

**PEACE WINE** In Eran Riklis' 2008 movie "Lemon Tree," a Palestinian woman defends her lemon tree grove against a new Israeli defense minister who wants it fenced off because it could become a hiding place for terrorists. That was a movie. Sadly, day-to-day life in the West Bank interlocks often with such fiction.

Now, in an effort to revive dialogue between divided people and to generate jobs, Italian wine expert Riccardo Cotarella and the Italian NGO Via are working together to upgrade an ancient Salesian winery near Bethlehem. Italian wine publications report that five acres of land located behind the walls of the monastery (at high risk of expropriation by Israeli authorities) are now being cultivated. **"The vineyards will be divided between Palestine and Israel, but will produce different qualities of wine under one label: Cremisan," wrote the Italy's Wine-News website.**

These small steps towards peace - part of an effort to better the lot of the local population - are being undertaken in one of oldest settlements in Palestinian, dating to the Bronze Age. The development of the Cantina Cellars winery helps boost employment where joblessness is endemic unemployment. **There are 15 full-time employees, plus seasonal workers, in addition to artisans and traders. Though Muslims oversee most of the work, they refrain from wine during Ramadan.**

The harvest period lasts about two months, from late July - with the first white grapes from the Salesian House of Beit Gemal - until end of September when the grapes ripen in the indigenous zone, Shaffa. The products are marketed directly at the farm shop and also indirectly by five distributors that deliver to restaura-

teurs, hoteliers and shopkeepers in Bethlehem, Jerusalem, Galilee and Ramallah, and in the Jordanian capital of Amman.

**Some of the grapes will be grown on land owned by Palestinian, who will received guaranteed income in return. Two Arab Christian workers - trained at the University of San Michele in Trento - will join the Muslims at the vineyard in an effort to bolster interfaith dialogue.** Proceeds from the sale of wine will help assist the 1,650 youths who participate Salesian Institute educational programs. In its Bethlehem technical school, 60 percent of pupils are Muslim; the remaining 40 percent disadvantaged Arab Christians.

**WHITE ELEPHANTS** For some months now, the attention of the Burmese Government hasn't been on the separatist Karen, calls for free elections from exiled opponents, or on the scorching destitution of its own people. Instead, according to London's "The Independent," the junta has white elephants on its mind. When timber haulers claimed to have seen one in a jungle hillside near Ngwe Saung, on Myanmar's west coast, junta leader Than Shwe "dispatched a company of some 50 soldiers, with an entourage of elephant handlers and veterinarians armed with tranquillizer darts" to track down the beast. For centuries, white elephants have been revered as symbols of power and good luck in Asian and Pacific countries. Wrote "The Independent": "The legend of the white elephant originates in tales of the birth of Buddha: a white elephant reputedly appeared before his mother and presented her with a sacred lotus flower. The ancient Burmese kings believed that white elephants were found only during

**CHINESE IMMERSION** Several dozen students with a special interest in social and political dynamics of China will find themselves studying hard in Turin this summer. **The fourth edition of the Summer School TOChina, run in collaboration with the political science faculty of the University of Turin, will be held in the northern city from June 28 through July 9 and include programs on economics, politics, human rights and the challenges of globalization.**

Since 2007, professionals and students have been meeting in classrooms to discuss and reflect on issues regarding China and its relationship to the world. Last

the reign of good kings and that the possession of one would help a country prosper. Conversely, the death of one of these creatures could spell disaster. The demise of King Thibaw's favorite white elephant - who lived in extravagant surroundings, adorned with diamonds and fed from a gold trough - was soon followed by the monarch's ousting by British colonizers in 1885."

This explains why Than Shwe and his junta military brethren want to find the elephant, if it's out there, and bring it to the nation's new capital at Naypydaw. "Amid



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year, the contingent numbered 35 students from four continents and 15 countries, including the United States, China, Great Britain, France, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Russia and Taiwan.

