

BiH Media Round-up, 11/6/2002

Print Media Headlines

Oslobodjenje: Ashdown demands Grabovac's resignation

Dnevni Avaz: Ashdown demands responsibility

Jutarnje Novine: Interview with director of Tax Administration; Federation government to discuss Grabovac's resignation on Thursday

Glas Srpski: Federation government lies about missing persons in Sarajevo

Nezavisne Novine: Why was general Bosko Buha killed?

Dnevni List: UNICEF testing new medicine on children in BiH, Moldavia and Estonia?

Vecernji List: BiH-Croatia – passage through Neum and Ploce port to worsen relations between the countries; AM-SPED – Grabovac to make a decision by Thursday

AM-SPED Affair

In an interview with the **FTV** and the **RTRS**, the High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown**, called upon all responsible and criminally charged officials involved the AM-SPED affair to resign. *"I cannot imagine any democratic country in which the Minister of Finance would not resign in the wake of such a large financial scandal,"* said Ashdown. His spokesman, **Julian Braithwaite**, was even more specific in his statement for **Dnevni Avaz** (front page), when he said that if BiH wants to become a part of Europe, it has to adopt European standards in the sphere of budgetary funds. *"This in particular means that Ministers of Finance in both entities should accept responsibility not only for what had been done, but also for what had not been done and it should have. We accept politicians in this country to react and make adequate decisions. If they do not, someone else will have to do it for them,"* he said, stressing that this is not about criminality or illegal activities, but about responsibility and competence

of senior officials.

In a live interview with late night news at the **FTV**, the Federation Minister of Finance, **Nikola Grabovac**, said that he will not resign from his post because he does not feel responsible for the AM-SPED affair. He dismissed all the charges and demands for his resignation as a *“ruthless media campaign by his opponents”* – Zufer Dervisevic, Federation Financial inspector, Miroslav Vidovic, deputy Financial inspector, and Sefika Hafizovic, deputy Finance Minister – who, in his words, have been conspiring against him. Grabovac went at length about the recent positive developments in the Federation Finance Ministry and concluded that he deserves to be commended for his work. *“I expect direct commends for my work from the Federation government and the people...I am not ready for any compromise [in the fight against tax and customs evasion] and I support Paddy Ashdown and reform forces which are working for the benefit of the Federation.”*

In an earlier statement for the press, however, Grabovac was less categorical. He said that he will decide as to whether to resign or not after thorough consultations with his party, NHI, and the Alliance. His final decision should be made public at the next session of the Federation government scheduled for Thursday. (**Dnevni Avaz**, front page, **Oslobodjenje**, front page, second item in the **FTV** prime time news and the leading one in the late night show. **Vecernji List** p. 3 and Belgrade's **Nacional**).

The president of the NHI, **Kresimir Zubak**, told **Dnevni Avaz** (p. 8) that he will not ask Grabovac to resign and he does not hold him directly responsible for the AM-SPED affair. On the other hand, the **SDP**'s Sead Avdic, said that he expects Grabovac to *“show enough political wisdom and dignity and resign because of the scandal shaking his Ministry.”*

In the meantime, the newly appointed director of the Federation Customs Administration, **Zelimir Rebac**, suggested on Monday the removal of Zenit Kelic, the head of the Customs

Fraud Prevention center because of his involvement in the AM-SPED affair, along with all other officers and officials linked with the scandal. (**Dnevni Avaz** p. 5)

Croatian **HINA** news agency notes that the replacement of the Federation Finance Minister seems inevitable. *"Grabovac is likely to have two options: either to quit of his own accord, or to be removed because of Ashdown's insistence, which would mean his permanent exclusion from the future political life."*

