BiH Media Round-up, 15/3/2001

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BiH State-related Issues

Lagumdzija says gold from succession sold legally

According to Dnevni Avaz, the BiH Council of Ministers Chairman, Zlatko Lagumdzija, told journalists in Sarajevo on Thursday following a session of the Council that the gold BiH had obtained from the process of the succession to the former SFRY had been sold in accordance to the valid laws and the authorities of the BiH Treasury Ministry. Lagumdzija added that it was not practice anywhere in the world that the decisions on such issues were being made by the parliaments as suggested by certain members of the BiH Parliamentary Assembly.

Belkic and Krizanovic meet with US Ambassador to BiH

Dnevni Avaz reports that the BiH Presidency Chairman, Beriz Belkic, and the Croat member of the Presidency, Jozo Krizanovic, received in Sarajevo on Thursday the US Ambassador to BiH, Clifford Bond. During the meeting, the officials paid special attention to the issues of the reform of judiciary in BiH and a possibility for war crimes processing in the country.

Constitutional reforms

Talks on the constitutional reforms to be continued on Monday

All BiH media report that the leaders of the eight political parties, who were at the initiative of the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, discussing the constitutional reforms in the OHR building in Sarajevo during the past two days, agreed at the end of the meeting on Thursday to resume talks on the disputed issues on Monday and, if necessary, Tuesday. “The Party representatives managed to come closer to agreeing in principle on a where we need to have minimum representation, where we need to have parity and where we need to have proportionality,” Petritsch told journalists following the meeting referring to the issue of representation of the peoples in the authorities in both entities. The High Representative urged the political parties’ leaders to use the upcoming weekend and “narrow the gaps between the issues that have not been resolved yet.” “The leaders of this country must prove that they are mature enough to find common ground, to agree on solutions,” Petritsch emphasized adding that “it is time that the domestic politicians take even difficult decisions.” The High Representative concluded that his role was to “facilitate negotiations between the groups and party heads” and “make sure that things move in the right direction.” The SDA President, Sulejman Tihic, told Dnevni Avaz that the positions of the political leaders had been brought closer but that they were still far away from reaching the agreement. President of the Party for BiH Presidency Safet Halilovic said in a statement with the newspaper that the majority of the political parties from the Federation were practically insisting on the solutions, which were, in a way, verified by the Entity Parliament. SNSD leader Milorad Dodik believes that

the negotiations were actually slowed down by the Croat representatives. The HDZ BiH Presidency member, Niko Lozancic, is of an opinion that there would be no consensus if the talks continue moving in the "Thursday's direction," since neither he not the other Croat people's representatives did not want to participate in the BiH's partition.

The BiH Federation House of Peoples also supports the initial version of the amendments to the Entity Constitution

Following the BiH Federation House of Representatives, which had discussed the issue on Wednesday, the deputies to the BiH Federation House of Peoples at their session in Sarajevo on Thursday also supported the initial version of the Government-proposed amendments to the Entity Constitution. They tasked the Government to prepare the final version of the draft by March 30 taking into account suggestion made by the delegates to the both parliamentary houses.

The Federation TV Dileme program on constitutional reform

The ongoing constitutional reforms in BiH were a topic in the BiH Federation TV Dileme program on Thursday night. The guests expressing their opinions on the issue were: Sahbaz Dzihanovic (Party for BiH), Rifet Dolic (DNZ), Ivica Marinovic (HDZ), Adnan Terzic (SDA), and Sabrija Poljskic (SDP). (Click here for a comprehensive summary of the ONASA-provided monitoring report on the show)

Federation

Toby Robinson and Fynn Lynghjem appointed as new

members of the Eronet Supervision Board

At a press conference organized by the Mostar-based Eronet d.o.o Mobile Communications, which was held in the town's Hotel "Ero" on Thursday, Miroslav Rupcic, the President of the Supervision Board (SB) of Eronet, said that the Assembly of the Company had held its session earlier today, at which it had passed a decision to replace the members of the Supervision Board, due to the fact that the Provisional Administration had been introduced in the Hercegovacka Banka, which had a share in Eronet and owned 60% of the Hercegovina Osiguranje and 100% of the Croherc Company. Therefore instead of Damir Medic and Marinko Planinic, Toby Robinson, the Herecegovacka Banka Provisional Administrator, and Fynn Lynghjem, her associate, were appointed members of the Supervision Board. New member of the SB, Toby Robinson, said that the ownership structure-related problems in Eronet would be resolved soon hoping that it would be carried out without making any damage to the Company.

Vecernji List: A new business move of Hercegovacka Bank Provisional Administration is at sight – Herzegovina Osiguranje is being sold?

