

OHR BiH Media Round-up, 3/10/2002

Headlines in Print Media

Oslobodjenje: Lagumdžija claims Behmen to be BiH Presidency member – Alija is, however, the first among the Bosniaks!; Paddy Ashdown for Oslobodjenje – There is no alternative to reforms

Dnevni Avaz: Plavsic pleads guilty; Ashdown visits northeastern Bosnia – Banja Luka and Brcko will overcome disputes

Dnevni List: Meeting of expert group for infectious diseases of Federation Ministry of Health: Original DTP vaccines to arrive soon

Vecernji List: Croatian President was responding to Milosevic's cross-examination: Mesic stood attack

Glas Srpski: RS Tax Administration claims 150 million KM of tax money evaded; Biljana Plavsic pleads guilty

Nezavisne Novine: Clifford Bond – BiH citizens should vote for future not for past; Exclusive story: RS Government gave Banjalucka Bank to Verano Motors as a gift

Vecernje Novosti: Biljana Plavsic: I am guilty

Blic: Plavsic pleads guilty; Disputable sell of Kristal bank; Clifford Bond: Vote without fear of war and divisions; Wolfgang Petritsch: Victory of reformers-a chance to BiH

Nacional: Sarovic: I will work in interest of RS and BiH; Seselj offers a deal to Kostunica; Milosevic: If I had had control over the JNA, there would not have been the war; Biljana Plavsic pleads guilty for war crimes in Bosnia

Pre-election news/messages/commentaries

"Saturday is polling day — from Sunday, every day for four years, we will be living with the consequences of how Bosnia and Herzegovina votes on 5 October. During those four years, the future of this region will be decided. By the next elections, Slovenia will be in the European Union, and Croatia at its gates. Where BiH will be depends on the government you elect on Saturday. So it's an important weekend. I have spent the last few weeks criss-crossing the country talking directly to voters. I have made it very clear that I am not supporting individual candidates or parties, but policies and actions. But there is no alternative to reform. What's clear is that if we keep on doing what we're doing, we will keep on getting what we've got. The choice on Saturday is stark: reform or fail," the High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown**, emphasized at the beginning of an editorial written exclusively for **Oslobodjenje** (p 3, mentioned on the front page).

The international community does not believe that the nationalists will take BiH towards Europe, said US Ambassador to BiH Clifford Bond in a special address to media ahead of the Saturday's elections. *"The nationalists in the governments would not be considered legitimate partners,"* Bond emphasized reminding that a poor turnout sometimes might mean the victory of the extremists and nationalists. (Oslobodjenje, front page, Dnevni Avaz, p 2, mentioned on the front page, Vecernji List, front and p 3, Blic, p 7)

Glas Srpski(p 3) and **Nezavisne Novine**(front page, p3), quote Bond, as saying that people should vote at these elections without the fear of a new war. He said that the US fully supports the territorial integrity of BiH, the peace on the Balkans and European future of BiH, adding that the US and EU showed BiH a way of accession to the PfP and Euro-Atlantic integration. *"These elections are extremely important, because when it comes to the international integration process, many issues for BiH will be resolved in the next four years. That is why I call for BiH citizens to vote for better future"*, said Bond.

The BiH Foreign Minister, Zlatko Lagumdžija, who is in an official visit to Great Britain, met in London on Wednesday with the British Prime Minister, Tony Blair. Lagumdžija informed his host on the current political situation in the country particularly in light of the upcoming elections. The two officials emphasized that the October 5 elections would decide on the BiH future and they therefore had a crucial importance for a faster

country's moving towards Europe. In the course of the visit, an agreement on the protection of investment was signed between the two countries. (Oslobodjenje, p 3, Dnevni Avaz, p 10)

In an interview with **Nezavisne Novine**(p 6), **Lagumdžija** said that BiH has to take a path of reforms. "Implementation of reforms is often very painful, but we have to go through that phase if we want to join the process of European integration. For the first time, we have made a clear and precise plan called 'Jobs and Justice', which is a sort of a contract between the IC and BiH authorities", said Lagumdžija.