Disputes between BiH and Croatia over Neum, Ploče port

Foreign Policy Advisor in the BiH Presidency, **Dragan Ivanovic**, said on Monday (**Oslobodjenje**, p. 2 and 9) that BiH does not have intention to obstruct the free passage between Croatia and BiH through Neum, as the Presidency legal advisor, Kasim Trnka, claimed over the weekend. Ivanovic explained that Trnka was expressing his own position on this matter, rather than the one of the Presidency. *"BiH is not interested in straining relations with Croatia in any way. The coming session of the Inter-State Council is an opportunity to reach an agreement on how to unblock the process related to the passage through Neum and the use of Ploče port. It is evident that the conditions for constructive negotiations are ripe on both sides and adequate solutions can be found."* Similar statement was issued by the BiH Ambassador to Croatia, Zlatko Dizdarevic, who was quoted on the front page of **Vjesnik**.

However, in a statement for the **Croatian Radio**, the deputy speaker of the Croatian Parliament, **Zlatko Tomcic**, said that the talks on the two contentious issues will not take place at the upcoming session of the Inter-state council, as there are several controversial provisions in the original agreements on Ploče port and which first have to be removed. *"This is the provision referring to the management of the port in cases of a dispute. This provisions puts Croatia in an inferior position and is unacceptable for us,"* said Tomcic, clearly referring to the item stipulating that in the case of a dispute, the contentious issue will be resolved by an

international member of the board. Croatia Parliament believes this [provision expends the state of international protectorate from BiH to Croatia.

(This was the front page story in today's **Vecernji List**, **Dnevni Avaz** p. 4, **Slobodna Dalmacija** carried the item on p. 4, quoting the Parliament speaker, **Zdravko Tomac** as condemning Trnka's statement and stressing that BiH and Croatia cannot afford worsening of their relations)

RS Customs Affair

Belgrade's **Vecernje Novosti** (13) and **Nacional** (8) report that the suspended director of the RS Customs Administration's Enforcement Section, **Nedeljko Milovanovic**, in his interview to **Reporter** denied the existence of organized cartel within the RS Customs. *"I cannot deny that there is corruption present in the RS Customs Administration, but these are only incidents and not a pattern."* Milovanovic and 25 other employees of the RS Customs have been dismissed after the publication of the CAFAO report on the organized cartel within the RS Customs. He said that the CAFAO report was unprofessional, because *"it did not contain concrete evidence but speculations"*.

Nacional (11) quotes the president of the RS Socialist Party, **Petar Djokic**, as saying that those responsible for the affair had to be dealt with before a court and in accordance with the law. **Blic** (11) reports that the Chairman of the RS National Assembly, **Dragan Kalinic**, said that on June 25 the councilors would most probably discuss the report of its investigating team about the RS Customs affair.

In the editorial in **Nezavisne Novine**, **Dragan Jerinic**, writes that the RS Prime Minister, **Mladen Ivanic**, made several mistakes in the whole affair with the "customs mafia". *"According to the RS Constitution, the Public Prosecutor's Office is independent and not under the jurisdiction of the RS Government, thus there were no legal grounds for the RS Prime Minister to appoint the Public Prosecutor as the Head of the Investigation team. The Prime Minister's statement that the*

*report will be done through urgent procedure and that the Public Prosecutor is the head of the investigation team, turned out to be nothing else but a political bluff. Such outcome shows that Ivanic was not determined to actually bring the affair to an end.” (Note: The Acting Public Prosecutor, **Jovan Spaic**, claims that he is not the head of the investigation team, while the Head of the RS Government Press Bureau, **Cvijeta Kovacevic**, reiterated that the investigation team is comprised of the representatives of OHR, CAFAO and RS Interior Ministry and led by the RS Public Prosecutor.)*

SRNA reports that the suspended chief of the Bijeljina customs, Zoran Spasojevic, denied on Monday allegations that he was removed from his post “because of a poor work record and abuse of office” and called on the RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, to explain publicly why he and other employees of the RS Customs Administration were suspended.

