

Mafia artistic publications

"You can have the cake and you can eat it"

You can't have the cake and eat it.

In Macedonia, where are living just a little more than 2 million people, with the publication activity are dealing over 200 publishing houses, a figure that is as astonishing, as it is absurd at the same time. Therefore, question arises: Why is this great interest for publishing houses? The answer is short and simple: it is a good opportunity to make money with little effort.

Halimi Shkllzen

Macedonia is the only state in the Balkans (and certainly beyond) where the government give support to the publishing of the literary works. Ministry of Culture for each year dedicates a very large share of cash and after the application delivered by the publishing houses, establishes a Commission composed of three members (two Macedonian and Albanian) for sharing the amount. Often for the Commission members are proposed individuals that have no single relation with the literature or individuals who do not have enough capacity to assess what has value and what hasn't.

In this process there is much politics, as members of Commission are proposed by the ruling parties, which, of course, ensure that the publishing houses that are close to the ruling parties benefit most. This, at the same time is a good opportunity for misusing (the means) camouflaged with perfection.

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on the book market, they are publishers which are almost unreal, they exist only to compete in various competitions and to gain euro more."

The same opinion about the large number of publishing houses has Selajdin Salih, one of the best writers of the young generation in Macedonia, who lives and works in Tetovo.

"The Ministry of Culture does not stimulate the ones who write, but those who become rich by the writers' work, so many publishers, who instead of being part of the market, receive honorariums of the real writers, become rich, while the writers suffering for the most basic things in life.

Meantime we have some publishers that whenever the time comes for the contests they make noise in defending of "national values", while the goal is to "absorb" as much as possible money from the Ministry of Culture. But they do not read even the books they print, because their aim is not the book publishing, but the benefit," says Salih Selajdin.

For the year 2009 the Macedonian Ministry of Culture spent over 65 million MKD (about 1 million euros) on publications, magazines, electronic publications and projects of associations, most of which as usual, presents great interest and "the real war", in which, as it happens every year, are included influential people, representatives of ruling parties, friends and members of the committee that evaluates and distributes the means. It is understood that in this "war" are many calculations, many promises and everything that it takes just to manage to get a great part of the general amount that is dedicated for this activity. And how are shared these tools, which in fact are given means up-to-date and never justified their initial aim, the culture and literature, especially the Albanian, rather just help to the publishers to earn without any effort.

Usually, publishing houses are competing with many titles, from 1 up to 40 titles, while the allocated funds range from 50 thousand (750 euros) up to over 200 thousand MKD (about three thousand euros). The financials (especially in recent years) are allocated according the close relation that publishing house has with members of the Committee, as well as according to the publisher's political affiliation.

Thus, many publishing houses did not have financial support on this year' competition, simply because the committee members evaluated that they aren't close to the ruling parties. We should emphasize that this was happening in the past, the present opposition at that time was ruling party. One of the publishing houses that do not have support for any of the titles is the publishing house "Konica press" from Skopje. The owner of this house, Halil Berisha, says that they sent application for the competition program for 2010 with seven titles from well-known authors in Albanian

literature. "Unfortunately, they did not give support for any of the titles. It is understood that it is impossible to support all editions, but they should do a little effort to help those who have really high quality publications, behind which are recognized people. Example, according to Halil Berisha, the publishing House "Konica press" did not get support for "Lek Dukagjini' Kanun", then "Anthology of modern Albanian story in Macedonia, poetry by the poet Sali Bashota etc. Unless you are close to any of the members of the committee or if someone from the top position dictates you the titles with which you should compete, then you are in big trouble.

Some time before, Osman Ahmeti, director of the publishing house "Sub-cult" as a revolt erased his publishing house from the Central register of enterprises, he could not agree with mixing politics and publishing activity as well as intrigues done in the name of politic. "Last year, the commission for evaluation of titles, the two books evaluated as very funny, if not offensive. But this year, even though I sent five titles, none was taken into account, says Osman Ahmeti. Was forced to close the publishing house, he adds, simply not to make any more expenses in vain, to pay state about my obligations that are necessary regardless if the publishing house is working or not. If there is no proof that you are a member or fellow of the ruling party, and then you work in vain, adds Ahmeti. You won't get support even if you apply with for example, some Ismail Kadare's book. This is the horrible reality, the reality of the classic mafia as it is not a secret, and everyone knows who has the biggest benefit, especially in the last two years when this political party is ruling. In such a constellation, you loose the meaning and importance of the books, expresses his anger, Osman Ahmeti.

To justify the means allocated by the Ministry of Culture, the publisher has obligation to deliver to the Ministry of Culture 30 copies of titles and 50 other to the University Library. At the same the mafia phenomena begins right here, as with only 80 copies you perform every obligation you have and the commission will deposited on bank-account of the publisher the agreed amount of money.

Albanian publishers (the situation with the Macedonian publishers is even worse) often publish works of foreign authors or authors of the earlier periods, titles from the classic literature, those authors to whom they have no obligation to pay honorarium. The benefit is good as some of the Albanian "publisher" support it with the proverb "You can have the cake and you can eat it."

The formula is simple: print 100 copies, even though usually on the books are written the circulation figure of 1.000 copies. So, 50 samples submitted

to the University Library, the Ministry of Culture gets 30 samples and 20 remain for the publisher, who needs them only to expose in a show-case or on a stand as a proof that title was published.

An owner of a printing house, who for commercial reasons, prefers to remain anonymous, says that often in his printing house are printing or have been printing various publications in small print run of 100 copies. "At first I did not understand why, but later learned even though, it had nothing to do with me. I'm simply interested to get payment for my service", says the owner of the printing house, adding that now, with new technologies for the minimum print runs you use photo copy.

This is also confirmed by Halil Berisha, who is also an excellent designer and is well informed about the publishing and computer technology. He says today's new technology enables the rapid preparation of a circulation of 100 copies, which is not very different from publishing to printing. According to him, the cost for 100 copies is around 9000 MKD (around 150 euros).

A simple math says that if a publishing house for five titles spends around one hundred thousands MKD, and if the house for these titles spends about 45 thousands MKD (5 of 9000) or about 750 euro, then its pure profit is 450 thousands MKD or about 7500 euros, amount that is enough to buy a new car. (Continuous)

Follows: The authors, publishers' hostages

Box

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