock, which cost 2.5 million Kuna to repair. Zlarin's dock is just one of the 39 docks included in the 2 year

reconstruction plan by the Ministry of Sea, Tourism, Transport, and Development. The Ministry has allocated 98 million Kuna for this project.

"The state is committed to invest significant funds into the future of the islands. In 2005, 980 million Kuna will be invested by the Ministries and public companies into projects to improve life on the islands," said Božidar Kalmeta, the Minister of Sea, Tourism, Transport and Development at the second meeting of the Council for the Islands. A total of 14 programs are already underway. They deal with different issues, but have all incorporated guidelines on sustainable development and undertaking to improve the infrastructure on the islands.

"The islands are of strategic importance to Croatia. Therefore, we have reduced the cost of ferry tickets for the inhabitants of the islands and have given out 45,000 free passes," Kalmeta said. He said that as a result of the planned investments and island programs, "A new wind has begun to blow and it brings hope to the 130,000 island inhabitants." State Secretary, Branko Bačić, pointed out that this government had doubled the funds for island development, and allocated substantial funds for the reconstruction of some 300 docks in the Adriatic.

### **5) Huge Cleanup Project for Murter's Sea and Coast**

ADRIATIC MUST NOT BE A LANDFILL

***Along with all the bottles, cans and numerous car tires, divers also found a car battery and some oil filters, which have caused great changes to the seabed.***

***In October of last year, 50 cubic meters of waste were removed from the sea during a cleanup action around the island of Žut.***

**Ana Rukavina**

MURTER - From May 6th – 8th of this year, a huge project will be held to clean up the sea and coast in the area of Murter, especially around the island Žut. We have learned from the organizers of the project and the president of the Association for Ecological Protection, Martina Markov Podvinski, that 200 divers and the pupils of the local primary schools will participate in the action. Last week's cleanup of Murter's harbor, which involved only 40 divers, indicated the necessity of thoroughly cleaning the seabed.

"We managed to collect 25 cubic meters of waste in only one day, which tells us that there is a real danger that the ecological and biological balance of the Adriatic could be tipped. Along with all the bottles, cans and numerous car tires, we also found a car battery and some oil filters, which have caused great changes to the seabed," Markov Podvinski says. In the first major ecological action of cleaning the seabed around the island of Žut, in October of last year, some 50 cubic meters of waste were removed. Although they had expected a lot of waste, they could never have imagined those kinds of results. They certainly did not expect that the divers would be left without garbage bags in which to put the waste. The most difficult was removing the waste from the depth of ten meters. Due to the excellent visibility, we could not afford to overlook one single object, explained Markov Podvinski.

"The shore area of Murter and Žut had never been thoroughly and systematically cleaned, and it was alarming to see the dangerous waste that people had thrown into the sea. If we continue at this rate, we can just forget the tourists, who also greatly contribute to this pollution. However, we are the most responsible for this," Markov Podvinski points out. This irresponsible behavior and the extreme lack of culture could come back to haunt the inhabitants who are mostly in the tourism business. A polluted sea could lead to the end of their livelihoods, says the ecologist. Waste decomposition, which people think very little about while throwing things into the sea, is a long-lasting process which bears huge consequences. "For example, the decomposition of one filtered cigarette lasts about one year, for a tin can or diaper the process lasts about 100 years, and it can take up to 1000 years for a plastic plate or bottle to decompose!" adds Markov Podvinski.

These actions are educational as well, explains the organizer, because they alert us to the importance of protecting and preserving the environment, sea and seabed area. For these reasons, the primary school pupils will participate in the ecological action and will be responsible for the cleaning of the coastal area.

**(April 29, 2005)**

### **6) Green Areas Are Black Spots for Šibenik**

**Ana Rukavina**

ŠIBENIK - Although Šibenik is a beautiful city which abounds in cultural heritage, this is not what you see at the start of the tourist season. Of the three entrances into the city, two have been reconstructed and revamped in the last few years owing to the construction of shopping centers. The third entrance, from which a road leads on to Krka National Park, is still disorganized. We found out from the Tourist Board in Šibenik that 50,000 Kuna has been allocated for the development of the green areas in the city. The money is meant to buy an irrigation system for the entrances into town in Ražine and Njivice. However, this money will be spent on areas that have already been developed.

"The entrance into town creates the first impression on our tourists, so we must work hard to make sure it is as pleasant a view as possible. Although the Tourist Board is not the place where this should be discussed, we cannot just sit and watch. The money we have at our disposal will hardly go very far," says Ksenija Grubišić, the president of the Tourist Board. The experience we went through last year was devastating, as the 70,000 Kuna allocated for planting was literally thrown in the wind. After the company, Zelenilo, planted the seeds they all dried up because they were not properly taken care of or watered, and some were never even planted. "Green areas are the black spots of Šibenik, and only with an initiative by all those responsible can we accomplish something," Grubišić says. When the head of the Office for Municipal Activities, Zvonimir Zaninović, was asked why there was a mountain of construction waste at the entrance of town, he could only answer that this was due to some unresolved property title issues. The city owns only a part of that land and a majority is owned by the Juras family. "We have tried on a number of occasions to reach an agreement on developing the area, but we have not succeeded because the Juras family has not given their consent," Zaninović says. He points out that they will at least try to clean the area.

**(April 28, 2005)**

## **7) Collateral Victim of Illegal Construction**

***Many people built without construction permits, which they have subsequently obtained.***

**Hopes of subsequently attaining building permits are based on promises by the mayor.  
Ana Rukavina**

PRIMOŠTEN – Even a year after bulldozers destroyed her illegally built house, Nataša Hartmann, the owner of land in Dolac near Primošten, refuses to give up until she uncovers the dirty games which she strongly believes led to its destruction. A year ago there were six houses without building permits in Rtić, the part of Dolac where her land is located. Four of them subsequently obtained their permits, and two were demolished. Nataša's story is confirmed by Mayor Vinko Bolanča, who believes that there is a well-organized lobby behind this, which includes the director of the County Institute for Physical Planning, Damir Lučev. He also believes that Nataša Hartmann is a victim of their illegal decisions.

In an interview with Vjesnik, Bolanča explained that Hartmann bought the land in March 2001 and started to build without a permit the following year. "I knew Rtić was not in the construction zone, and in fact, I was given a warning twice by inspectors," Hartmann says. She was optimistic about subsequently obtaining a building permit based on promises from the mayor. Namely, the written affidavit she was given by the Primošten municipality and signed by Bolanča, states that Rtić is foreseen to be included in the gastronomy and tourism zone in the zoning plan.

"I believe we should support the issuance of a building permit for the residential object, as its construction will not disturb the balance of nature," states the affidavit which should have helped Hartmann obtain the permit, but that didn't happen. In late April 2004, the bulldozers came onto her property and demolished the object's foundation. Subsequently, she received a 250,000 Kuna bill for the cost of demolishing her property. She didn't pay this, she appealed it. Bolanča says that Hartmann is a collateral victim. "While some people were able to build without any permits and subsequently received them, she is an ordinary person without any connections and because of that she suffered," Bolanča says. He went on to say that in the plan for the municipality of Primošten, which hasn't yet been approved, Rtić is marked as a tourist zone.

The director of the County Institute for Physical Planning, Damir Lučev, dismisses all of the accusations, based on the simple fact that the house was being built without a building permit.

"Hartmann's case is a typical story which is constantly being repeated in this area. The mayors have promised people that the zoning plan will solve their permit issues, regardless of the law," Lučev says.

### **8) "X-Files" in Šibenik** **Ana Rukavina**

ŠIBENIK – The news that arrived around 3:30 PM on Tuesday from the Šibenik-Knin police department made us want to race to the scene immediately, at first. The call from spokeswoman Rosanda Truta was: "Nedjeljko Bakmaz from Čista Velika was plowing his field in Cicvare and suddenly the ground opened up without any reason. It left a crater 80 x 60 meters in size and the police say they cannot see the bottom."

In spite of the fact that this happened during the "siesta" time, the phones in the newsrooms in Šibenik started ringing. This "X-Files" story caused great unrest because it is not everyday that the earth opens up and leaves a crater the size of a football field! The only thing we could think was, "Let's hope we don't fall in!" and "Did anyone call a speleologist?" Should we call NASA? We put in calls to the newsroom in Zagreb to keep space in the newspaper for the bizarre story from Šibenik, and then came the turning point.

