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BiH State-related Issues

Oil wars spreading across the Balkans

On midnight Wednesday [16 January] a ban on transporting oil and oil derivatives through Croatia was due to come into effect, but this ban may not be implemented due to a greater regional nature of this matter, Deputy Head of the Federation Customs Administration Hasib Salkic has told Onasa. Salkic emphasised that intense activity can be expected in the region in the coming two to three days, because this matter also involves Slovenia and Yugoslavia, not just BiH. "According to

the information I have, there have been reactions from the Slovenian Foreign Ministry, Economy Ministry and Chamber of Commerce, as well as from BiH institutions, which have been in contact with their colleagues in Croatia since Friday," Salkic said. He added that BiH and Croatian officials discussed the matter on Friday, along with the subject of border crossings. "I assume that BiH will react and ask for a review of the decision. There are a few things that are not in line with international conventions and some obligations that have to be fulfilled under the Agreement on Free Trade between BiH and Croatia," Salkic said, adding that the lower authority institutions will also be discussing this matter, especially the customs offices, chambers of commerce, and other associations.

Fena news agency reported that a BiH delegation will indeed travel to Zagreb today (Wednesday) to protest Croatia's decision to ban the transit of petroleum products on its roads. The delegation would try to "persuade Croatian authorities that their

unilateral decision is unjustified," said Sinisa Kisic, the mayor of Brcko District told the agency. Explaining the reasons for the controversial decision, Croatian officials have cited "environmental concerns," however, BiH and Slovenian politicians say Croatia is trying to introduce a monopoly oil and oil products in the region. Moreover, media claim that Croatia is seeking to prevent Slovenia from delivering oil to BiH, thereby protecting the interests of its state-owned INA oil company. "It is a protectionist measure adopted by Croatian authorities to give their interests here an advantage," Silvo Komar, representative of the Slovenian oil company Petrol, told the BH Radio 1, adding that it was in violation of European standards for allowing the free movement of goods. BiH Minister of Foreign Trade, Azra Hadziahmetovic, told Oslobodjenje that Croatia does not have any legal grounds to make such a decision which clearly violates several

international agreements, most notably the European Convention on Free Transport of Goods and the Free Trade Agreement between BiH and Croatia. The so-called oil war was the most dominant story in the Federation media on Tuesday.

Premier says lawsuit against Yugoslavia targeted at former regime

The chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers, Zlatko Lagumdžija, said on Tuesday that Bosnia-Herzegovina's lawsuit against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia [FRY] at The Hague Tribunal was a legal issue and that it would not threaten the development of relations between the FRY and BiH. "Claims that the lawsuit is a hindrance to the relations are made by the very same persons who at one time linked the blame attached to one political establishment with the people. When they make a mistake, then it is peoples' fault, and the people cannot be held accountable before the law," Lagumdžija told Banja-Luka's Reporter. He added that this was "a lawsuit against Slobodan Milosevic's regime, which is also condemned by the people there".

Federation

Verbal conflict between Sarajevo and Mostar over joint Pension Fund continues

In a statement for *Oslobodjenje*, the newly appointed head of the integrated Federation Pension Fund, Bozo Misura denied ever saying that some 300 Bosniak employees will be laid off in the integration process. He conceded that the new Fund has to do a systematisation of jobs, but that will be done in consultations with the Steering Board and the Union. "We have been tasked by the Federation government to structure the Federation Bureau of Pensions Insurance...and we have done a really good job, despite all the obstructions" Misura said,

adding that he has written a letter to the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, and the Provisional Administrator of Hercegovacka Banka, Toby Robinson, asking them to de-block 14 million KM which were frozen on the day the Administration was imposed. "We have also asked them to start paying into the Pension Fund the contributions for its local employees. This was signed by Zlatko Lagumdžija and Wolfgang Petritsch," Misura said, stressing that he has not yet heard from the two.

SDA's Adnan Terzic, on his part, noted that the SDA will initiate a procedure in the Federation parliament with aim of introducing an amendment to the Law on Pension Fund, by which the seat of the PIO would remain in Sarajevo, instead of being transferred to Mostar, as agreed.

Bozo Misura: Terzic illegally hired his "mates": I will fire them, but legally!

Following the accusations by the Vice President of the SDA, Adnan Terzic, that the Acting Director of the Federation Pension and Disability Bureau (PIO) based in Mostar, Bozo Misura, plans to sack 300 employees of the Fund, mostly Bosniaks, Slobodna Dalmacija carries an interview with Bozo Misura who commented on the accusations. Misura says Terzic's malicious remarks that he is not able to re-structure the Bureau due to his dubious political orientation do not stand because he managed, together with his associates, to register the PIO Bureau in Mostar within 20 days.