SDP – Durakovic – Party for BiH Affair

At Monday’s session of the **SDP presidency**, the presidency members discussed the issue of **Nijaz Durakovic’s** announcement that he will lead the Party for BiH candidates list for the BiH Parliament. As Durakovic failed to show up at the session, the Presidency did not make any concrete decision on this case and invited its senior official to join the next session scheduled for Wednesday. In a statement for **Dnevni Avaz** p. 2, however, Durakovic, said that he was not even invited to yesterday’s meeting. (**Oslobodjenje** p. 3, **Dnevni List** p. 2, all electronic media report on the item)

In an editorial in **Slobodna Dalmacija**, **Miroslav Landeka** (p. 17) writes that **Durakovic** has finally shown his real face. He also notes that all Sarajevo media, “*which are under the influence of **Haris Silajdzic** and S BiH, are trying to present Durakovic’s coalition with this party as a great blow to the SDP.*” Landeka argues that **Safet Halilovic** ‘s statement that Durakovic is a proved democrat is cynical because, in his words, “*Durakovic is an old Communist with a nationalistic*

orientation."

Possible Croat coalitions: Who will be Croat candidate for the Presidency?

Oslobodjenje (p. 6) reports, quoting anonymous sources, that the HDZ will join the recently formed Croat Democratic Block made up of the Croat Christian Democrats and the HNZ (Croat Peoples' Community). Representatives of the three Croat parties will hold a joint meeting on Wednesday in Mostar, when they are expected to discuss more concrete issues, such as the possible joint Croat candidate for the BiH Presidency. Speculations have that this will be Miljenko Brkic, the president of the HNZ.

The daily also notes that, under the patronage of the Contact Group ambassadors, representatives of the moderate Croat parties (NHI, Croat Peasant Party, HDU and Working for Prosperity) met on Monday in Sarajevo to discuss the formation of a pre-election coalition. What is certain, notes **Oslobodjenje**, is that these parties will nominate their joint candidate for the Presidency, most likely the deputy Mostar mayor, Neven Tomic.

Secret ammunition in Mostar

Slobodna Dalmacija (last page) quotes **Faruk Balijagic**, a legal representative of **Jusuf Piralic**, one of 8 suspects in the case, as saying that the most responsible persons for storing of the ammunition are Halid and Hasan Cengic, Mustafa Music and Sakib Mahmuljin. Balijagic added that four are powerful persons that no prosecutor dared to touch, however, added that he will file criminal charges against them on Tuesday. Balijagic also stressed that the only possibility to solve the case is to get the OHR involved and transfer it to the Federation Supreme Court. (This was aired last night on **FTV's** "Pogledi").

Ivic Pasalic says Croatia was not involved into the war in BiH

All Croati(ian) dailies report prominently on former advisor

to the late Croatian President Ivic Pasalic as rejecting allegations made by the ICTY prosecution that Croatia was involved in the BiH conflict and that it had territorial aspirations towards its neighbor. *"Croatia was not involved in any way in the BiH conflict. On the contrary, Croatia's policy was to establish and contribute to peace in BiH, contribute to bringing to an end the suffering and war for a number of reasons"*, said Pasalic. He arrived to the Hague at the request of the defence to testify in the trial against Herzegovina Croats Mladen Naletilic Tuta and Vinko Martinovic Stela.

RS National Assembly session

Both Banja Luka dailies carry reports from yesterday's session of the RS National Assembly. While **Glas Srpski** (p.3) focuses on refugee issues, **Nezavisne Novine** (p. 5) see the security situation in the RS as more important. According to the GS report, the RS National Assembly obliged the RS Government to provide KM 6 million, within 90 days, for purchase of construction material that will be allocated to families of deceased soldiers, whose property in the BiH Federation territory was destroyed. Nezavisne Novine report that the RS NA adopted the report on the security situation presented by the RS Interior Ministry (MUP RS). Some of the delegates to the RS NA (**Nebojsa Radmanovic, DSP; Krstan Simic, SNSD**) expressed their dissatisfaction with the report. Radmanovic assessed that he is not satisfied with the security situation in the RS and according to Simic, the report submitted was a 'bureaucratic' one. Both dailies also report that a delegate to the RS NA, **Fatima Hodzic**, was killed yesterday in a car accident in Bjelajci, near Mrkonjic Grad.