As we were racing to Cicvare, already having left Šibenik, we received another call. Although it was Truta's number on the display of the cell phone, we couldn't understand a word she was saying through her laughter. In short, the story was true, except for one little detail. "It wasn't a matter of meters, it was centimeters," she managed to say while laughing. So, there was no X-Files story. It came down to an old truth – this is what happens when men talk about size.

**(April 6, 2005)**

### **9) As Firm as the Rock on Which the Catholic Church Was Built**

ŠIBENIK - "Pope John Paul II told us not to mourn, but one cannot help oneself," said Marija Barbača from Šibenik after the funeral mass for the late Pope which was served in St. Jacob's Cathedral. People had to stand outside of the Cathedral on Sunday because there was no more room inside for all those who wanted to pray and say their last goodbyes to their beloved Pope.

Bishop Ante Ivas from Šibenik stressed in his sermon that the Pope was a great man, because he approached all the challenges of Church life, humanity and the world, with the courage of Christ. "He seemed as firm as the rock on which the Catholic Church was built and lived up to its mission, and served this world in times of great distress. He was persistent and firm, he was Christ's light and brought hope and positive energy to many people," Bishop Ivas said.

It was just as crowded in the hall of the Bishop's palace, where the worshippers signed the book of condolences. "It would be an honor to have my boat next to yours on Christ's shore," was one of the messages left by the people of Šibenik as they said their goodbyes to the Pope.

**Ana Rukavina**

**(April 4, 2005)**

### **10) Unemployed Woman in Šibenik Lives From Breeding Goats**

**Going to jail because of goats and donkeys!?**

***According to the decision by the municipality authorities in the area of Šibenik, which includes Brodarica, it is forbidden to keep animals.***

***Marina Milutin: I know it's forbidden to keep animals, but I have no choice. I only work as a part-time seasonal worker, but we must eat every day.***

ŠIBENIK - Marina Milutin (29), who lives in Brodarica near Šibenik, could soon be facing prison because of not paying a penalty fine for keeping animals in the yard of her family house. According to the decision by the municipality authorities in the area of Šibenik, which includes Brodarica, it is forbidden to keep animals. Since three goats and a donkey live in Marina's yard, and she did not move them elsewhere even after three visits by the communal police, nor did she pay the 900 Kuna fine, the expected happened.

After violating the statutory term for not removing the animals and not paying the fine, the communal police sent a claim to the court to have the pecuniary penalty replaced by a prison punishment. In Marina's case there are additional complications because she is an unemployed single mother to a 6 year old son, Šimun. "I know it's forbidden to keep animals, but I have no choice. I only work as a part-time seasonal worker, but we must eat every day," says Marina. Her monthly salary, including child support, is about 2000 Kuna. That amount must pay for food, the bills and cover all the costs of her little animal kingdom. Besides the goats, Prugana, Marica and Cujka, she must feed a donkey named Talet, five cats and a dog. We discovered from the communal police that they were informed of the illegal activity by one of Marina's neighbors. When asked if she knew who reported her, Marina waved her hand and said people were just jealous and envious. "They would be happy if I begged and pleaded, then they would feel pity for me. They reported me only out of spite," says Marina as she showed the roughness of her hands from years of hard labor. "Is this how a 29 year old woman should look? Instead of thinking about my hair and going out, I must do hard and exhausting physical work," she adds.

Marina went on to explain that the animals were only in the city during the winter and in the springtime she would move them to a little farm near Šibenik. "I have ten big goats there which are aggressive towards the little ones, so I keep the little ones with me until they grow stronger," Marina says. She had never imagined that raising goats would be her life's calling, and she had no knowledge about it before she started. "When you must learn, you will learn," Marina says. She hopes reason will prevail and she won't have to go to prison for the unpaid penalty. "I would certainly not have chosen this life for myself if I had a choice. Life has been hard on me. I've learnt how to fight. If that's a sin, something is very wrong with this world," Marina says.

We learned from the head of the Šibenik Communal Police, Miroslav Lucić, that in cases like this the minimum prison punishment is three days. "I'm sorry about this woman's situation, but we are only doing our jobs," Lucić says.

**Ana Rukavina**  
**(March 12, 2005)**

### **11) Healing Mud on Murter Covered With Bureaucratic Slime**

TISNO – In the bay of Makirina near Tisno on the island Murter, there is a rich supply of high quality therapeutic mud. Despite a few attempts by foreign investors to exploit this resource, nothing has been done. The reason behind this is the unresolved spatial planning documentation and a lack of interest of the local government. Based on the expert opinions from the Zagreb Institute for Geological Research, it seems that this therapeutic mud is of unique significance compared to other similar mud layers in Croatia because it is completely clean.

"In terms of size, Makirina is probably a smaller peloid site than, for example, the one in Morina Bay, but it is not contaminated. Therefore, it was the first target for research which started in 1988," says Marko Šparica, a professor at the Institute for Geological Research. There are some 410,000 cubic meters of therapeutic mud in the bay, which means there is enough for the next 90 years. "Of course, this is based on controlled exploitation and the fact that the mud will regenerate," points out Šparica. Despite the confirmed potential of the mud, not one health-tourism object has been built in the area. When asked why nothing has been done to develop this bay that contains such a profitable resource, the mayor of Tisno, Joso Stegnić, said that the land around the bay was privately owned and that the whole area is protected.

**Ana Rukavina**  
**(March 1, 2005)**

### **12) JANJEVO: The Oldest Croatian Diaspora**

**"Since the war there have been no police in Janjevo, so night robberies are very common. At the moment we are working on getting the police back in town because the people are living in fear," says Reverend Palić. When we asked him where the nearest police station was, he laughed and said, "I am the nearest police station." The truth is that thieves don't touch anything around the church, even though it is probably the only place with anything worth stealing.**

There is only one muddy cobblestone road through Janjevo, a village only half an hour drive from Priština. The houses on the steep slopes are mostly damaged and deserted, and with a few exceptions, most of the inhabited houses look more or less deserted as well. Once the flourishing trading center of the Dubrovnik Republic, these days it looks gloomy, as it is currently inhabited by the Roma, Albanians, Turks, as well as the descendents of the oldest Croatian emigrants.

A frightened feeble elderly woman wearing “dimije” stood on the steps of the Church of St. Nicholas, where the village road ends. Paulina Dodić (94) is the oldest Croat in Janjevo. The house in which she lives alone had been robbed the night before. She had come to the parish to ask for help. The first to come to her aid was a young man, Sebastian (16), who was just on his way to get her something for lunch. He had taken her into the parish home where she feels safe, says Paulina. Her family had moved away a long time ago, but she doesn't want to leave Janjevo. Although we came unannounced, we were kindly welcomed. Reverend Matej Palić (40) told us about the oldest Croatian diaspora which had come to these hills 700 years ago. Until the nineties of the last century, 4,500 Croats lived in Janjevo. Today there are only 320 of them left. The emigration had started in the seventies, but the real exodus began during the war in Croatia, continued during the fighting in Kosovo, and the worst came after the war.

### ***The poor people***

“For years we have been living in very dire economic straits. Whoever had the opportunity or the means, left Janjevo. Only the poor stayed, who cannot afford to buy a house in Croatia,” the Reverend says. Recently, there has been a positive development, however; the emigration trend has stopped. “I am not a prophet, but I am optimistic. We deserve better times to come,” Palić comments.

For centuries, the Croats from Janjevo lived on agriculture and craftsmanship. They were known in the region for the production of plastics. “The reputation of Janjevo people as hard workers is confirmed by their descendants who live in Croatia,” Palić explains. Today it has become impossible to compete with Chinese products, especially plastic, so there are only a few families left who deal with plastic production. The rest of the people mostly live on meager social benefits or pensions, which are roughly 40 Euro a month. Still, the Reverend points out, there is a solidarity among these people. The elderly and lonely inhabitants, like Paulina, are taken care of by their neighbors who bring them food and whatever else they need. If someone is traveling to Croatia, they always have a free seat in the car for those who cannot afford the trip themselves.

“We cannot complain about the help that comes to us from Croatia. People from Croatia really help us out, as do our people who come to visit their homeland during the holidays,” Palić points out. While some people can arrange to travel to Croatia even without money, others can't visit their families because they don't have passports. According to the Reverend, some people would give a fortune for that precious document in Kosovo, but, only 50 percent of the Croats from Janjevo have passports. Even though one would expect that only older people are left in Kosovo, the Reverend says there are 55 children living there. “The Croatian children in Janjevo currently attend Serbian school, but there is hope that next year the lessons will be in our mother tongue. Teachers are hard to find, but we manage somehow. We improvise,” Palić says.