"Unfortunately for Terzic and other masters of obstruction, everything has been completed and we can carry on with further activities with regards to establishment of the Federation PIO Bureau", says Misura.

When asked as to what motivated Terzic to utter those accusations, Misura said back in 1998 Terzic and former Director of PIO BiH Public Fund, Sead Zeco, illegally formed a

branch office of the Bureau in Travnik and employed 75 persons there, and Misura thinks Terzic should say in public how many non-Bosniaks are employed at this branch office. He says he has never stated what Terzic says he did.

Speaking of the Ero Hotel case, Misura said: "The World Bank, in their so called steps after pension balancing, wants to solve the issue of the ownership, i.e. to establish facts in respect of the ownership structure. Once that is done, it is necessary to find a way of transferring it to the Federation Government, that is we should get rid of it. As for the Ero Hotel, all I know is what I have read in the press and that the case is at court. I would not comment any further and you can ask the Court what will happen."

As for the Bureau's money blocked in Hercegovacka Banka, Misura said: "We have recently requested that our 14 million KM be de-blocked, and if the Bank's Provisional Administrator Toby Robinson and the High Representative meet the request, that money will be very useful in the pay-out of the first pension. We also have privatization funds to use, as well as funds paid for international organization employees. Indeed, I do not know where those funds are or how significant they are, but I do know the High Representative has been saying the funds will be activated as soon as the Federation MIO Bureau is registered. The Bureau has been registered and we have informed the High Representative, the World Bank and all relevant factors in the Federation about it."

Alliance involved in the illegal personnel puzzle

In a lengthy article, Oslobodjenje notes that the Federation Securities Commission found itself in the center of the political battle within the ruling Alliance. Personnel changes within this and other financial institutions in the Federation are a cause of the conflict between the leaders of the Liberal Democratic party (LDS) and the New Croat Initiative (NHI), and threatened to slowly break up the Alliance.

The affair began at the end of the last year when Kresimir Zubak of the NHI and Safet Halilovic of the Party for BiH submitted to the Deputy Prime Minister, Nikola Grabovac, a proposed list of candidates for the leading posts in the financial institutions. This list was allegedly agreed upon by all the parties in the Alliance. According to the same list, the Federation Securities Commission should have been ran by Mirko Puljic, Fahrudin Sebic, Almasa Kajtaz, and Mirko Kraljevic. Oslobodjenje notes that Alliance officials in charge of the personnel issues thereby clearly demonstrated the lack of familiarity with the Federation Laws, which they flagrantly violated with this move.

One of the proposals was to take away mandates from the present members of the commission who were named to the post in 1999 and whose mandates last five years. They could be dismissed only if they resign or they severely violate the law. Alliance has never even suggested that the current members, Edib Basic, Enes Gotovusa and Vjekoslav Domljan, acted contrary to the existing laws, and even if their mandate expired, at least two of them would have to be re-appointed in accordance with the relevant regulations.

Oslobodjenje writes that Rasim Kadic, the president of the LDS, sought to have his own cadre in the Commission, and is presently cross with the NHI because it nominated Mirko Puljic to this post thereby filling all important posts in financial institutions with Croats.

Securities Commission is one of the most important institutions which should be completely free from any political or party influence.

SDA to expel Edhem Bicakcic?

Dnevni Avaz writes that there is a possibility that the SDA (Party of Democratic Action) expels from the party the former Federation Prime Minister and the dismissed General-Manager of

Elektroprivreda, Edhem Bicakcic, before the upcoming elections. The daily notes that Bicakcic could also be offered a chance to resign himself, as the SDA wishes to enter the pre-election period with a new and more moderate political image. "We are trying to be a new party, but this is not going too easy with our old members. It would be the most appropriate if those against whom criminal charges have been filed resign themselves," an anonymous SDA source told Avaz, adding that if Bicakcic indeed faces a trial on any charges, the party may ask its vice president to step down. The same source added that, at one of the upcoming sessions, the SDA Presidency will discuss the Bicakcic issue, as his dubious past and negative image present an additional burden to the party.

Reminding Avaz readership that the High Representative removed Bicakcic from the important post in Elektroprivreda, OHR spokesperson, Alexandra Stiglmayer, said that is up to the SDA to resolve this situation. "The High Representative did what he believed was a right thing to do. The party now needs to collect strength to resolve the relations with its factions, including the one supporting Bicakcic," said Stiglmayer.