Written by Zdenko Jurilj (Provided by OHR Mostar)

According to unofficial information, the Hercegovacka Bank Provisional Administration, led by Toby Robinson, the Provisional Administrator, is planning to invite a tender for the sale of a part of shares of Herzegovina Osiguranje. A possible business move of the Provisional Administration, which after the raid into Hercegovacka Bank controls all companies of 'Herzegovina Group', which had been powerful until two years ago, would be made most probably in order to ensure enough money to make possible that Hercegovacka Banks starts to function again. According to the information, that are coming from business and banking establishment, the Provisional Administration will make this move, whose purpose

is covering of huge financial losses caused by politically motivated closing of Hercegovacka Bank in April last year. By the money of sold shares of Hercegovina Osiguranje, the Provisional Administration is planning to put in function again some companies that were a part of the ownership structure of un-destined 'Hercegovina Holding'. Also, the Provisional Administration is planning to invite a tender for the sale of shares of Croherc, a company that dealt with import of oil and oil products. Some Austrian banks and companies, that within two years only, succeeded to take over a total financial monopoly over banking market in the BiH Federation, have showed a great interest for it.

Hypo Alpe-Adria Bank was mentioned as the most interested competitor for the purchase of Herzegovina Osiguranje shares, and the possibility that some other foreign banks and Insurance Companies participate in it, is opened.

Asked about this information, people from Hypo Alpe-Adria Bank stated that their Management has not contacted anyone with regard to this issue.

The article says that some Austrian Oil Companies are interested in the purchase of Croherc, and the name of Oil Concern OMV, which after Croatia is planning to enter BiH oil market in style, has been mentioned in this context.

Asked to comment on this information, Johan Verheyden stated that it was the first time that he heard of it and added that, according to his information, this issue has not been discussed so far. He also said: 'We are analyzing business operations of the Hercegovacka Bank and reveal irregularities, this is our main task.'

Asked to comment on the conclusion of a Vecernji List journalist that it takes forever to make the analyses and that it has not given some concrete results, that OHR announced earlier, Verheyden answered in a diplomatic manner 'that every

day they reveal some new things about a previous work of Hercegovacka Bank.' Verheyden added: 'There are days when the investigation goes smoothly, however, there are also days when we have to exert great efforts to get some new information.'

People from Hercegovina Osiguranje do not have any information about it, and Ivan Kristic their Spokesperson stated that the Provisional Administrator and other members of the Provisional Administration decide on this issue.

The article says that, by all accounts, the final analyses of the Hercegovacka Bank business operations will last another few months and this means new costs. It has been supposed that Hercegovacka Bank has already suffered a great financial loss, due to which the Provisional Administration has decided to sell shares of Hercegovina Osiguranje. Although the Minister of Finances of the Federation Government has demanded to get the money back for the pensions, it is indicative that there has been no any reaction from the other side.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Interview with Hasan Becirevic, the Federation Minister of Energy, Mining and Industry

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

With regard to the Aluminij case and Sarajevo Tobacco Factory, Becirevic stated: 'I am absolutely sure that mistakes were made in Aluminij and I do not have any doubts about it because the amount and structure of capital was changed illegally. Also, I am completely certain, on the ground of the findings that I have at my disposal, that the privatization in Sarajevo Tobacco Factory was not made in a regular way, not wanting to discuss the fact whether a part of private capital exists or not. Probably it does exist, but if we strictly apply to the Law it does not.' Asked as to how make the foreign investors to participate more in the process of privatization, Becirevic stated that there are two crucial factors that caused such

image. They are the so-called certificates' privatization and frequent illegal forms of privatization.

New FENA Director acting Editor-in-Chief appointed

The management board of the BiH Federation News Agency Fena elected in secret ballot Zehrudin Isakovic (former Dnevni avaz commentator) director of this news agency and Marko Dragic his deputy at session in Sarajevo on Thursday. The management board will forward the results to the BiH Federation government for approval. At the same session, chaired by Pejo Gasparevic, the management board relieved from his duty hitherto acting director Emir Efendic from this post. The board appointed Zoran Ilic acting editor in chief, who will discharge this post until a new editor in chief and his deputy are elected. Zinaida Lakic was appointed deputy chairman of the management board. The management board approved the books on procedures. All seven members of the Fena management board approved the proposal that this agency becomes a state news agency.