"The upcoming elections are of the historic significance because they will be for the first time organized by the local authorities, they will decide on the next four-year term and they represent the end of a post-Dayton era in BiH," the former High Representative and current Austrian Ambassador at the international organizations in Geneva, Wolfgang Petritsch, said in an interview with APA news agency. He emphasized that following the elections a new era would begin in BiH, and it was therefore very important the pro-reform political parties gain the power. Petritsch added that he considered the Alliance for Change political parties and not the nationalist SDA, SDS and HDZ as such reform-oriented political forces. (Oslobodjenje, p 6, Nezavisne Novine, p 3, Blic, p 7)

Vecernji List (page 4, by Zoran Kresic, titled 'Jean-Pierre Bercot: International Community does not have its favorites') and **Dnevni List** (page 12, **Fena** report, titled 'Jean-Pierre Bercot called on citizens to vote') carry reports from yesterday's press conference of international organizations held in Mostar. VL says that **'Jean-Pierre Bercot, the Deputy High Representative and Head of OHR South, called on citizens to turn out at the elections, claiming that the International Community will work with any party that wins at the elections.'** The article also says that **'Bercot rejected allegations saying that the International Community has its favorites among the parties'**. Bercot stated: **'The International Community will not interfere in the election procedure. The choice is yours and we shall respect it.'** Replying to a journalist's question about an indirect support that Clifford Bond, an American Ambassador in BiH, gave to some parties, Bercot stated that **'diplomats have a right to represent stands of their Governments in that way too.'**

Slobodna Dalmacija (page 15, by Blanka Magas) carries article with title "International Community will not reject 'unwanted' election winners: 'National' parties acceptable, but only if they are constructive". The dily learned from a source close to OHR that "with pre-election opinion poll results increasing in favour of 'national' parties, in spite of efforts of international community to put 'reform forces', i.e. SDP, ahead, the High Representative **Paddy Ashdown** decided to consider possibility for 'national' parties, if voters decide so, to form the government in next four years. (...) Certain NGOs, that are installed in BiH because evaluation of political condition, have warned that it would not be wise to put anathema on 'national' parties without reasonable arguments, and exclude them from government, for that could lead to higher national homogenisation, which could result as boomerang at next elections, what is obviously happening now. The most direct ones were officials of ESI (European Stability Initiative)", the author said. Magas also reminded that new people, in different environment and atmosphere of pre-election rallies, represent 'national' parties, with their rhetoric radically changed.

Dnevni List (page 5) carries that **HDU, HSS, People's Party Working for Prosperity, NHI** and **Croat Block of Rightists** sent a letter to **OHR** and Ambassadors of the **Peace Implementation Council Steering Board**, as witnesses of the Dayton Peace Agreement and the BiH Constitutions, in which they demand that the aforementioned institutions do not allow that Dragan Covic, an HDZ candidate for the position of the Croat member of the BiH Presidency, represents the Croat people because the Constitution clearly defines that the BiH Presidency make one Croat, one Bosniak and one Serb.

Vecernji List (page 17, by Zdenko Jurilj) reads that SDP President Zlatko **Lagumdžija** and President of SBiH Haris **Silajdzic** will make coalition after the elections, and HSS, NHI, ProENS, Economic Bloc HDU-Za boljitak and BPS will join them. However, as a counter-balance to these parties, that International Community is supporting, a block of 'national' parties is expected to be created. **"Regardless of vote turn out, all party representatives will be requested to co-operate with International Community in BiH. It was Paddy Ashdown who sent such message, wrapped in diplomatic vocabulary. Political party leaders are aware that the only true government is OHR and International Community"**, wrote the author.

The man most likely to become the next RS President, nationalist candidate **Dragan Cavic**, says he is on a mission from God, **AFP** reported on Thursday. His "holy task", he says repeatedly, is to protect the Serb-run entity in post-war Bosnia, the Republika Srpska (RS), from any merger with the Bosniak-Croat Federation, the other autonomous half of the country. Cavic, a 44-year-old economist and member of the nationalist Serb Democratic Party (SDS), became vice-president in 2000 elections and is tipped to win the race for the RS presidency on Saturday. **"The**

