

## Mafia in art publications (2)

### The authors, publishers' hostages

Generally those few authors who publish at almost any publishing house do not have right to raise the issue of honorarium even if his work is funded by the Ministry of Culture

### Halimi Shkëlzen

For publication of circulation just for overview, Zekerija Ibrahim, says "Calculation of a printing house, for serious publisher says it is beneficial if from a book is published in more than 300 samples, 500 samples is optimal, while the average of our market is 1000 samples for a book which will be present in the market for at least 3-4 years. But for purposes of profit "the publisher" has to print only 50 copies to justify the means they have received."

Although the Ministry of Culture says they have control of circulation, intrigues of this kind and publishers are never penalized, and perhaps it is technically impossible to control all publishing houses.

Part of the intrigue in the financing of literary publications is the segment called "family publishing houses", which are increasing the material benefits. There are many cases that as the founder of the publishing house and at the same time trader, are presented his wife, then the elder son, daughter in law from the younger son, daughter. So, within a family there are six (6) publishing house.

We can only the benefits provided they publish only to three titles. With publishing of 18 titles according to the Macedonian standards it would be more than good enough for a family of six members to live without concern throughout the year. And worst of all, is that there is no transparency in the allocation of resources. Only titles are published in the media, not the amounts for each title.

Zekirja Ibraimi for this issue says that "the means are allocated by Commission established at the Ministry of Culture, while the way of allocation is completely not-transparent. No one knows why, is not financed the Macedonian translation of the first novel in Albanian literature, "Bardha e Temalit, not even the costs for printing and the poetry book of some unknown author gets quite enough money to buy a car with them. As this is only up to the decision of those in the commission at the Ministry of Culture," says Ibrahim.

Selajdin Salih says "The practice has proven that so far they allocated the support only to two or three publishers, who, ironically, are the noisiest and the ones who allegedly criticize. They have no moral right to criticize the Ministry of Culture, as they received hundreds of thousands of euros from it, but not books or the authors. As it is developing one day every writer will become publisher of its books. Thus, at least, they will not be prey to publishers. It should be added, that the Ministry of Culture is not transparent too, for many years they are publishing only the titles of books, but no amount of financial resources allocated for that book. One book is funded with hundreds of thousands MKD, and a serious book with ridiculous amount of money. Why does this Ministry do not make the figures public? As then it would be visible who has benefited. Then everything will come to the surface. Not to mention about the difference in the amount of money allocated to the Macedonian and Albanian culture. The difference is drastic. Albanians from whole budget do not get even 5 percent. That's why this Ministry does not publish the figures," says Sali.

For the moment it seems that there is no mechanism to control this abuse, as if there was we would probably be witnesses of such case.

Ministry of Culture, says Ibrahim, is in the hands of ethnic Macedonian state, while the Albanian culture, Albanian books remain completely controlled by persons who are incompetent to do that. They are usually people that are not there because of publishing experience or as they are familiar with the book values, but simply because of political expediency to power, thinks Ibrahim.

But Sali Saljadin has an opinion that is different. He adds that "The means should not be allocated for books, which often appear on the lists of financed books, but the money should be allocated to the books we need for the culture: different encyclopedias, dictionaries, serious studies which should be chosen by a committee composed of eminent experts, then complete works, translated books (verified translators), but also valuable reprint of the works (why not to re-publish Iliad and Odysseus, the complete works of Konica etc.) of course in cooperation with Tirana and Prishtina. It is because these books are essential to Albanian culture, as the literature and culture are indivisible and have several creative sensibilities, which represent wealth for our literary and cultural system. "

But this is not the way how Albanian pseudo-publisher think, the ones that are not interested in opening the book shops (except for the book shop "Vatra" in Skopje), no distribution network for the book, as that is not their aim. Albanian publishing houses exist only to compete on the contest of the

Ministry of Culture and not to distribute the published books.

In the period of 20-years long transition phase (that is still on going) in Macedonia there were and still are existing pseudo-publisher who abuse young creators, or those who publish for the first time. These young people are prey to the publishers, who without any quality check, the guide them to pay the "sacrifice", the cost of printing press of 1000 copies, while calculating the costs for critics, lector, DTP and so on, amount up to 2000 euro, even though the real price should not be more then 1000 euros.

Generally those few authors who publish in almost any publishing house have no right to raise the issue of the honorarium even if their work is funded by the Ministry of Culture. It is well known that there are two or three publishers ("Logos-A", "Vatra" and one other) who remain faithful to agreements, even the symbolic, and the editor-author report.

"Creators have become hostage to publishers. You should emphasize their rights, if you want to publish something. At the serious publishing house this is regulated with agreement between two parties, but at the fictive publisher this concept is unknown," says Ibrahim Zekirja, while Salajdin Saliu adds "as long as the cultural policies are govern by those who do not read, but only print, we will only be spectators of improvisations, will become spectators to publishers' maneuvers that guided by personal benefits.

And worst of all this evil is very poor quality of the Albanian book. Therefore, it is imposed the need for urgent change of this practice. Not to allow the publishers to compete, but authors. Then let the authors to decide which publisher will publish their books. Or, perhaps have to act as is practice everywhere in the world; where state is not funding the artistic books, but they are left to the competition, where the ones who know to proved better books to the public, survive. In this way we will create order that will bring high quality art. At the same time we would get into "war" to get the best authors bestseller works and, of course, would be able to establish new relation between the publisher and the author. Of course, we get rid of the politics' influence in publications, which has done irreparable damage especially in the Albanian publication. At the same time we will finally put end to the mafia operations that publishers, who often, without shame say that they are involved on behalf of the population. With the right Selajdin Sali says that those who have been chosen do not know that culture is above all, as the "father" of the EU, Jean Monnet said: "If I start again, then I will start with the culture. But, in this context, Zekirja Ibrahim says, "If something is published without politic interference, would be a great success. That should get the real value.

In such a horrible reality, where the book is subject to "laws" of mafia, it is difficult to do more, because this is exactly the mafia's truth. There is no other way to protest, except as Osman Ahmeti did, decided to erase his publishing house "Sub-cult" from the central database of companies in Macedonia. It is a painful and horrible protest. (End)

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