Republika Srpska

RS political parties and Government on Tomac's statement and "Croatia's interference" into the BiH internal affairs

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

The RS Socialist Party (SP) strongly condemned requests of the Croat parties in BiH for establishment of the third entity as it would be a strong violation of the DPA. The Party Vice President, Tihomir Gligoric stated at a press conference that interference of the leadership of the Republic of Croatia, which – through Croat parties in BiH, suggest new territorial division of BiH, was unacceptable. The RS Democratic Party (DP) assessed that the statements by the Deputy Speaker of the

Croatian Parliament, represented a classic example of interfering into internal BiH matters. The RS Government also condemned the statement of Zdravko Tomac, according to which, the RS was a result of crime and ethnic cleansing. (RS Government Press Release)

Slobodna Dalmacija: Constitutional reforms in the RS – SDS makes compromise with Croats from SDP

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

With regards to the constitutional talks Slobodna Dalmacija carries an article in which the SDP are accused of striking deals with the SDS, which are detrimental to the Croats. SD says that the SDP's Karlo Filipovic and SDS's Dragan Cavic held what was supposed to be a secret meeting on Wednesday. The paper speculates that it was Cavic, having realized that the SDS could not reach an agreement with both HDZ BiH and NHI, who called Filipovic to reach an agreement with, as SD outs it, "the SDP's Croat". The daily says that the SDP is breaking its pre and post election promises that it would never cooperate with nationalistic parties, which was evident in Busovaca some time ago when they struck deal with the SDA at the Croats' expense. SD also reads that although the HR has assessed the constitutional talks as positive saying that there are progresses in some matter, participants of the talks on the other hand said that the negotiations have hit the dead-end. The daily says that representatives of Croat parties, the HDZ BiH and NHI, insist on their request that the same constitutional arrangements have to be introduced both in the RS and in the Federation and that the HDZ is going one step further asking for abolishment of both BiH entities or the establishment of a third Croat entity if that does not happen.

Privatization of disputed apartments

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

On its cover page, Glas Srpski reports that, as soon as the Instruction on checking of the revalidated contracts on privatization of the disputed apartments is publicized in the RS Official Gazette, the High Representative would lift the ban on privatization of apartments allocated in the period between 1st April 1992 and 19th December 1998, as well as those built after that period. The Assistant to the RS Minister for Urbanism, Miladin Gacanovic stated that, by his decision from 4th December last year, the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch stopped privatization of at least one quarter of the entire housing fund or, in other words, more than 15 000 flats. Within 15 days from the publishing in the Official Gazette, a mixed commission would be established in each municipality and it would control legality of the revalidated contracts.

Serb Orthodox Church answers to requests of the Islamic community

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

The Serb Orthodox Church owns the land where Banja Luka Faculty of Electro- technics was built and dislocation of which was requested by the Executive board of the Islamic community, due to the fact that, upon the reconstruction, the view to Ferhadija mosque would be disturbed. It is confirmed to Glas Srpski by the Banja Luka Secretariat for construction and urbanism that the representatives of Banja Luka eparchy submitted documents, according to which, the Serb Church municipality of Banja Luka is the owner of that piece of land. Also, according to the documents, Banja Luka eparchy is the owner of a land plot near by.

AFP: First stock market in BiH opens in Banja Luka

The first ever stock market in BiH opened Thursday in the Republika Srpska capital of Banja Luka, signaling a new era in the country more than a decade after the fall of communism.

With the opening of the exchange and the privatization of state-owned firms in the RS, RS companies, which previously had only nominal value, will now be valued on market criteria. “Our goal is for public to realizes that from now on transactions will be done through an organized market in a fair and transparent way,” said stock market director Milan Bozic. Twenty companies have so far registered on the Banja Luka exchange and offered shares for sale. Some 200 privatized companies are in the process of registration. The Banja Luka market will offer shares in companies from the RS. A stock market the BiH Federation is expected to be opened in April. Edib Basic, director of the Federation’s securities commission, told AFP that the stock exchange in Sarajevo would be an on-line operation.

Reuters: Bosnian Serb camp commander gets 7-1/2 years

The Hague war crimes tribunal on Friday sentenced a Bosnian Serb former maths teacher to 7-1/2 years in prison for crimes committed while he commanded a nightmarish prison camp in 1992-3. Milorad Krnojelac, 61, had denied multiple counts of crimes against humanity and war crimes accusing him of murdering, torturing and enslaving hundreds of Bosniaks including the mentally handicapped and gravely ill. Krnojelac was warden of the so-called KP Dom prison in Foca, southeastern Bosnia, where 760 inmates suffered starvation, forced labor and constant physical and psychological assault.

Serb forces overran Foca in the spring of 1992, arrested Bosniak villagers and separated the men from the women. Thousands of Bosniaks and other non-Serbs were unlawfully confined and countless women and girls were systematically raped. Foca became a byword for wartime rape when The Hague-based U.N. war crimes court convicted three former Bosnian Serb commanders in February 2001 in a landmark prosecution of rape and sexual enslavement as crimes against humanity. Judge David Hunt of Australia said Krnojelac would receive credit

for the three years and nine months he had already spent in custody, as well as for any more time he spends in detention before it is decided in which country he would serve his sentence.