preservation of Republika Srpska is a holy task, not only for the SDS and the future Bosnian Serb president but also for all our (Serb) people in general," he said in a recent campaign speech. The SDS was founded in the early 1990s by Radovan Karadzic, the Bosnian Serbs' political chief during the 1992-95 war. It remains the dominant party in the RS despite international pressure for a break from the nationalist past. Republika Srpska's authorities firmly reject any idea of abolishing the two separate entities despite support from Bosnian Muslim and Croat parties, which argue that the war-torn country could function better as a unified state. Both entities, linked by weak central institutions, have separate parliaments, governments, armed and police forces. But Cavic has resisted all pressure to transfer any of the entities' powers to Bosnia's weak central institutions. Republika Srpska *"was created as a reflection of political will arisen from the almost four-year long war,"* he said, adding that SDS was the *"political architect of Republika Srpska"*. In a bid to distance itself from its wartime past, the SDS cancelled Karadzic's membership last year. Karadzic and his wartime army chief, Ratko Mladic, are fugitives from the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague, where they are wanted for crimes including genocide, says the AFP story.

Alija Behmen, the SDP BiH presidential candidate at the October 5 elections, will become the next Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency, says in a statement for *Oslobodjenje* (front page, p 6) the party's leader, Zlatko Lagumdžija, mentioning the latest relevant public opinion polls. Lagumdžija thereby denied the Tuesday's *Dnevni Avaz* story that there was a spectacular plan according to which Behmen would give up the candidacy in favor of Party for BiH candidate Haris Silajdzic.

Dnevni List (pages 6-7, conducted by [Valentina Rupcic](#)) carries an interview with **Alija Behmen**, SDP candidate for Bosniak member of BiH Presidency in which he presented results that 'Alijansa' achieved in the past two years in Federation BiH, but also stating certain problems. Behmen stated that last bastion of parallelism is the Herzegovina Neretva Canton: *"Parallelism in work (in Herzegovina Neretva Canton) with double expenditures has resulted in condition of true social unrest, and paralysis of key functions in the Canton, mostly Bosniak part. (...) Government of the canton has not shown responsibility to anyone and I personally am wondering how citizens of HNC do not request to be informed about budget expenditures"*, Behmen added.

"The representatives of the international community should behave in compliance with their mission in a sovereign state such as BiH, not crossing the lines drawn out by an usual diplomatic practice. Sometimes it happens that certain diplomats come out from that framework, but the citizens should be convinced that we will raise our voices, when necessary, against such an inappropriate behavior (of the international officials). We did not lose 200,000 lives through the aggression and genocide, and resist in order to survive and live in dignity to finally be brought into question as sovereign citizens in our own country," the Party for BiH candidate for the Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency, Haris Silajdzic, said at the beginning of an interview for *Dnevni Avaz* (p 5).

Globus (page 26, by [Josip Blazevic](#)) carries an interview with **Dragan Covic**, an HDZ candidate for the position of a Croat member of the HDZ Presidency. Asked how he explains the fact that Croats are not interested in the coming elections, Covic says: *"Perhaps, Croats are sending a message that it does not make any sense to turn out at the elections if their vote does not have to decide on the election of the Croat member of the BiH Presidency or the executive and legislative authority, at all levels in the BiH Federation."* According to Covic: *"the last elections are the best example of it."* Asked as to what HDZ will do if the radical election engineering interfere in the elections, Covic said that he *"believes that this time the International Community will not advocate such ideas due to its experience during the last two years"*. Asked whether HDZ gave up the idea on the establishment of the third entity, Covic says: *"HDZ is looking for a better solution, because they (HDZ) are far from being satisfied, when this solution is in question."* Covic added that *"it is clear to HDZ that this solution should be reached through BiH institutions of this state and this means that they have to agree upon this issue with Serb and Bosniak peoples and have a partner in the International Community that will encourage all of them to find such solution"*.

War crimes

Former Republika Srpska President **Biljana Plavsic** Wednesday pleaded guilty to crimes against humanity, becoming the highest ranking official of the former Yugoslavia to acknowledge responsibility for atrocities in the Balkan wars. All other other charges against her including genocide and war crimes will be dropped when Plavsic appears again before the UN war crimes tribunal for sentencing on December 16 and 17, the prosecution announced. Plavsic Wednesday changed her initial plea of not guilty, entered in January 2001 after she turned herself in to the court.