### ***Faith or “dimije” (Turkish trousers)***

In general, the Croatian people of Janjevo don't speak Albanian, even the Reverend doesn't brag about being versed in that language. When we told the Reverend that Paulina's “dimije” confused us and we didn't know how to approach her, the Reverend said that thanks to the Church the Croats managed to avoid assimilation, but some things could not be avoided.

“When the Turks came to this area, the offer was: faith or “dimije”. Nevertheless, our “dimije” were different from theirs,” Palić says.

Life in the valley hidden by the hills was peaceful even during the most dreadful of wars. It isn't surprising that the former Prime Minister of Kosovo, Bajram Rexhepi, said Janjevo was “an oasis of peace and ethnic tolerance.” Still, Reverend Palić says that peace and harmony reign during the day, while at night anything is possible. “Since the war, there have been no police in Janjevo, so night robberies are very common, like the one at Paulina's house last night. At the moment we are working on getting the police back in town because the people are living in fear,” says Reverend Palić. When we asked him where the nearest police station was, he laughed and said, “I am the nearest police station.” The truth is that thieves don't

touch anything around the church, even though it is probably the only place with anything worth stealing. When asked why he didn't leave Janjevo like his family did, Reverend Palić responded, "I don't want to leave these people. My nationality is Janjevo."

**Ana Rukavina**

**(February 26, 2005)**

### **13) Danger and Eyesores Along Croatian Highways**

#### **War damaged buildings pose a threat**

***It's been confirmed that 1,206 buildings should be knocked down in Croatia. Most are situated in the County of Zadar. In the County of Šibenik and Knin only 45 out of 355 buildings have been knocked down in the last two years. In other words, only those for which the owners have given permission or the buildings which were part of the state reconstruction program.***

ŠIBENIK – During the rush to get ready for the tourist season, the security of the tourists and their hosts is rarely talked about. Besides the mine fields in the Dalmatian hinterland, there is also a threat from the buildings which were damaged during the war. Even if we ignore the way the devastated remains of the former family houses look as we drive past them or the impression they leave, they are truly dangerous for passersby. Many drivers try to avoid them by changing lanes and pedestrians cross to the other side of the street in order to get further away. There haven't been any consequences yet, but it's just a matter of time before the buildings give in to gravity before somebody takes them down properly.

We found out from the Ministry of the Sea, Tourism, Transport and Development that the removal of these houses started in 2003. A survey of the situation in the war affected regions, especially the areas along the main tourist highways, has confirmed that a total of 1,206 buildings in Croatia should be taken down. Most of them are in the County of Zadar. The spokeswoman for the Ministry, Marina Halužan, tells us that of the 355 such buildings in Šibenik-Knin County, 281 are residential objects, 52 business premises, and 22 are public buildings. "Until now, 45 houses have been knocked down, and those are the ones for which the owners have given permission or the buildings which were part of the state reconstruction program," Halužan says.

Attaining approval from the owners was an effort which involved local authorities, non-governmental and international organizations. However, since they did not receive approval from all of the owners, the planned project to take down the ruins has not been completed in its entirety. "The privately owned ruins are removed pursuant to the owners' requests to the state administration offices, which have been passed on to the Ministry," Halužan says. In the situation that the owners are inaccessible or unknown, and their objects are a life and health hazard, the removal is initiated by the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Physical Planning and Construction, more precisely, the Directorate for Inspection.

So, in the bureaucracy tangle of locating the owners, the illegal construction issue and other problems such as landfills, the devastated buildings will probably be around for a few more seasons before a resolution is reached.

**Ana Rukavina**

**(February 22, 2005)**

### **14) President of Serbia Visits Kosovo Tadić welcomed with eggs in Priština**

PRIŠTINA – Around noon on Sunday, the citizens of Priština gathered in front of the UN Mission Center in Kosovo (UNMIK) to hear what the president of Serbia, Boris Tadić, had to say about Kosovo. Even though many people believed that he was much more moderate in his rhetoric than his predecessors, the reactions of the citizens of Kosovo on that day were definitely not welcoming. The start of the first official visit of a Serbian statesman to Kosovo since 1999 began with the arrest of 30 activists who represented non-governmental organizations of Kosovo. The trouble was stirred by Albin Kurti, a former political prisoner who had been convicted and imprisoned in Belgrade in 1998.

The level of police security was quite high and included the Kosovo regular police and Special Forces, as well as members of the UN units. They patrolled the center of town while two helicopters circled above the city starting in the early morning hours. There were a few minor

incidents when activists from the Kosovo Action Network (KAN) gathered in front of the UNMIK headquarters. The headquarters is located across from the Sports Hall Boro and Ramiz, once a symbol of brotherhood and solidarity between today's irreconcilable adversaries. With whistles and banners reading, "Kosovo is waiting" they demanded an answer from Tadić about the people from Kosovo who had died or had gone missing during the years of fighting.

Since they were denied an answer, they reached for the eggs.

"Serbia has always been a source of criminal and political genocide, because of which 15,000 innocent citizens of Kosovo have been killed, about a million have moved out of the area, 120,000 homes have been devastated, and 20,000 women have been raped. The intentions are all too clear; to occupy Kosovo again. If they do not succeed, they want to take over at least one third of it," said KAN activist, Fatbardh Bunjaku. He went on to say that the history of the people speaks loud and clear about why Tadić was not welcomed, and why he never would be.

After meeting with the leader of UNMIK in Kosovo, Soren Jessen Petersen, the Serbian president plans to visit Orahovac, Velika Hoča, Goraždevac, the Visoki Dečani Monastery, Štrpce, Priluje, and other Serbian enclaves in central Kosovo. Over the last few months, the hottest political issue and the biggest point of dispute between the minority and majority populations has been electricity. While the Serbs claim that in some villages the electricity has been cut off without any apparent reason, international officials insist that the disruption in the supply of electricity is the result of faults in the electric network, as well as the outstanding debts to the Kosovo electric company. The Serbs have not paid their electric bills for years and it is estimated that their accrued debt is now more than 60 million Euro.

**Ana Rukavina**

**(February 14, 2005)**

### **15) Poaching Around Kornati Results in a Feast for the Poor**

ŠIBENIK – Based on the amount of fish on the menu in the Caritas soup kitchen on Wednesday one would have assumed it was Friday. And this was not just any fish, but bonito fish from the Kornati area. On Monday, the local police confiscated 7.8 tons of fish from poachers caught illegally fishing in Kornati National Park. Out of the total amount, 7.2 tons were forwarded to the collection points on Murter and 600 kilograms were given to soup kitchens. "Of course the fish was greatly appreciated, especially that amount. We just need to add a few side dishes and we have enough food for a month," says Jure Lipovac, the head of the soup kitchen in Šibenik which feeds about 200 citizens a day. The last catch was a record for the police and for the kitchen.

Jure recalls that similar amounts were confiscated from Italian ships caught trawling through Croatian waters. On Wednesday, risotto and grilled fish steaks were served, and the cooks have many more ideas for bonito recipes, "Fish soup, boiled fish, pasta... All it takes is a little imagination."

So, who can say that the captains of "Lasta" and "Kraljica Mira" caused nothing but damage while poaching in a forbidden zone?

**Ana Rukavina**

**(February 10, 2005)**

### **16) Four New Cases of Domestic Violence in Šibenik and Knin County**

***Only nine beds for victims of domestic violence***

***When battered women finally find the courage to seek help, it is a challenge to find it in Šibenik. Calling the only hotline number in the county is in vain, as nobody answers.***

ŠIBENIK - In less than one week, in the County of Šibenik and Knin, four cases of domestic violence were recorded, one of which ended in murder and the others with serious bodily harm. Although the police claim that there has not been any increase in domestic violence, the fact that speaks louder than the statistics is that when battered women finally find the courage to seek help, it is a challenge to find it in Šibenik. The man who put two bullets in his wife's head last week had had a restraining order prohibiting him from approaching his wife and children. They were in the middle of divorce proceedings and on the day of the murder he was to be sentenced by the court to ten months in prison for violence. In the most recent

case, a woman who had sustained broken ribs caused by her husband had spent some time in a shelter with her child. When they returned home, the husband beat her again. What can a woman do when she finally decides to put an end to years of abuse? Calling the only hotline number in the county is in vain, as nobody answers. Šibenik initiated the opening of a youth and family counseling center, and the project to open it is underway. There is also the Center for Social Welfare which can accommodate women and children only in the Caritas shelter at the Šibenik dioceses. There are only enough beds available for nine women and one child. "The women are entitled to stay in the shelter for up to nine months and they are provided psychological help and food," says Father Slavko Mikelin. There have been times when we have exceeded our capacity, as there is insufficient space in the shelter, which opened in September 2002.