International Community

Reuters: Ashdown starts giving his testimony in Milosevic's trial

Kosovo Albanian refugees driven from their homes by Serb forces in 1998 faced harrowing conditions on their flight to safety in Albania, a prominent Western politician told Slobodan Milosevic's trial on Thursday. Columns of refugees dodged shell fire as they negotiated treacherous mountain passes into neighboring Albania during a Serb crackdown in the disputed province, former British Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown told the Hague war crimes court. "All their stories were consistent. The final descent into Albania was extremely precipitous. They had some very harrowing stories to tell," Ashdown told the International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia (ICTY). (Reuters' reports on the Ashdown's Thursday and Friday testimonies)

Reuters: Serbia and Montenegro agree death of Yugoslavia

Montenegro shelved its independence plans on Thursday to form a new union with Serbia, consigning Yugoslavia to history in a deal the West hopes will avoid more violent redrawing of Balkan borders. "We have taken an important step forward for the stability of the region and of Europe," European Union foreign policy chief Javier Solana said after signing a draft constitutional framework with leaders of the two republics. (Reuters article)

RS President, political parties welcome Serbia/Montenegro agreement

The Republika Srpska President, Mirko Sarovic, RS Democratic National Alliance and the RS SNSD (Party of the Independent Social Democrats) on Thursday welcomed the agreement to reshape the federation signed in Belgrade by leaders of Serbia and Montenegro. (SRNA Reports)

Dnevni Avaz: Paddy Ashdown – The Person of the Day

The next High Representative of the international community to BiH, Paddy Ashdown showed, while giving his testimony in the trial of Slobodan Milosevic before The Hague Tribunal on Thursday, how well informed he was about the development in the Balkans. The newspaper concludes that Ashdown is expected in the coming period to open the process the Europeization both of BiH and its neighborhood.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Portraits – Lord Paddy Ashdown, future High Representative of the international community in BiH

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

The article says that although Lord Ashdown was convinced that he will go to Kosovo to represent the UN there, and thus come to Southeast Europe, which is very interesting to him (allegedly during 1992 he was meeting with Radovan Karadzic intensively) Bernard Kouchner was appointed to this position. However, now he is coming to this region as a new HR for BiH. The article says that preparing for his new duty he started to visit the states from this region far from media and for this reason he secretly visited Zagreb last week. The press release issued on this occasion only said that Ashdown paid the visit, but it was not clarified whether he came to present his agenda for the work in Sarajevo or to demand a support of the officials in the region as a prerequisite for his successful work in BiH. The article says that Lord Ashdown was a witness

in The Hague in the process against Tihomir Blaskic, where he talked about the division of BiH and Greater-Croatian aspirations of Franjo Tudjman, the first Croatian President. The article mentions ‘ a famous Tidjman’s napkin on BiH division’ and says that Ashdown will also testify in the process against Slobodan Milosevic.

Slobodna Dalmacija also carries that one of the affairs related to Ashdown’s name was a love affair with his secretary.

Vecernji List: CRA personnel receives phone threats

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

During the session of the CRA Council it was stated that members of CRA Council were exposed to constant threats over phone and other ways of intimidation, allegedly in the name of some radio and TV outlets. Brian Fontes, a Chairman of the CRA Council, stated that they have already started to examine all threats that they received and all attempts of intimidation, most probably coming from those, who received long-term licenses or those who applied for them. In case that they find evidence that some stations were connected with these activities the broadcasting of their program will be banned.

Headlines

Oslobodjenje

- Six Algerians released from Guantanamo?
- There is no FRY any more

Dnevni Avaz

- Monthly payments (financial support) to the unemployed demobilized soldiers

Jutarnje Novine

- NATO and OSCE’s request to the authorities in BiH: Temporary moratorium on the regular military service as of June this year?

Glas Srpski

- The issue of disputable apartments to be resolved: the “Official Gazette” approves privatization
- Banja Luka: the Church owns the land
- Tomac is for the past

Nezavisne Novine

- Exclusive: Which war crimes indictees will be tried in BiH
- BiH Parties meeting in OHR: another round without results
- With EU mediation, an agreement signed between Serbia and Montenegro: no more Yugoslavia

Dnevni List

- Scandal in Mostar during eviction of Marina Maric, widow of Croat defender: Petar Milic arrested
- Cardinal Kuharic buried
- High Representative in BiH Wolfgang Petritsch: I regret that HDZ did not remove Jelavic
- Historic agreement in Belgrade: No more Yugoslavia!
- Due to poor salaries and food allowances: Police in Mostar announce general strike

Vecernji List

- Croatia says goodbye to Kuharic
- Lovre Pejkovic warns of evictions of Croats: Wave of refugees from Drvar a possibility
- New move of Provisional Administration for Hercegovacka Banka: Hercegovina Osiguranje to be sold?