(*Oslobodjenje*, p 7, announced on the front page, *Dnevni Avaz*, front page, p 4, **AFP**, **Glas Srpski**,

front page, **Nezavisne Novine**, p 11, **Vecernje Novosti**, p 4, **Nacional**, p 5, **Blic**, p 16, **New York Times**, **Washington Post**, **Guardian**, **Independent**, **Jutarnji List**, p 3, **Vjesnik**, front page, **Slobodna Dalmacija**, p 4, **Dnevni List**, p 9, **Vecernji List**, p 16)

Dnevni List (p 3) carries statement of Chairman of Council of Ministers of BiH **Dragan Mikerevic** that the admission of guilt of Biljana Plavsic is her personal act and "individual matter" which will not have any consequences on the RS adding that everyone is responsible for his own acts. *"Republika Srpska is planted in consciousness of its every citizen and nobody's individual responsibility will not undermine foundations of RS"*, Mikerevic said.

Armed with piles of papers, former Yugoslav President **Slobodan Milosevic**, who is standing trial at the Hague tribunal for war crimes in Croatia and Bosnia, on Wednesday started cross-examining Croatian President **Stjepan Mesic**, accusing him of having ordered, upon coming to power, the execution of a number of people, including his former fellow inmates at the Stara Gradiska prison. Milosevic continued cross-examining the witness by claiming that Mesic had been recruited first by the Croatian state intelligence service and later by the military counter-intelligence, which Mesic dismissed as "a figment of somebody's imagination". He also dismissed Milosevic's claims that he had been involved in white slave trade. Responding to Milosevic's accusations that he had personally ordered the destruction of Serb villages, Mesic said those claims had nothing to do with the facts. Milosevic attacked Mesic with questions such as whether Mesic had been more radical than Tudjman, and continued with a series of questions about crimes committed against Serbs in Croatia, the nationalist rhetoric in the Croatian parliament, the laying off of Serbs working in the police, health sector and the media. Mesic said that there had been inadmissible statements, as well as unnecessary dismissals, which had indeed caused damage to Croatia, but, he added, this should have been solved within the framework of the law-based state and not responded to with attacks on Dubrovnik, Vukovar and other towns. The president of the trial chamber, **Richard May**, intervened many times in Milosevic's cross-examination, asking that Mesic be allowed to respond and examining the relevance of Milosevic's questions for the indictment and the trial and warning Milosevic to refrain from holding political speeches. Milosevic accused Mesic that he was testifying against him to evade responsibility for crimes, as he was the second most important person in Croatia during the war. At one moment, Mesic responded that he considered Milosevic guilty of what he was charged with. Responding to Milosevic's statement that "the only question here is who is the criminal", Mesic said this was easy to agree about, and added "It is not me who is standing trial here". Answering Milosevic's questions on the involvement of the Croatian Army in the war in Bosnia, Mesic said he had not known about it but he had been told by former President **Franjo Tudjman** and the defence minister that the only troops which went to Bosnia "were volunteers, born in BiH". Milosevic then quoted statements by international politicians and reactions by the Security Council regarding the presence of Croatian Army troops in Bosnia. "The Security Council knew about it... and you, who were the parliament president, do not know and claim you did not know about it," he said. During the cross-examination the witness and Milosevic exchanged several ironic compliments. (**Vecernje novosti** p 5, **Nacional** p 5, **Blic** p 16, **Oslobodjenje**, p 7, **Dnevni Avaz**, p 22, **Glas Srpski**, p 3, **Nezavisne Novine**, p 11, **New York Times**, **Washington Post**, **The Times**, **Independent**, **Vjesnik**, pages 1-3, 7-13, **Dnevni List**, p 12, **Vecernji List**, pages 10-13, **Jutarnji List**, pages 1-6, **Slobodna Dalmacija**, pages 2-4)