Prostitutes and addicts are not welcomed here because they need other forms of help. Reconciliation, which many women's associations find unacceptable, is often the desired result of these sad family stories, according to Father Mikelin. "It is extremely important for the spouses to reconcile." He adds that a contract will soon be signed with the Ministry of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity, which will assist in their work. Jagoda Sablić, the president of Women's Initiative, claims that this non-governmental organization is just for logistical support. "We organize events in order to raise the public's awareness of the problem. We have also suggested opening a shelter for victims of domestic violence, but without the help of the city and county we cannot achieve much."

**Ana Rukavina**  
**(February 3, 2005)**

### **17) Number of Marsh Birds in Vrana Lake Nature Park Doubles**

#### **Birds from Europe and Asia in Dalmatian nests**

***The lake is an important place for birds to winter, especially marsh birds. Along with the Neretva Delta, it is the only other larger swamp on the Croatian Coast. Last year, most of the marsh birds spent the winter at Vrana Lake.***

**Ana Rukavina**

The winter bird counting campaign in Vrana Lake Nature Park is underway. According to the preliminary results, at 60,000 the number of birds in the area doubled on last January. We found out from the park's expert, Vlatka Dumbović, that most of them are coots and ducks, as well as a considerable number of Great Crested Grebes. As a matter of special interest, Dumbović mentions that about 500 Pygmy Cormorants, a highly endangered species, have found Vrana Lake their only suitable habitat and breeding range.

The lake is an important place for birds to winter, especially marsh birds. Along with the Neretva Delta, it is the only other larger swamp on the Croatian Coast, explains Dumbović. The results of last year's bird counting campaign show that most of them spent the winter at Vrana Lake. "The abundance of marsh vegetation is extremely important, as well as the regime of protection of Vrana Lake. These provide ideal conditions for birds which migrate from northern parts of Europe and Asia to spend the winter in this area," Dumbović points out. Based on experiences from the previous winter, it can be foreseen that about 75 species will have spent the winter at the lake. If the winter is harsh, there can be up to 180,000 birds. "The geese have not arrived yet this year. They usually come when it is extremely cold in the continental areas. We expect them to arrive with the first snow," Vlatka Dumbović says. As usual, the data on the number of birds at the lake will again be delivered to Wetlands International, which organizes the international winter count of marsh birds. "It is extremely important because volunteers work hard all over Europe to collect data on the number of birds throughout the continent," Dumbović says. The results are encouraging because they confirm that after the catastrophic fire at the ornithological reservation in 2003, the birds are coming back to Vrana Lake. The lake area now complies with all the international criteria and has been declared an important marsh bird area in Europe. As a result, a biological-ornithological station will be opened here on February 2nd of this year, International Wetlands Day. "It will be the first station of its kind in Dalmatia, which will significantly facilitate the work of the bird researchers," Dumbović points out. All people with good intentions are welcome at the lake, which means not throwing garbage in, not lighting fires and keeping your pets on a leash.

(January 30, 2005)

**18) Dalmatian Zagora Region Is Interesting to Foreigners, But Not to Tourism Employees**

Food from the “peka” for tourists with deep pockets.

*Rural tourism should not be limited to the summer season as there are things for guests to do throughout the year.*

*Vlašić: Comparing Dalmatia to Istria is completely pointless*

*Kalpić: Foreigners want something indigenous and they are ready to pay for it. Our people, on the other hand, tend to think rural tourism means something inexpensive and they want to haggle.*

ŠIBENIK – In Dalmatia, it is still more appropriate to offer tourists the sea and beaches rather than the ambience of Dalmatian Zagora. Even though rural tourism has made some great advances in some regions of Croatia, it is hardly developing in the County of Šibenik and Knin. Rows of concrete high-rise buildings are mushrooming along the coast, while the ruined stone houses from the beginning of the last century are slowly but surely giving way to gravity. Is this due to a lack of interest on the part of the guests or maybe the inertia of the hosts? If it is inertia, it is not justified. Rural tourism should not be limited to the summer season as there are things for guests to do throughout the year.

The president of the Tourist Board of the County of Šibenik and Knin, Šime Vlašić, believes the low number of households engaged in rural tourism is due to the fact that less than 10 years ago a greater part of this region was occupied. “We also should not forget that a greater part of this region has not been cleared of mines,” Vlašić points out.

Comparing Dalmatia to Istria is completely pointless, Vlašić thinks. It’s not a question of whether or not Dalmatian Zagora has the resources, but it will take a few more years before the rural households open their doors to guests.

“There have been several short-lived attempts but in the end, there are only two places which introduce the traditions, customs and gastronomy of our grandfathers to guests. One of these places is Jurlinovi Dvori (Jurlin’s Houses) in Primošten Burni, which is run by the Reverend Stipe Perkov and enjoys state protection. The other is the Kalpić family estate in Radonić,” Šime Vlašić says.

We found out from Ivan Kalpić that his guests are mostly wealthy foreigners. “Foreigners want something indigenous, and they are ready to pay for it. They are interested in vineyards, sheep breeding and local cooking. Our people, on the other hand, think that rural tourism means something inexpensive and they want to haggle,” Kalpić says.

The construction of the highway is another advantage for the development of rural tourism, because it allows people the freedom to stay in one area and easily get to other places of interest. “More than anything else, the peace and quiet is enough to attract people. Especially those who want to relax and not be bothered by the noise and crowds on the coast,” Ivan Kalpić points out.

Of course, the Kalpić family also has to deal with the problem of the short season, even though they have quite enough to offer all year round. “Our tourist season could last all year, but that is a mute point when there are no tourists in Croatia in March,” Kalpić concludes. He believes that extending the season is exactly what the Tourist Board should be working on.

**Ana Rukavina**

(January 19, 2005)

**19) Birth Rate in County of Šibenik and Knin Down by 41**

Fall in the birth rate has a direct impact on the hospital’s finances

*Burić: It is nothing new that the birth rate has been dropping from year to year. It is especially alarming because there are no signs that this trend will soon stop. Knin has a somewhat younger population, but the number of births dropped from 213 in 2003 to 190 last year. The hospital maternity ward is not working to its full capacity, which is consequently reflected in the area of pediatrics.*

**Ana Rukavina**

ŠIBENIK – The birth of Chiara Vukšić in Šibenik General Hospital just a few seconds after the ringing in of the New Year was celebrated by many. The first baby born in 2005 weighed 3.45 kilograms, was 51 cm long and hailed from Šibenik. However, the celebration didn't last too long. Taking into account the number of newborns in the county last year, there was no reason to celebrate. The director of the hospital, Željko Burić, explained that 856 babies were born in 2004 in hospitals in Knin and Šibenik, which was 41 babies less than the previous year.

“It is nothing new that the birth rate has been dropping from year to year. It is especially alarming because there are no signs that this trend will soon stop,” Burić says.

Several years ago the media wrote and spoke about the baby boom in Knin as a normal post-war phenomenon, but Burić seems undecided on that.

“Maybe it could be called a baby boom, but the increased number of births was more a result of migration than soldiers returning home. After the war there were extreme changes in the demographics of Knin. The population of Knin is still relatively young, but the number of births dropped from 213 in 2003 to 190 last year. For a city that has about 9000 people, the loss of 23 potential new residents is not negligible,” Burić says.

The downward birth rate trend has been affecting all the Croatian counties but in the County of Šibenik and Knin the low number of newborn babies also has a negative impact on the hospital's financial performance.

“There is a cause-result relationship. Our hospital is too big and underused. The hospital maternity ward is not working to its full capacity, which is later reflected in the area of pediatrics,” Burić points out.

The financial viability of the maternity ward and pediatric department in Knin has reached critical stages. Still, a mere hint at the closure of the Knin facility met with a loud protest by the townspeople.

“Sinj, for example, records about 400 births a year. Its maternity ward operates outside of the hospital, without anyone on-call. In Knin, where there are far fewer babies born, the hospital functions as if all of its capacities are being used,” Željko Burić points out.

## **20) Death of Young Ivan Vulić Is Another Reminder of the Fatal Mines**

### **The Homeland War isn't over yet**

***The death of Ivan Vulić (29) from Gradac has also reopened the issue of the inadequate effectiveness of the emergency response system. Vulić had to wait three and a half hours for help which was obviously too long.***

ŠIBENIK - Ivan Vulić (29) from Gradac succumbed to his wounds on Sunday after stepping on an explosive device while hunting on Ilova Glava hill. This was another brutal reminder that land mines are still planted throughout parts of Croatia and they are fatal. In some areas of the country people can still not move about freely.

