

The Gjilan/Gnjilane City Park

The City Park project restored what was once a park to a new city park. At over one hectare, the new park is a major resource for Gjilan. With walks, benches, shaded areas, tree plantings, a large playground, and playing areas, it is Gjilan's main park and recreation area. Balkan Sunflowers implemented the project under the UNDP VERP program, funded by the European Union, with further major support from UNMIK and the International Organization for Migration TMK program.



Most trees were cut down in the early 1990s; the park was neglected until restored in 2000.

“As a result of the conflict in Kosovo and compounded years of neglect, the Gjilan Municipal Park is overgrown, littered with trash and debris, and in overall disrepair. The entire park is strewn with litter, two areas have

particularly heavy concentrations of waste. These areas have become illegal dumping sites. Throughout the park, grass and weeds are overgrown. There are fallen trees and standing snags, as well as scattered deposits of dead brush on the ground.” From the UNDP VERP program project proposal.

BSF volunteer Hugo Ortega, from Australia, saw the need for a park and began an intense three-month effort to find the funding. With commitments from the UNDP VERP program, UNMIK, and IOM supporting the large fence construction element, as part of a training program with TMK, the project could begin. Three months later, 2 November 2000, the park opened on time and on budget.



Welding and grinding the fences.



The land was cleaned, sculpted, planted; fences and stairs were installed.



The base of a never built swimming pool became a football practice area.



At the groundbreaking, Dr. Bernard Kouchner, UN Kosovo head, plants a tree.



Walks and park benches throughout the one hectare park area.



The children's playground included sand pit, climbing toys, swings.



Kamer Asllani, co-manager of the project front center; Hugo Ortega at the rear left.



Playground swings being constructed.



Walkway with playground in the background



The banner reads "Peace in Kosovo".



OPINION/LETTERS



Cartoon by Danziger. *My Ad Seems to Claim That Rats May Be Bureaucrats*

based energy conservation; anything that makes us more efficient is all to the good and saves not only natural resources but also money. But don't expect such efforts to have a noticeable influence on sea ice, glaciers or the ongoing rise of sea levels.

And don't count on a hydrogen economy to help us reduce the use of fossil fuels. On the contrary, producing hydrogen requires prodigious amounts of energy from fossil fuels or nuclear reactors, making it costly as well.

So if human activities do lead to a slight warming of the climate in this century, it makes more sense to adapt and enjoy the warmer winters than bankrupt our economy and damage the economic system of the world.

The writer is emeritus professor of environmental sciences at the University of Virginia and a former director of the U.S. Weather Satellite Service. He contributed this comment to the International Herald Tribune.

EDITOR

'Mad Cow' Disease

he report "Mad Cow Disease and Sheep" (Aug. 31):

...needs clarification. Prions are normal proteins present in human body whose role is unknown. It is an agent (PrPres or PrPsc) that has as an infectious agent, but of for this.

...here any proof that bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE or "mad cow") is caused by abnormal prion transmitted to man — or any creature — as a variant of "mad cow disease" or any other

...by John Collinge and his Prion Unit of Britain's Health Council, cited in the position, as is the statistical "a maximum of 136,000 to

half a million cases of (human) vCJD" will occur eventually in Britain.

The search for the cause of CJD, transmissible spongiform encephalopathy, BSE and prion diseases has been going on for nearly four decades without success. The incubation periods for these diseases are unknown and there is no therapy.

The Nobel Prize has been awarded twice for the same product, the slow-virus (D. Carleton Gajdusek) cum prion (Stanley Prusiner), whose physiological, infective or any role is unproven to this day.

There are, however, lots of circumstantial evidence and many theories and suppositions, which one hopes will eventually resolve these issues.

SERGE DUCKETT, Philadelphia.

The writer is emeritus professor of neuropathology, Jefferson Medical College of the Thomas Jefferson University.

In a Kosovo City Park, A Small Ray of Hope

By Rand Engel

PRISTINA, Kosovo — At the groundbreaking ceremony for the restoration of the Gjlilane city park, Bernard Kouchner, the head of the United Nations mission here, said, "This is the happiest day of my life in Kosovo." Dr. Kouchner was moved by a gleam of hope from Gjlilane. In a highly visible project, Albanians and Serbs were to work together.

The ceremony included Hugo Ortega, 23, an Australian volunteer aid worker, who doggedly put

his. Good, he said, that will be better protection than the peace-keeping force KFOR can provide.

We met with Shaban Mustiu, the Gjlilane area spokesman and chief of staff for the KPC. We said that we hoped to have Serbian participation in the park project. Good, he said, we want to work with minorities, as long as they were not individuals involved in the ethnic cleansing. This was not going as we expected. Would he meet with the Serbian spokesperson? Of course, Mr. Mustiu said.

MEANWHILE

this project together. Mr. Ortega had been introduced to the United Nations Development Program, the lead donor, by Major Dan LePage of the U.S. Army. Major LePage proposed a work crew of mixed ethnicity.

"No way," we said. "You're insane." Of course, Mr. Ortega and our volunteer organization Balkan Sunflowers were fully committed to the concept — sometime in the future. We believed it impossible now; we knew too many widows, as well as fathers and sons, who had lost loved ones in last year's "ethnic cleansing." Many of our work crew had suffered awful losses. All have painful memories from the 10 years of Belgrade-imposed apartheid and the three-month terror. Wounds are still raw, hatreds close to the surface. But we agreed to explore the possibility.

Mr. Ortega had begun to work with Kosovar refugees in Australia. There he met Luljeta, a Kosovar Albanian refugee, and they became engaged. In November they came to Kosovo and joined Balkan Sunflowers. They moved into the Konvikt Center, refugee housing in Gjlilane, not far from Luljeta's village; here they engaged in children's activities: English classes, play, art, sports and nursery school. Totally immersed, Mr. Ortega learned Albanian as few relief workers do.

We expected the mixed work crew idea to fall apart rapidly when it bumped into reality. We met the Serbian spokesman in Gjlilane to discuss participation of Serbian workers. Yes, he said, he wanted that. We said that the work force would include a crew from the Kosovo Protection Corps, veterans of the Kosovo Liberation Army that had fought against Ser-

We interviewed prospective workers at a U.S. KFOR station near the Serbian neighborhood. Few came. No Serb showed up for the first few days of work. That part of the project seemed over. Mr. Ortega could concentrate on the park itself, a major project with 100 workers.

Then Major Michael Foley found three Serbs who wanted to work. We admired their bravery and feared for their safety. Mr. Ortega held two meetings with the Albanian workers. He said that in Gjlilane, in this park, these workers would help decide the future. Mr. Mustiu said that the KPC supported a mixed-ethnicity work crew.

The workers had the opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions. One former KLA member had lost family during the ethnic cleansing terror campaign. He nevertheless wanted a future without hatred. Another veteran, whose father and brother were killed, said that he was willing to plant a tree with a Serb.

People said there would be trouble if they recognized a criminal. When Mr. Ortega said the first three Serbian workers were women the tension dissolved; in that moment, the workers realized they could make this first step. During the women's first days on the crew, Albanian workers often asked them, sometimes in Serbian, if they were all right, or if they needed water or food.

It is possible there will be setbacks. We are nevertheless moved by the courage of these people. Small steps are being taken in Kosovo, despite the fear and hatred that continue to haunt so many.

The writer, the Kosovo coordinator for Balkan Sunflowers, contributed this comment to the International Herald Tribune.

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