Vecernji List (page 2, by Zdenko Jurilj) carries that after the October elections, SFOR special forces will start their biggest action in order to arrest **Radovan Karadzic** and **Ratko Mladic**. VL says that 5000 SFOR members will take part in this action in all parts of BiH and along the border with Montenegro. Also, the article carries that Americans will play the main role in the action and the British and French special units will also take part in this action. According to the VL source, that is close to SFOR, Karadzic and Mladic will be in The Hague by the end of this year. The source added that it is important to arrest Karadzic and Mladic at the time when the trial **against Slobodan Milosevic** is underway. The source also said that these kind of actions were not organized before, because of pre-election campaigns since they would result in homogenization of the Serb people with the radical political option and thus the security situation in BiH would be seriously aggravated. According to him, through this action Americans want to prove their military and political dominance in the region in order to soften criticisms that come from European Union, because of the American opposition to the work of the International Criminal Court. In addition, VL carries **Miroslav Toholj**, the founder of the Association for Protection of Reputation of Karadzic and Mladic, who says that *'two of them will not go alive to the Hague. Toholj added that they are both alive and that they feel well.'*

Glas Srpski quotes (p 3) the High Representative for BiH, **Paddy Ashdown**, as saying in Brcko on Wednesday that he personally will not interfere in the oil dispute between the RS and Brcko District, because the two sides have to resolve this dispute through direct negotiations. *"As far as I know the negotiations have already been going on in a very satisfactory direction and I hope that the solution to this problem will be satisfactory too"*, said Ashdown (**Blic**, p 6). **Nezavisne Novine** also reported (p 3) on the High Representative's visit to Brcko and Bijeljina where he handed in the keys of the new High School building and visited the "Sveti Vracevi" Hospital in Bijeljina. The High Representative called on BiH citizens to vote for those who want reforms. (**Dnevni Avaz**, p 2, mentioned on the front page)

The Senior Deputy High Representative, Bernard Fassier, visited the woman's association Prozorke in Prozor and the Mostar Municipality of Southeast-based Green Development Company, which produces healthy food. (**Dnevni Avaz**, p 4)

Dnevni Avaz (p 10, photo of Ashdown and young people representatives) reports that late on Tuesday, the High Representative, Paddy Ashdown, met in Tuzla Youth Home with the representatives of the young people from northeastern Bosnia.

RS-related news

Glas Srpski quotes (p 2) the Kozarski Vjesnik Editor-in-Chief, **Zoran Sovilj**, as saying at a news conference in Prijedor on Wednesday that threats to Kozarski Vjesnik and him have been intensified since the High Representative for BiH, **Paddy Ashdown**, visited the premises of Kozarski Vjesnik recently. The main reason why Sovilj held a news conference yesterday is that someone sent a leaflet which states that Sovilj is a war criminal who armed Serbs in the village of Crna Dolina. It also says that it was Sovilj who planted an explosive device before his door, because he wanted to become a new Zeljko Kopanja and hide the truth about his activities during the war. The paper reports that the leaflet has the signature of Vojislav Pelkic, the Prijedor Police Chief and the seal of the Prijedor Police. Pelkic said yesterday that his signature is forged. He said that the Police have already launched an investigation into this case and the results will be released as soon as possible.

Nezavisne Novine carries a story (pages 4, 5) about the privatization of the **Banjalucka Bank**. It says that on March 21st this year the Banjalucka Bank was sold for 100,000 KM. After this, on March 29th, the buyer, Verano Motors, gives as a gift 1,370 shares, whose nominal value is 1,370,000 KM to the RS Government, which sold the bank to Verano Motors in the first place. The paper claims that the Komercijalna Bank from Banja Luka was also given the same number of shares with the same value.

Headlines in Electronic Media

BHTV 1 (Wednesday, 1900)

- Biljana Plavsic pleaded guilty for crimes against humanity
- Milosevic's cross-examination of Mesic looked like argument
- RS Ministry of Interior received accreditation by international community
- Yet 50 hours till elections

FTV 1 (1930)

- Biljana Plavsic pleaded guilty for the crimes against humanity
- Slobodan Milosevic cross-examined Croatian President Stjepan Mesic
- 477 bodies of killed people from Srebrenica exhumed so far from mass grave in Kamenica
- If BiH Presidency fails to decide on Agency for Protection and Information head, HR is expected to decide on the issue

RTRS (1930)

- Biljana Plavsic pleads guilty for crime against humanity
- Milosevic – There were no talks on BiH dividing in Karadjordjevo
- Ashdown says agreement on oil prices might be reached through direct negotiations