

OHR's BiH Media Round-up, 13/6/2002

Print Media Headlines

Oslobodjenje: Grabovac: Behmen, Becirovic, Tuka should resign; Dutch Prime Minister in Srebrenica

Dnevni Avaz: Nijaz Durakovic: I will keep my word given to Silajdzic; Ashdown – Resignation is an honorable and courageous act

Jutarnje Novine: Federation Finance Ministry: Redundancy pay for laid off soldiers in the coming days

Dnevni List: Why were 6 policemen in HN canton suspended?; Grabovac: My resignation would be a message to criminal to continue their dirty work

Vecernji List: World Cup; Alliance to break up if Ashdown removes Grabovac

Glas Srpski: Ashdown to return apartments to former YNA soldiers? SFOR soldiers harass a child in Sanski Most

AM-SPED Affair

In a letter addressed to the Federation Finance Minister, **Nikola Grabovac**, the High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown**, said that if BiH aspires to become a European democracy, it must start to apply same standards. *"In this sort of European democracy...ministers are ultimately responsible to the people of their country for the action or inactions of their ministries. When their ministries are implicated in a major scandal, particularly a major abuse of public funds, they are expected to resign. Such resignations are not seen as an admission of guilt. Indeed, they are often seen as brave and honorable political acts."* (**Dnevni Avaz** carries the letter in full on p. 9, **Oslobodjenje** p. 5, **Jutarnje Novine** p. 6, **Dnevni List** p. 5, **Vecernji List** p. 2, **Nezavisne Novine**, p. 3)

At an extraordinary press conference held yesterday in Sarajevo, **Minister Grabovac** reiterated that he will not resign despite the insistence by the High Representative or the Federation Prime Minister, Alija Behmen. *"Just within ten days and during my mandate which started in march last year, I have done more than the International Community did in the past five years. I agree with the position of Paddy Ashdown about the rule of law and fight against corruption, but I have been doing that for months. Concerning the moral act of resignation because of the AM-SPED affair for which I am not responsible, this has to be also asked from the minister of interior in the case of the hidden ammunition caches."* (**Dnevni Avaz**, p. 9, **Oslobodjenje**, p. 5, **Jutarnje Novine**, p. 6, **Dnevni List** front and p. 5, **Vecernji List** p. 2, **Slobodna Dalmacija**, p. 17, **Nezavisne Novine**, p. 3)

In an interview with **Dnevni List** (p. 4), Grabovac talked about the positive results of his Ministry in the past year and reiterated that he will not resign. He said that his work on uprooting corruption and crime has upset mafia structures in the country who now want to "get rid of him." *"In addition, my views on the Mostar Aluminij or about the Hercegovacka Banka, where some 40 million KM of funds belonging to soldiers and pensioners are being frozen, were not liked by many. For year and a half they have not been able to resolve the case."*

"I believe that Paddy Ashdown was served all this. He was to be portrayed in public as the one creating order starting from the two Finance Ministers. Vracar is fighting the same battle as I am, except he does not have as good results."

In a statement for the press, the New Croat Initiative (NHI) said it will back Minister Grabovac in his decision not to resign, and added that the entire AM-SPED Affair is the result of the Party for BiH aspiration to take control over the Federation Ministry of Finance. *"It is obvious that all positive results that stand behind Minister Grabovac did not suit to the already established corrupt political structure and media lobbies in the country. Resignation would mean the triumph of these corrupt structures."* NHI also calls upon the High Representative to reconsider his insistence on Grabovac's resignation, check all relevant details of the Financial Police investigation on AM-SPED. *"In democratic society, such as the one of the High Representative, an investigation is never conducted in public and*

via media, individuals are not guilty until proven guilty...The NHI asks the High Representative to ensure these standards, for the rule of law which is so adamantly advocated by Ashdown, means first and foremost that agencies which protect legality, their objectiveness and respect of personal dignity and basic human right to defense oneself against allegations." (**Oslobodjenje** p. 6 carries the full text of the PR, **Avaz** and **Jutarnje** also extensively quote it)

Zdenko Jurilj in **Vecernji List** (p.2) notes that political dissidence is threatening to take over the NHI, as some member of this party warned that if Grabovac is removed, this party will withdraw from the Alliance. According to Jurilj, during his meeting with Ashdown earlier in the week, NHI president, Kresimir Zubak confirmed this. Referring to the possible dissidence, he (Jurilj) claims that Grabovac, as one of the party leaders, has met this week with representatives of the HDZ to discuss the possible pre-election coalition.

Dnevni Avaz (p. 9) reports that the leading officials in the Federation Financial police, **Zufer Dervisevic** and **Miroslav Vidovic**, whom Grabovac charged with conspiracy, asked protection by the Federation Parliament, Federation government and the OHR.

NOTE: Most Federation newspapers report on Wednesday's session Grabovac held in Sarajevo before several hundred Federation Army soldiers in which he informed them that some 71 million KM have been deposited onto the Federation Defense Ministry account. According to Grabovac, these funds will be used to make first redundancy payments to the laid off Federation Army soldiers.