The death of this young man reopened another issue: the inadequate effectiveness of the emergency response system. Vulić had to wait three and a half hours for help which was obviously too long. Vulić lost both of his legs as a result of stepping on the mine. He fell into a coma around 1 PM and it wasn't until 2:30 PM that he finally succumbed to his injuries and died, before the ambulance even reached him 3 and a half hours later.

A helicopter had been dispatched from Split to save him and the four men who had gone into the mine field to help him but it was unable to land or lower a rescue team. It remains unknown whether or not the helicopter even had the necessary rescue equipment. The rescue operation and recovery of the body from the mine field lasted until late in the afternoon.

Since the end of the Homeland War the number of casualties has increased to 16 deaths and 70 serious injuries. In the County of Šibenik and Knin alone there are seven affected towns and municipalities covering an area of roughly 43,000 square meters, and with 462 danger warning signs posted.

The tragedy on Svilaja might have been avoided if the danger warning signs had been placed better. According to the people of Drvenjak, the first danger warning signs are three kilometers away from the accident scene, and they can only be seen if you are coming from the southern side of Svilaja. The young men started their hunting expedition from the northern side.

Most of the areas suspected of containing mines are around Drniš (23 square kilometers), Skradin (16), Vodice (10), and Ružić (6). The last tragedy of this kind happened near Ružić, which was the front line during the war. Promina and Šibenik are also suspected of containing mines, but in smaller areas.

### **Ana Rukavina**

#### **21) Ramirez concert tour continues**

Everything is OK in Šibenik

ŠIBENIK - After the success of the sold out concert in Kset club in October, the young band Ramirez promoted their first album in Dalmatia as well. The location of the concert was the comfortable Bunar Cafe in Šibenik. The crowds gathered on Saturday to enjoy the two hour concert. The great location and incredible atmosphere made it a music event to remember. Aljoša Šerić, the frontman of Ramirez, was impressed by the space, as well as by the enthusiasm from the organizers. "I don't remember ever playing in such a great environment. I'm sure we'll be back here," commented Šerić, who is also the author of all twelve songs on the album.

According to many people, Ramirez is the most pleasant surprise on the Croatian music scene, which is also confirmed by the critics who have listed their album among the top five most successful albums of 2004. In the home-like atmosphere they played their songs "Iste cipele" (Same shoes) and "Sve je ok" (Everything is OK), both of which also have music videos. The audience reacted spontaneously to the songs from the debut album, which was produced by Denyken. There were even a few celebrities in the audience, such as famous football player and coach from Split, Slaven Bilić. After Saturday's appearance in Krešimir's city, Ramirez will continue their concert tour in Split.

### **Ana Rukavina**

**(January 10, 2005)**

#### **22) Vjesnik Visits Returnees in Republika Srpska**

##### **Returnees Buried Alive**

***"Humanitarians keep saying that it is vital to return. But what then? How does one start living again? People are waiting for charity from foreigners because their own country has nothing to give them. Returning at all cost is no answer," says Ivo Jović, the ex-commissioner of the Croatian Community of Herzeg Bosnia for the Banja Luka municipality.***

BANJA LUKA – Very few people have returned to Grab, the oldest part of Banja Luka, which had always been inhabited by Bosniaks. One of them is Sadik Ičagić, whose story is similar to the stories of thousands of other refugees. It proves the point that Croats, Bosniaks and Serbs are finding it equally hard to return, no matter which part of the war devastated area they are supposed to come back to. Sadik and his family of five spent the wartime in Bugojno, from which they have brought back all of their property – a cow and a calf.

"I don't know how we would make it if we didn't have them," Sadik says. His house was renewed in 2000 by a foreign humanitarian organization, which he did not want to name.

"Nothing in this house is in order. Everything is crooked, falling apart, not a single door closes properly," Sadik says. Like the other returnees, he has no means to support himself and he is trying hard to make ends meet. Agriculture is his only option and his only chance.

##### **Most returnees in Republika Srpska**

According to UNHCR data, a total of 999,258 persons have returned to their pre-war homes in Bosnia and Herzegovina, 14,255 in the first six months of this year. Only Zvornik, Bratunac, Srebrenica, and Milići in Republika Srpska have not been affected by the overall downward trend in the number of returnees in comparison with 2003. Before the war, the capital of Republika Srpska, Banja Luka, had a population of 195,139 of whom 55% were Serbs, 15% Bosniaks, 1% Croats, and 16% Yugoslavs. During the war, most of the Croats and Bosniaks were expelled from the city. As we learn from Željko Matić, the president of the municipal committee on the expelled Croats' community, there are barely 10,000 Croats residing in Banja Luka at the moment. Most of them are elderly people which means that the number is rapidly decreasing due to the high mortality rate.

Matić says that the returnees have received some, albeit insufficient reconstruction funds from the Federal government and the Government of Republika Srpska and humanitarian organizations.

“Humanitarians keep saying that return is vital. But what then? How does one start living again? People are waiting for charity from foreigners, because their own country has nothing to give them. Returning at all cost is no answer,” says the ex-commissioner of the Croatian Community of Herzeg Bosnia for the Banja Luka municipality.

#### ***A fragment of the Balkans in a blind alley***

“Those who have decided to return need more than just the funds to rebuild their houses. They need jobs, not to mention Croatian schools and kindergartens.” Jović continues, “Those who have come back are mostly elderly people. Those who are contemplating return have no illusions that a better life awaits them here. All they can expect is to be buried alive.”

Francisco Segovia, the head of the Spanish humanitarian organization MPDL in Bosnia and Herzegovina, headquartered in Banja Luka, points out that the main problem in Republika Srpska is the fact that the political parties still do not speak to all the nations.

“Nationalism is still the main political agenda which makes contacts among the nations extremely difficult. Besides, the political parties enjoy full support from the church. The positive development is the fact that there are fewer troops in the streets,” says Segovia. His experience shows that rebuilding confidence between the Croats and the Serbs is slowly taking root, whereas the process is much slower with the Bosniaks.

As Francisco Segovia points out, the dire economic situation should also be taken into account. The Federation has several bigger economic centers whereas Banja Luka is the only such center in Republika Srpska .

“Sometimes it seems as if this part of the Balkans is a blind alley,” concludes Francisco Segovia.

**Ana Rukavina**

**(January 20, 2005)**

### ***23) Vrana Lake Will Remain an Important European Wetland for Marsh Birds***

#### **Mines blow up fish, bombs kill birds and fires burn down the park**

***The final goal of all the dodgy deals around the park, which includes the fire, is to create the impression that Vrana Lake is impossible to protect because of the devastation of the reserve and the resistance of the inhabitants. This would mean leaving the door to the lake and the area around wide open to the people who are not aware that their greediness would soon mean death for the park. “Thanks to the understanding and support of the local people, that is not going to happen,” insists Gojko Pintur, director of the Public Institution Nature Park Vransko Jezero.***

**Ana Rukavina**

The general public perceives Vrana Lake as an area devastated by a fire. Very few people know the lake area meets all the international criteria and that it has been declared an important marsh bird area in Europe. You can also find fish, reptiles, and thousands of plants. Human bones were found here, as well as the remains of a fireplace, roughly three thousand years old.

“In this case, it seems that only bad news makes good news, which means that the picture created about Vrana Lake does not reflect the real situation. Of course, the media is more likely to attract the public’s attention with stories of someone threatening to commit suicide if their house is torn down, rather than the opening of a 50 kilometer bicycle path or the opening of a fishing port. Those are just rare isolated events that steal the spotlight from all that is good and positive. These incidents are meant to create an impression of the latent conflict between the locals and the park authorities, which doesn’t really exist,” says Gojko Pintur, the director of the Public institution Nature Park Vransko Jezero.

This institution was founded in 1999, in order to protect, maintain and promote nature and the cultural and historical heritage of Vrana Lake and its surroundings, with special attention on the

ornithological reservation in which there are 234 bird species recorded. The first measurable results should already be seen next year, according to Pintur. “The park authorities started working in 2001 and already in the winter 2003 – 2004, there were considerable and positive

changes in the number of species and specimen in this protected area of 57 square kilometers, of which 30 square kilometers is the lake," says Pintur.

#### **Picky geese know where life is good**

The lake is overflowing with hunters, but they have never killed in the prohibited area. They respect the restricted zone of 500 meters from the line of demarcation. The Hunters' Associations comply with the bird protection regime so the birds have started to cross the road, go to the agricultural region and approach people. Of course, there have been a few minor problems, but only two or three times a year.