**TOChina is part of a larger organization called TOAsia, also based in Turin, which sees its mission as to coordinate institutional and academic activities relating to China, India and the Middle East.** An India program similar to the one on China runs from July 12 to July 16, also in Turin (move fast, the India application process closes June 4).

Meanwhile, the organization is already preparing for a TOMiddle East version of its

the chorus of international criticism, the regime may be hoping that the capture of the elephant will bestow legitimacy on its rule," wrote the London paper.

But historian Thant Myint-U is skeptical. "Old symbols of the monarchy still hold some sway, and the possession of a white elephant might boost the confidence of some," he says, "but I think for most Burmese people today, just a little more spending on health and education would be a much more welcome sign of enlightened government," said the historian and author Thant Myint-U.

Still, this would be an auspicious year to find a white elephant. Burma's first general election in 20 years will be held later in 2010, but Western governments have already dismissed the vote as a sham. Recently announced election laws forbid the detained opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi from running for office. Her National League for Democracy, faced with the choice of expelling its leader or boycotting the election, has chosen to boycott it.

national immersion programs for the summer of 2011. "The Middle East," reads the organization's website ([www.toasia.it](http://www.toasia.it)), "is a crucial area for Europe and the world, especially from a geopolitical point of view... especially after the 11 of September 2001, Middle Eastern politics has become crucial for foreign relations and critical to for the understanding of regional changes and dynamics."

**SERBIAN 'SNUFF'** "Our movie is social commentary. It's intense and difficult family drama, which reflects the struggle of trying to survive in a country like Serbia, battered by years of war and violence. It's a metaphor for our deepest and sincerest emotions. The violence in the film is the only way we could find of making everything more realistic." The words are those of Serbian director Srdjan Spasojevic, whose film "A Serbian Movie" ("Srpski Film") premiered at South by Southwest Film Festival, an annual event in Texas.

Spasojevic, little-known at best, insisted that the sexual extremes portrayed in the film were a reaction to problems that exist but that most pretend don't.

"A Serbian Movie" is hard-core, at times ramming up against snuff movies themes (snuff movies, essential underground violence and death videos, have a long history in the United States). Milos (Srdjan Todorovic), the hero of the film, is a former porn star trying to make ends meet for his family. Out of the blue, a former colleague named Vukmir (Sergej Trifunovic) offers him a chance to make one last movie whose success will ensure his security. But Vukmir, a powerful and disturbing figure, literally invades Milos' life. He's Milos drawn into a maelstrom of unbelievable cruelty

and mayhem devised by his employer, who know "directs" his destiny. Vukmir pushes his actor beyond violence itself and into acts of necrophilia and pedophilia. "In order to escape the living cinematic hell he's put into and save his family life, Milos will have to sacrifice everything - his pride, his morality, his sanity, and maybe even his own life," reads a PR release for the film.

Described by some as more provocative than Lars Von Trier's "Antichrist" and by others as brutal and shocking, but also smart and cynical, the film is a cut above films such as "Saw" and "Hostel," to which it's been compared.

"The voices coming out of Serbian independent cinema are daring and try to push film beyond its established borders, where it rarely has the courage to go," said Mitch Davis, a co-director of Montreal Fantasia Film Festival, which will be screened. "This is one of the most raw and transgressive films I have ever seen. We're not talking about the kind of violence you see on the news and forget in five minutes. This film puts people at the center of cruelty. It shows them stripped of all filters and even averse to them."

Serbian artists are no strangers to provocation. Tanja Ostojic came up with women's blue panties spangled with European stars while performance artist Marina Abramovic cut herself and lets pythons roam over her body.

"A Serbian Movie," so far without a distributor at home, will try its luck at international festivals. The movie is the vein of the German director Michael Haneke's 1997 kidnap-murder drama "Funny Games," a fierce parody of the psychotic, which seemed to ask its viewers: "Is this really what you want?"

(Sanja Lucic)