Nijaz Durakovic: I will lead the Party for BiH candidates' list for the Parliament

At yesterday's session of the SDP Presidency, the party's founder, **Nijaz Durakovic**, confirmed that he will be leading the Party for BiH's candidates' list at the upcoming elections. *"I will keep my work given to Haris Silajdzic...I do not want Zlatko Lagumdžija to decide about my fate. I don't trust him."* Durakovic also insisted that Lagumdžija be nominated as the SDP candidate for the Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency. *"He finally has to enter the political arena and not to shy away from it."* (**Dnevni Avaz**, p. 3)

However, **Oslobodjenje** and **TV Hayat** reported, quoting the SDP press release, that Durakovic will be also on the candidates' list of this party. Durakovic in a statement for Avaz rejected this allegation.

RS Government discussed report of Investigation team on criminal activities in RS Customs Administration

At a session held yesterday in Banja Luka, the RS Government discussed the report of the investigation team in charged to investigate allegations from the CAFAO report on the criminal activities in the RS Customs Administration (**Nezavisne Novine**, p. 3). The daily learnt that after the discussion, the RS Interior Ministry (MUP) was tasked to carry on further investigation, thus the RS Interior Minister, **Dragomir Jovicic**, will be the chief local "supervisor" for the customs affair. The RS Prime Minister, **Mladen Ivanic**, did not want to confirm whether the Government discussed the report of the Investigation team. The daily also quotes the OHR Spokesman, **Julian Braithwaite**, who passed the views of the High Representative that the RS Finance Minister, **Milenko Vracar**, should resign because of the misuses that occurred in the RS Customs Administration. Vracar did not want to comment. The RS Prime Minister announced that he will meet with the Head of the OHR AFD, **Manfred Dauster**, today. According to **Nezavisne Novine** sources, the dismissals in the RS Customs Administration, as well as in some other departments of the RS Finance Ministry and Ministry for Trade and Tourism, might happen after the meeting of the RS Prime Minister and Manfred Dauster and the High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown**.

All Sarajevo newspapers and **Nezavisne Novine** (p. 5) quote yesterday's statement by OHR Banja Luka spokesperson, **Sonja Pastuovic**, saying that entity Finance Ministers must take political responsibility for what is

happening in their ministries. Dailies also quote Pastuovic as saying that the RS National Assembly may if it wishes initiate a process before the BiH Constitutional Court about the Decision on Judiciary imposed by the former High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch. (**Blic**, p. 11 also carries the report)

Six police officials suspended in Mostar

All Federation media (front page of **Dnevni List**) report that the Interior Minister of Hercegovina-Neretva Canton, Goran Bilic, and his deputy Sead Sehic have suspended five officials from the Mostar police administration and one inspector from the canton department for organized crime at the request of the police chief, Dragan Brkic. The persons in question were suspended after an expensive car had been stolen from the grounds of the Mostar police administration where it was impounded as evidence in a criminal case.

Vecernji List (p. 4) and **Slobodna Dalmacija** (p. 18) also report on this case. Vecernji List notes quoting Dragan Brkic, the Police Commissioner, that the Internal Police Control has already started to work on resolving this case.

What is to happen with JNA apartments in BiH Federation?

Glas Srpski reports on its cover page that the BiH Federation failed to execute the decision of the BiH Human Rights Chamber from December 7th last year, by which it was obliged to change a law provision according to which, the members of the former JNA, who were not BiH citizens and not in BiH Army, have lost their apartments. According to the daily, there are more than 800 such apartments. The public attorney of the RS Army and RS Defense Ministry, **Branko Mitrovic**, recalled that more than 95 % of the apartments in question were privatized but, in 1995 the then Government of BiH, decided to cancel all purchase contracts made by 15th February 1992. Mitrovic added that the RS Defense Ministry will once again address the BiH Federation Defense Ministry, High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown**, RS delegates to the BiH House of Representatives and will request the return of the 800 apartments in question.

Nezavisne Novine (p. 4) quote OHR Spokesman, **Mario Brkic**, as saying that the OHR expects the Federation authorities to implement BiH Human Rights Chamber Decision on military apartments. Brkic recalled that the deadline issued by the Chamber expired on June 7th.

Dutch Prime Minister visits Srebrenica survivors

On a second day of his visit to BiH, the outgoing Dutch Prime Minister, Wim Kok, visited several Srebrenica massacre survivors association in Tuzla. A member of the Women of Srebrenica association, Nura Begovic, said after the meeting that the women from the association did not ask the Dutch prime minister to give them alms nor plead for assistance. *"However, we believe that the Netherlands has a responsibility to support the building of the memorial complex in Potocari"* [in honour of the Srebrenica victims]. (**AFP, Reuters, BHTV 1, FTV, Oslobodjenje, Dnevni Avaz** – not very prominently)

Croatian Deputy PM Budisa: Government did not turn back on Croats in BiH, but it is not their tutor either

Vjesnik (front and p. 6) and **Nezavisne Novine** carry a report from a session of the Croatian Parliament at which the Deputy Prime Minister **Drazen Budisa**, answering to the claim of **Ante Kovacevic** (MP) that the Croatian Government has turned its back on BiH Croats, said: *"The Government did not turn its back on Croats in BiH, but it is not their political tutor either"* adding that the Government honors its constitutional and national obligations foremost in the areas of healthcare and education. Questioned by an HDZ MP **Krunoslav Kordic** to comment on the secret caches in

Mostar, Budisa said that according to his information SFOR did not inform the Croatian Government about the caches and that Croatia, being a signatory of the DPA, is interested in the peace in BiH and the entire region.