The importance of protecting the nature of Vrana Lake is more than just a Croatian concern, Pintur points out. Due to its geographical position, half way between Africa and Finland, it is a resting place for birds during their autumn migration.

Besides the hunters, the new rules have also been accepted by sport fishermen and the locals, which is extremely important according to Pintur since the previously existing practice of uncontrolled killing of birds and illegal fishing in the area was not the least bit encouraging. "Another indication of the stabilization and protection of the ecological system is seen from the fact that wild geese have chosen the lake for their winter resting place. These birds are very picky. Huge flocks of wild geese had searched for a suitable and safe location for ten years. There were up to three thousand of them on the lake last winter," Pintur explains.

Things are quite different when it comes to fishing. Unlike hunting with a gun, fishing is done in silence and at night. The lake was previously protected by organized watch groups who collected the caught fish and successfully sold it on the market, with earnings of about three million Kuna a year. "Fishing in the time of spawning nearly caused the disappearance of young carp. They used to fish with anything they could get their hand on. They used mines in the lake and threw bombs at the birds.

Today, the situation is vastly improved and there are huge quantities of carps here," Pintur says.

#### **Illegal construction and fires**

Sport fishermen risk losing their licenses and paying high penalties because of poaching, while the local poachers don't have much to lose. "Illegal fishing has decreased, but it has not stopped, especially with respect to fishing for Grey Mullet," the director points out.

Namely, one night of living with the fear of getting caught poaching can yield up to 20,000 Kuna profit. If a school of Grey Mullet, say 600 to 700 kilograms, gets caught in your net, you can ask for the going rate of 30 Kuna per kilogram.

"Along with the problem of poaching, we are faced with the problem of the Majdan construction zone," Pintur mentions. The problem of illegal construction that has affected the entire country has spread across Vrana Lake this spring. There are also illegally built objects inside the park's borders.

The fire that happened less than a year ago, in which 90% of the bamboo fields were lost, was the final dot on the "i" for those who think that preserving nature is a waste of time. The park authorities undertook all possible measures to recover the loss, but it will take some five to six years to undo the damage, Pintur points out. Thousands of birds are left without a secure shelter, some of them were wounded in the fire, and many of them died in the days that followed.

"The ultimate goal of all the dodgy deals around the park, which include the fire, is to create the impression that Vrana Lake is impossible to protect because of the devastation of the reserve and the resistance of the inhabitants," Pintur says. Obviously, this would mean leaving the door to the lake and the area around wide open to the people who are not aware that their greediness would soon mean death for the park.

"Thanks to the understanding and support of the local people, that is not going to happen," concludes Pintur. He adds that the protection of the area could open up great opportunities for eco and ethno tourism.

**(September 5, 2004)**

## **24) The Deputy Prime Minister Opens the Games of the Croatian Veterans' Children**

### **Obonjan must remain the island of children**

***The Minister of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity promised continued support of the games in which children compete in sporting events and attend cultural-artistic workshops.***

***Jadranka Kosor signed a contract together with the mayor of Šibenik, Neda Klarić, about cooperation with the center for the elderly and disabled, Cvjetni Dom. The contract defines the program for financing the care of the elderly and disabled in Šibenik and on the islands.***

ŠIBENIK - The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Family, Veterans' Affairs, and Intergenerational Solidarity, Jadranka Kosor, visited Šibenik on Friday to officially open the Games of the Croatian Veterans' Children. These games were held on the island of Obonjan and gathered 520 children from all the Croatian counties.

The Deputy Prime Minister emphasized the importance of having these games, because, "With their hard work, children show how much they love their country and preserve what is truly valuable. Next year the Ministry will join in the competition. Since being able to swim well is very important in politics, I could participate in that discipline," Kosor mentioned, promising the continued support of the games in which children compete in sporting events and attend cultural-artistic workshops.

The Deputy Prime Minister also referred to the difficulties faced by Otok Mladosti, the company that manages the island. She said that together with the mayor of Šibenik, Neda Klarić, they had arranged cooperation with the local authorities. "Obonjan must remain the island for children. As soon as we receive a letter from the authorities of Šibenik, we will formulate a plan of action and allocate the funds for the island's revitalization," she said. Also, in cooperation with the Ministry of Tourism, we must devise a program of social care which will give the opportunity to other children to spend their summers on Otok Mladosti, Kosor added. "Most of all, I am thinking about the children from so many families which have never seen the sea," she remarked.

After visiting Obonjan, the Deputy Prime Minister signed a contract together with the mayor of Šibenik, Neda Klarić, about cooperation with the center for the elderly and disabled, Cvjetni Dom. The contract defines the program for financing the care of the elderly and disabled in Šibenik and on the islands.

The Ministry has guaranteed 1.7 million Kuna for a number of projects. First of all, this money would enable those who are not residents of the center to stay there during the day. There would also be funds available to buy a ship and employ workers so the elderly and disabled could visit the islands. A contract was also signed regarding under-privileged children spending their summers on Obonjan, even though the implementation of this project started last summer.

**Ana Rukavina  
(September 4, 2004)**

## **25) Pets as Tourists**

**Cats and dogs are not welcome on the Adriatic Coast.**

***Although it is quite understandable that other guests may not find it appetizing to have breakfast next to someone else's four-legged friend, the experience of tourism professionals working in the dog-friendly areas shows that their animal loving guests are mostly well-off people for whom money is no object when it comes to their pet's accommodation.***

**Ana Rukavina**

ŠIBENIK - How do pets, especially dogs, fare on a visit to the Croatian Adriatic Coast? They are certainly not welcome, not in the hotels, not on the beaches, not in the museums. The Lovišća apartments in Jezera on the island of Murter are just about the only place in the whole of the County of Šibenik and Knin without a "Dog's Prohibited" sign on the door. It is quite understandable that other guests may not find it appetizing to have breakfast next to someone else's four-legged friend, however the experience of tourist professionals in the dog-friendly areas shows that their animal loving guests are mostly well-off people for whom money is no object when it comes to their pet's accommodation.

***Lovišća the only trend-follower***

"Anyone who is seriously considering tourism as their business must follow global trends, and one of them implies people traveling on vacation with their pets. If dogs are welcome in French and Italian resorts, I can see no reason why we shouldn't have them here. Besides,

we charge the same price for dogs as for people," says Drago Pirja, director of Lovišća tourist settlement.

While people aged 20 to 50 are willing go without their pets on vacation, it is not at all as easy for children and elderly people," Pirja points out. The separation is much harder for them. This tourist settlement, with apartments and a camp on an area of 120 thousand square meters, boasts as many as 6 kilometers of walking paths and is very much like an open-plan hotel. Still, this does not mean there are no rules for dogs. For example, dogs are not allowed on the beach; instead, there are special showers for them, and they have to be kept on a leash at all times. Their owners are also expected to pick up after them.

The president of the County Tourist Board, Šime Vlašić, says that the current state of affairs in most of the hotels and tourist settlements in the county is "unsurprising" because "it is hard to reconcile the two opposing sides in a mass-tourism situation. It is not easy to fit pets into the facilities where people have most of their meals and where the turnover of guests is very high. Some hotels, which used to welcome pets, have since given up on that practice because there were incidents involving children. If guests are adamant on taking their four-legged family members on holiday with them, they will have to look for accommodation in private apartments or in smaller, family-run hotels.

"The experience of the accommodation owners who cater to guests with dogs or cats shows that pet owners account for as much as 40 percent of their bookings," Vlašić points out.

#### ***Smaller hotels find it easier to adapt***

Šime Klarić, the president of the national association of family-run and small-sized hotels adds that most of the association members have still not started exploring this avenue. Nevertheless, when they do, smaller hotels will probably find it much easier to accommodate their guests' wishes. "Although most small hotels don't have the necessary infrastructure needed to accommodate pets, our ability to adjust to the market demand is much better because we have first-hand contact with our guests," says Klarić.

Every year, before the holiday season, actions like the one entitled "Family to the coast, dog out on the street" warn people about the great number of pets that end up abandoned on the streets instead of joining their families on the Adriatic Coast. Part of the "blame" lies with those who do not welcome pets as their guests.

**(August 26, 2005)**

## **26) The Regent Esplanade Zagreb**

### **The lackluster comeback of a great hotel**

***There is no great improvement in services compared to the "old" Esplanade.***

***Regent's policy is not to cater only to foreigners, but to remain at the heart of Zagreb's social life.***

**Ana Rukavina**

After more than a year and a half, last Tuesday, the newly refurbished Esplanade Hotel welcomed its first guest, Klaus Ebert, the president of the management board of RTL Television, a figure relatively unknown to the Croatian public.