Nacional (p. 8) reports that **Petar Djokic**, the president of the SPRS, said it was very important that RS adopts constitutional changes *"by the majority vote in the RS National Assembly"*. *"I am sorry that the former High Representative (**Petritsch**) used his last 36 hours in BiH for bringing that huge achievement into question. I do expect **Paddy Ashdown** to understand this and return us to the position we were at before April 4, when we agreed about certain issues, although we had very different initial position,"* Djokic said.

George Soros suggests modification of Dayton Agreement

SENSE agency reports that the famous financier and a philanthropist, **George Soros**, suggested the modification of the Dayton Peace Agreement. *"The Dayton Peace Agreement played its envisaged role in the past six years and now it needs modifications. If not, the BiH will turn into an absolutely dysfunctional state."* As some of the problems, Soros noted crime and corruption and *"enormously large administration"*.

New affair: Petrol companion's evade paying taxes

According to **Oslobodjenje** (**Azhar Kalamujic** and **Aldijana Omeragic** in Theme of the Day, p. 4, 5), the Mostar petrol company **Croherc AG** has in the past two years sold around 73 million KM of fuel in BiH through several phantom companies. This, according to the daily, resulted in damages to the state, that is Federation, budget in the amount of 17,5 million KM. The authors say that this was one of the preliminary results of the investigation of petrol companies in BiH conducted by the Financial Police, Customs and Tax Police, and the Ministry of Interior under direct supervision of the OHR.

BiH and World Bank sign agreement on Business Adjustment Credit

BH TV 1 (leading item) reports that the BiH Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Azra Hadziahmetovic, and the resident-representative of the World Bank (WB) in BiH, Joseph Ingram, signed on Monday in Sarajevo the Business Adjustment Credit (BAC). The credit in the amount of 90 million KM will be directed to the state and entity budgets and has been approved under the most favorable conditions of the WB with a minimal interest rate and payment deadline of 35 years through two trenches. Hadziahmetovic said that this credit is one of the most important projects that BiH has agreed with the international institutions so far. (This was also one of the leading item in the **FTV** and **RTRS** prime time news. **Oslobodjenje**, p. 9, **Avaz** p. 2)

Sarajevo-Belgrade trains to start running on June 18

The Sarajevo-Belgrade rail passenger service via Bosanski Samac is expected to start running on June 18, Deputy General Manager of the Federation Railways, Narcis Dzunhur, told journalists on Monday, reports **BHTV 1** and **FTV**. Railway officials signed an agreement on the border crossing at Samac last week and the operation of the train still requires official permission from the relevant ministries in BiH, Serbia and Croatia, Dzumhur said.

Electronic Media Headlines

BHTV 1

- BiH Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations, Azra Hadziahmetovic, and resident-representative of the World Bank in BiH, Joseph Ingram, signed the Business Adjustment Credit worth 90 million KM, which is to be directed at entity and state budgets
- Hungarian government prepared the credit line of 100 million euro for the assistance to the Balkan countries and improvement of economic relations
- RS National Assembly postpones its extraordinary session for Tuesday

FTV

- Mostar: Investigation of illegal weapons caches continues – hearing of senior officials to follow soon
- AM-SPED affair: Grabovac to consult with Alliance, his party before he decides to resign
- In a statement for FTV and RTRS, Ashdown calls for resignation of responsible officials in the AM-SPED affair

RTRS

- Deputy in RS National Assembly Fatima Kudic Hodzic dies in an automobile accident
- RSNA regular session report
- RS Railways