Bosnian Serbs lose appeal vs key rape conviction

Three former Bosnian Serb commanders on Wednesday lost an appeal at the U.N. war crimes tribunal against landmark convictions for rape and sexual enslavement as crimes against humanity, **Reuters** reported (**The News York Times**, **BHTV 1**, **FTV**, **RTRS** carried the report). Appeal judges in The Hague upheld sentences of 12 to 28 years imposed on the three men in February 2001 for raping, enslaving and torturing Muslim women and girls — some aged as young as 12 — in the summer of 1992. Dragoljub Kunarac, Radomir Kovac and Zoran Vukovic sat stony-faced as presiding Judge Claude Jorda told them all substantive grounds of their appeals had been dismissed. The three were found guilty of taking women and girls, many of whom gave emotional testimony in The Hague, to a series of “rape houses” for brutal beatings and assaults after Bosnian Serb forces overran the town of Foca.

Annan appeals for funds for State Border Service

The U.N. mission in BiH remains on track to wrap up its work by the end of the year, but the former Yugoslav republic will still need outside help, U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan said on Wednesday, **Reuters** reported (**The New York Times** carried the report)

In a report to the Security Council, Annan said that even after the U.N. operation shuts down, BiH will continue to be troubled by a “*systemic weakness of the rule of law ... and continued obstruction, interference and illegal activities of entrenched political extremists and criminal organizations.*” He called on the Security Council to approve a final extension, until Dec. 31, of the mission’s mandate, which is now due to expire next week. Annan urged the Bosnian authorities, before the end of the year, to adopt legislation establishing a permanent post of police commissioner and to give priority to funding a newly created State Border Service. He said the mission would work closely with the European Union “to assure a seamless transition of responsibilities” on Jan. 1.

Football fever in Mostar causes incidents

Slobodna Dalmacija, **Vecernji List** and **Vjesnik** (pp. 16, 3 and 10 respectively) carry articles about the celebrations of Croat football fans in the west Mostar following the victory of the Croatian football team over Italy in the World Cup in Japan/South Korea when the Croat fans drove on car roofs abusing SFOR personnel. The Herzegovina-Neretva Canton Ministry of Interior issued a press release in which it says that the Police will not tolerate such behavior and that the Police Administration of Mostar filed misdemeanor charges against a person who offended and lunged at an SFOR vehicle. A few relevant institutions such as the Cantonal Ministry of Interior, City Administration of Mostar as well as SFOR call on people to celebrate with dignity. **Vecernji List** learns from an anonymous source that SFOR troops have been warned to avoid streets of west Mostar on Thursday when Croatia play Ecuador in a deciding game for the Croatian football team.

Editorials on Ashdown

In today’s editorial in **Nezavisne Novine** (p. 2), **Kruno Malenica** writes that, if one judges by the initial moves he made, the start of the New High Representative to BiH, **Paddy Ashdown**, is more than successful. Malenica wrote: “*In the first 15 days in Sarajevo, Ashdown did much more than he was expected to. I suppose that is why the people already gave him a nickname **Pedja**. The difference between Paddy Ashdown and his predecessors is that he takes his job seriously, with no*

compromises, as was the case with **Carlos Westendorp** and **Carl Bildt**. That is why **Wolfgang Petritsch** was 'artillery preparation' for Ashdown's offensive."

Walter columnist **Fatmir Alispahic**, writes in this week's issue of the magazine (p 10):

"During a shameful British support to the negotiations about Bosnia's partition, Paddy Ashdown was actively lobbying against calling the aggression against BiH a 'civil war'. Ashdown played an honorable role in saving British and European credibility. However nowadays, he is in Bosnia not as a free fighter but as a British diplomat and an exponent of the international policy towards BiH. Recalling Ashdown's war-time role in interpreting his role today has therefore no relevance, since it is about two different dramatic forms. By critical caution, Ashdown should be helped not to forget both himself and Bosnia,"

Electronic Media Headlines

BHTV 1

- Finance Minister Grabovac says he will not resign; OHR's Julian Braithwaite says Ashdown expect Grabovac to resign
- Ashdown replies to Grabovac: BiH must adopt European standards, Ministers must take responsibly
- OHR: RS must resolve its internal problems relating to customs affair

FTV

- Former Bosnian Serb commanders lose an appeal at the ICTY against rape conviction
- Dutch Prime Minister visits Tuzla, meets Srebrenica survivors' associations
- Durakovic confirms leading S BiH candidates' list at the elections
- Finance Minister Grabovac says he will not resign

RTRS

- RS discusses report on Customs affair
- RS Customs officers break network of coffee smugglers
- RS National Assembly to initiate a procedure before the Constitutional court challenging Petritsch's decisions on judiciary