Thus, the great hotel made its comeback onto the tourist map of Zagreb, as the five-star Regent Esplanade Zagreb. The initial enthusiasm about this lavish building was soon replaced by the feeling that although having gained much, the hotel had lost its recognizable uniqueness which would be hard, if not impossible, to restore. Despite all the grandeur it remains somewhat unexciting and bland.

Having bought the quickly declining hotel, well on its way to becoming just another run-of-the-mill facility, the Austrian, Herbert Haselbacher, claimed that following refurbishment the Esplanade would re-emerge as a true work of art. A walk through the hotel confirms that Haselbacher was true to his words. Still, the purported 15 million Euro worth of cosmetic surgery did not take on board all those things that would make the magnificent, renovated Esplanade stand out from all other magnificent, renovated hotels.

The former director of the Esplanade, Amelija Tomašević, the winner of several global awards for excellence in the hotel industry, confirms our impressions. She says that the hotel is indeed beautiful, but that the reconstruction has disrobed it of its history. She misses the old touch of quintessential Zagreb in the hotel and says that the new owner did not take on board the history of the building and the fact that it had won a number of awards for quality throughout its existence.

### ***Nostalgia for the days of the Orient Express***

The newly reconstructed hotel has more rooms and its services will be second to none in keeping with the high standards of the American Regent Hotel chain, which will manage the Esplanade on behalf of its owner. Although the names of some other chains, such as Kempinsky, Hyatt, Marriott and Hilton were in the running, the Esplanade eventually became the only European hotel in the Regent Hotel chain, along with the Regent hotels in the USA, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, and Taiwan.

The project to reconstruct and refurbish the hotel, which was built in 1825, started in October of 2002. The interior was designed by the Studio MKV project team, who were inspired by the period of the 1920's, the Orient Express theme and the Art-Nouveau Style. Originally, the Esplanade Hotel was built to provide top quality accommodation to Orient Express passengers en route from Paris to Istanbul.

Over the years, the hotel has accommodated royalty and heads of state such as Queen Elisabeth II, Presidents Gamal Abdel Nasser, Nikita Sergeevich Khrushchev, Leonid Illych Brezhnev and Richard Nixon, as well as the likes of Orson Welles, Josephine Baker, Paul McCartney, Mick Jagger, and many others.

Needless to say, there are many anecdotes about the famous people who have chosen this hotel as their temporary accommodation, or those who lived in it permanently, like the famous author and first female Croatian journalist, Marija Jurić Zagorka. The legend featuring Dragutin Tadijanović claims that Tadijanović, a poor student at the time, was robbed and the director of the Esplanade offered him two year's worth of free lunches at the hotel.

The most radical changes have taken place on the ground floor and in the rooms, the number of which has gone up to 209 from the previous 171. There is also a new presidential suite, 280 square meters in size, which will set you back 1,500 Euro a night. A superior room is 215 Euro a night. All the rooms are lavishly furnished and equipped with the latest IT technology. There are a round the clock concierge, room service, and porter service.

The conference area boasts seven new business meeting rooms around the Emerald Ballroom on the ground floor. The historically protected Emerald Ballroom has not undergone major changes and it is still suitable for receptions and conferences. All the floors and ceilings in the hotel have been replaced, as well as the lights and elevators, which has made the whole building much more stable than before. To keep up with the hotel's larger capacity and wider range of offer, the workforce has gone up from 130 to 200.

### **Štrukli still star on the menu**

At the Esplanade, they like to point out that the hotel's offer and services have also not undergone radical changes since the Regent's policy is very much in line with the previous offer of the hotel. One of the policies is that the hotel should not cater only to foreign guests. Rather, it should remain at the heart of Zagreb's social life and foster local culture and gastronomy.

Belgian Marc Fontenell has been appointed the chef of the "Zinfandel's" restaurant, named after the California grape variety, originally from Croatian Kaštela. A bottle of Dom Perignon in this restaurant is 1,800 Kuna, a glass of Hennessy 130 Kuna, and Pelinkovac (domestic liqueur) 20 Kuna. The "Zinfandel" is the symbol worn by the personnel on their aprons and ties.

True to Haselbacher's words, the gastronomic trade-mark will be the famous *Štrukli*, a pastry dish from Zagorje, which will be offered in *Le Bistro*. We have no doubt in our minds that the owner knows the story of how this delicious dish came to be part of the hotel menu, thanks to Branko Jakopović, the director of the Esplanade. The first to favor the Zagorje *štrukli* was Miroslav Krleža. Then it was Josip Broz Tito, who also liked spicy sausages. Legend has it that Orson Welles holds the record for 22 pieces of *štrukli* eaten at one seating. Other tales from the kitchen reveal that during his stay at the hotel, Khrushchev had duck served with red cabbage and Brezhnev had venison with tangerine chutney. Nasser also chose venison, but prepared "hunter-style" and Queen Elisabeth II had Dalmatian-style Sea Bream.

**(May 23, 2004)**

## **27) Deputy Prime Minister, Jadranka Kosor, Visits Roma Neighborhoods**

### **Additional budgetary allocation for the Roma**

***Jadranka Kosor, Chair of the Government Committee on monitoring the national Roma program, announces additional funding for the Roma in order to improve the minority's living conditions.***

The Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity visited the Roma neighborhoods of Zagreb last Friday and talked to the locals who informed them of the issues they were facing in their everyday life.

On this occasion, Jadranka Kosor, who is also the Chair of the Government Committee on monitoring the national Roma program, announced the possibility of an additional budgetary allocation intended to improve the living conditions of the Roma minority.

Speaking of priorities, she pointed out how everything was a priority for the Roma people: education, residential issues, and the construction of a culture hall, for which one million Kuna had already been allocated.

"When implementing our program, we will have to take into account the changes which have occurred within certain Ministries' competencies. Some segments of the program will need to be adjusted accordingly," Jadranka Kosor said. In dealing with the current issues, she expects help from the city authorities. After visiting the Roma neighborhoods in Zagreb, the Minister announced visits to the Roma communities in Međimurje and Rijeka.

The Roma in Zagreb took the opportunity of meeting the Minister as an informal way to talk to her about their problems. Alija Mešić, the president of the Roma Association of Zagreb and Zagreb County, said that 712 Roma took part in the Homeland War, and as a result 59 were disabled and entitled to the appropriate status but had not been able to exercise that right. The Roma also pointed out their substandard living conditions in houses which have no electricity or water.

**Ana Rukavina**

**(May 22, 2004)**

### **28) Joso Vukosav, Professor of Psychology at the Police Academy Talks About the Issue of Negotiating in Crisis Situations**

#### **Croatia Needs Skilled Negotiators**

***"I think trained negotiators are a must. We are not a big country, and crisis situations are few and far between, so it would suffice to have one professional negotiator in Osijek, Zagreb, Rijeka and Split," Vukosav says.***

**Ana Rukavina**

The recent events in Zagreb – two suicide attempts by jumping off the Cathedral, one of which, sadly enough, was fatal, and the hostage situation at the Center for Social Welfare in Trešnjevka – reopened the issue of the lack of professional negotiators on the police force. It is a notorious fact that police have no experts among their ranks who have been trained as negotiators in crisis situations. At the moment, any negotiating in cases of suicide attempts is done by the chief of the police or police officers who are responsible for the area in which the suicide attempts occur.

Psychology professor, Joso Vukosav, has just come back from the USA, where he attended an FBI course in dealing with crisis situations. He told us about the American's experiences in the area of negotiations.

Speaking of the lack of trained negotiators, Vukosav points out that it is in everybody's best interest to solve the problem as soon as possible. "Of course we need trained negotiators. We just have to mention the recent events in Zagreb to realize that the issue of the lack of experts in the field reemerges every time we have to deal with crisis situations, which should not be left to the police officer on duty to deal with."

#### **Skills and experience**

Dealing with crisis situations calls for additional knowledge and training in psychology, criminology, law and related fields. During their regular education, our police officers do not receive any additional training which would prepare them for such a demanding task so that, as a rule, the negotiating process largely depends on the natural negotiating abilities of every individual who happens to find themselves in such a situation

"I think trained negotiators are a must. We are not a big country, and crisis situations are few and far between, so it would suffice to have one professional negotiator in Osijek, Zagreb, Rijeka and Split," said Professor Vukosav.

Besides systematic education, a successful negotiator has to have a lot of practice and the experience that comes with it. In the USA, for instance, a negotiator gets his own case only after he has worked on a number of cases as a member of a team, said Vukosav. He went

on, "Experience is priceless because although there are different sets of negotiating rules that may be applied in different situations there are also many unpredictable situations which you will not have come across in any of the literature."

To illustrate his point, the professor told us about the case of a psychopath, who was in jail waiting for trial for the brutal killing of his wife, but managed to escape. That same evening he massacred a family of four with a baseball bat, and then broke into another house where an old lady was sleeping. Just as he was about to swing his bat, the woman woke up and said, "Mister, you must be very cold. Let's go to the kitchen. You can warm up a bit, and I will make you some soup."

Indeed, the old lady made the soup, they talked for a while, and then she suggested he stay the night, since it was so cold outside. The murderer gladly accepted. Of course, the police came in the morning, and found the old lady and the killer sleeping, to everybody's sheer dismay. "It is well-known that aggression provokes aggression. This event confirms it, but it also shows how hard it is to foresee someone's reaction. The old lady's reaction was perfect, and saved her life," said the psychologist.

Vukosav claims that the job of a negotiator is dangerous and demanding and that is why negotiators should not do anything besides negotiating. Apart from the fact that they are on call 24 hours at a time, they put their lives at great risk because it is not always possible to negotiate over the phone.

"Sometimes there is only one door between you and the person who is threatening to blow themselves up with a bomb," Vukosav said.

#### **Will they or will they not jump?**

"Every person is different. There are no two identical psychological profiles. Bearing that in mind, it is fair to say that you can never be completely sure how a person might react," said Vukosav.

To support that, he shared with us a plane hijacking case. "The hijackers demanded to have coffee with cream delivered to the plane immediately. When their order finally came through half an hour later, they saw that what they got was regular coffee without any cream. They surrendered there and then. When asked why they did so, they said it would be hard to expect 20 million dollars when they couldn't even get cream."

Luckily enough, one can always rely on some degree of probability and one should keep the negotiations going for as long as there is even the slightest possibility that someone might get hurt. The rule of thumb is that you never mention the word "surrender" to a hijacker.

"If the hijacker is asked to surrender because he is surrounded by the police force, or because there is a sharpshooter with a gun aimed at him, you can be sure that the outcome of that crisis situation will be bad," Vukosav said. Of course, the situation depends largely on the country where the hostage situation is taking place. "The Americans take more time and explore several options," said Vukosav, reminding us of the hostage crisis at the Moscow theatre. "The Russians didn't waste any time. They just went in full force, regardless of who would be hurt," he said. In practice, there are situations when you are simply powerless. A famous case from the American experience is one with the negotiator who, after days of useless attempts, at the end of his tether, finally said to the kidnapper that it would be best if he surrendered so they could all go home. And the kidnapper said, "Fine, I surrender then."

Astonished with this unexpected outcome, the negotiator asked the kidnapper what had made him surrender. The kidnapper said, matter-of-factly, "Well, nobody asked me before."

The trust between the kidnapper who is holding the hostages and the negotiator is an absolute priority and should not be compromised at any time. "The negotiator must try the honest way, he must feel for the kidnapper, but he must remain professional and detached. The thing is to try and understand why the kidnapper has found himself in such a situation in the first place. It is important to gather information, as much as you can, because that way not only do you buy time, but you start "buttering up" the person with whom you are negotiating. Everyone has a soft spot," Vukosav explained.

When invited to share his thought on the betting that was going on under the Cathedral while the young man was deliberating whether to jump or not, Vukosav said that such behavior was not at all uncommon. "Quite the contrary, in America, they will often try to persuade the person trying to commit suicide to go through with it," he concluded.

**(May 9, 2004)**

#### **29) Ban Jelačić – the "Pride" of the City**

On a short visit to the Croatian capital, you may not get around to seeing the Maksimir Park and its lakes, the old Upper Town or the arcades at the Mirogoj Cemetery, but you will definitely make it to the main square. Once there, you can not miss the equestrian statue of Ban (Viceroy) Josip Jelačić who has dominated the square since the beginning of the 90's of last century after having been gone for decades. Although it was returned to us all clean and polished, this monument, especially its pedestal, looks as if it's been here for centuries. Just a glimpse at the statue is enough for any tourist to find out a lot about this city, such as who is in love with whom, a thing or two about football, the most popular bands, subculture groups, and even where the city's pigeons prefer to relieve themselves.

**Ana Rukavina**  
**(May 7, 2004)**

### **30) Vjesnik Reporters Visit the DNA Laboratory of the Department of Forensic Medicine and Criminology**

**DNA analysis is the only thing that remains when all the other way of identifying mortal remains have been exhausted.**

***The identification of the Mostar airplane crash victims was difficult because the bodies had been exposed to high temperatures which destroys the DNA, pretty much in the same way the cremation process does.***

***The Zagreb DNA analysis laboratory has built quite an international reputation since it was first founded during the Homeland War, when victims from mass graves had to be identified.***

***A DNA analysis requires blood samples from family members for comparison with the genotype of the deceased.***

After the tragic airplane crash in which all nine members of the Macedonian delegation, including Boris Trajkovski, the president of the state, lost their lives on the way to Mostar, the Zagreb DNA laboratory at the Department for Forensic Medicine and Criminology was tasked with the identification of their mortal remains. The laboratory was chosen over some German and French laboratories, which were the initial candidates. Many found this choice somewhat unexpected, but those in the know knew better. According to the Macedonian media, the Zagreb laboratory was the first and the most obvious choice.

Vjesnik reporters went to the laboratory to see why. Our host was Assistant Professor Milovan Kubat who gave us a tour of the premises.

"Our colleagues from Macedonia, Serbia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina learnt the ABC's of DNA analysis at our laboratory. Recently, we have received applications from four other countries. Therefore, the call for help from the Macedonian Department for Forensic Medicine did not come as a surprise," Kubat said. In this particular case, it was very difficult to identify the mortal remains because the bodies had been exposed to high temperatures, which normally have a major impact on the DNA. After cremation, for instance, it is impossible to establish the DNA, because it is gone.

"In this particular case, samples were sent to the Zagreb laboratory as well as to the Laboratory of the International Commission for Missing Persons in Sarajevo. After we received samples of blood from the victims' family members, it took us a very short time to identify the remaining eight victims, given that one of the victims had already been recognized and identified," Kubat told us. Needless to say, the results were compatible with the subsequent results from Sarajevo.

The Zagreb DNA Laboratory was founded ten years ago, during the Homeland War. "At that time we had started performing autopsies on the first war victims. It was immediately clear that some of the cases could not be solved with classic medical methods. A decision was taken to found a DNA laboratory," Kubat told us. He took a course in forensic medicine in Germany under Professor Bernd Brinkmann and returned to Zagreb where the laboratory started its operations in the spring of 1994.

"Still today, more than 90 percent of our work is identification of mortal remains belonging to war victims. By now we have identified approximately 350 bodies using DNA analysis," Kubat pointed out, and added that similar laboratories also exist in Split and Osijek.

The whole identification process starts when a grave is located. The bodies are exhumed and the identification process starts with the involvement of a four member team: a forensic pathologist, a dentist, a radiologist, and an anthropologist. "We rarely find soft tissue on these

mortal remains. Most of the time, we are working on skeletal remains. The identity of a person can be established, for instance, by the victim's dental status during life, compared with their postmortem dental status, or from any existing X-ray images of fractures to the skeleton, etc.," Kubat explained. But, if a war victim's identity cannot be established by any of the classic methods, the only possible solution is a DNA analysis.

To make sure the process is successful, DNA samples must be taken from all family members of the missing person, their genotypes have to be established and then matched against the victim's. "DNA analysis is a matching exercise. That is why we have sometimes had to search the whole of Croatia to find the victim's family. Sometimes the families are refugees living abroad so it has taken cooperation at the highest levels in order to locate the victim's family members." In such cases we have relied on the police and the State Office for Prisoners of War and Missing Persons which is part of the Ministry of the Family, Veterans' Affairs and Intergenerational Solidarity, headed by Colonel Ivan Grujić.

Dr. Kubat also shared with us stories about criminal cases which have been closed, even after they were thought to have been unsolvable. He remembered the case of a criminal from Varaždin, who was eventually caught because an old drop of blood identified him as the perpetrator of a crime, as well as a murderer who has been found guilty and convicted based on a positive sperm match.

**Ana Rukavina**  
**(March 18, 2004)**