Croat party accuses Bosniak defence official of paying secret visit to Belgrade

Leader of the New Croat Initiative (NHI) on Monday accused the deputy Federation defence minister of having been on a secret mission to Belgrade. "While Defence Minister [Mijo] Anic was being condemned for his visit to Israel, a visit that was public and prepared in advance in the Federation Defence Ministry, Buljubasic went on a secret mission to Belgrade without anyone knowing about it," Zubak told a press conference in Sarajevo. He declined to discuss the details of the alleged visit by Buljubasic to the Yugoslav capital, announcing instead a special news conference of the NHI where he would reveal "on whose instructions Buljubasic went to

Belgrade". Zubak accused the media of knowing about the deputy Federation defence minister's stay in Belgrade, but that they did not want to disclose the information to the public. Defence Minister Anic, one of the NHI's senior officials, said he was not aware of the details of his deputy's visit to Belgrade, but that the details would be made public as soon as they were complete.

Federation dailies carry today Zubak's statement with additional comments by senior Federation officials all of whom said they were not aware of the controversial visit. The Entity President, Safet Halilovic, told Oslobodjenje that he or his deputy, Alija Behmen, were not officially notified about the trip and indeed do not know on what business Buljubasic went to Belgrade. The Federation Minister of Defense, Mijo Anic, also stressed he was not aware of the reasons behind Buljubasic's visit. "However, I will find a way to find out what he did there," Anic was categorical. Most media in Sarajevo bring Buljubasic's visit to Belgrade in connection with the recently revealed affair of arms smuggling between Kosovo and BiH.

Ombudsmen: All citizens must have access to secret files

The Federation ombudsmen have warned the Federation institutions that according to the BiH Federation's Freedom of Information Act coming into force in February, all interested citizens, including journalists, must have access to formerly secret files. In a recommendation sent to the Federation institutions, ombudspersons Vera Jovanovic, Branka Raguz and Esad Muhibic noted once again that the Freedom of Information Act gives everyone unrestricted access to information. Accordingly, the ombudsmen consider, "there can be no justification for not allowing all kinds of information to be accessible, including those of personal nature". "That is a general rule valid for all types of information, so it must be applied even to the information contained in what is widely

known as 'secret files' that used to, or still are, kept by the police, intelligence or other authorities," the ombudsmen said in a press release on Tuesday. Any citizen requesting access to information does not have to explain why he wants the information nor how he will use it. The ombudsmen also warned that no request for information can be automatically denied, although the act does state that information may not be published unless it is in the public interest.

Temporary budget for first three months of 2002 adopted; backlog pension by the end of January

At an emergency session held on Tuesday, deputies to Federation Parliament's House of Representatives adopted a decision on the temporary financing of the Federation in the first three months of this year. The decision will facilitate the financing of Federation institutions and provide money for budgetary beneficiaries until a 2002 budget is adopted. BiH Radio 1 notes that the decision was adopted in line with a proposal put forward by the Federation government and in the form in which it was adopted at the end of last year by the Federation Parliament's House of Peoples. A total of 252m convertible marks will facilitate the functioning of federal institutions and the financing of budgetary beneficiaries in the period between January and March 2002, i.e. until a Federation budget for this year is adopted. Deputies in the House also decided yesterday that one backlog pension will be paid out by the end of January.

Republika Srpska

RS Premier: RS takes the ICTY very seriously

In an interview with SRNA news agency, the RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, termed the adoption of the Law on Cooperation with the ICTY in The Hague as "extremely positive for the RS because it demonstrates a readiness on the part of the RS to

accept even the most difficult of issues, while The Hague is certainly one of the issues which would be a great burden for the RS". "The fact that the RS has obligations based upon this law to detain all those indicted and sought after by The Hague tribunal and there are 10 or 12 persons remaining on their public indictments who have been indicted for years. We have no knowledge that they are in the territory of the RS, which is logical," Ivanic noted. He repeated that the RS "will be carrying out its obligations in this area but that it believes that cooperation with The Hague is bilateral, which means that the RS, too, can have demands [backed] with evidence related to war crimes committed against the Serbs". Ivanic was also expecting that the RS "would very soon set out a demand to carry out proceedings against a Serb who committed crimes against members of the Bosniak people and who is not on the Hague tribunal's list". "All this shows that we take our obligations very seriously and that we are ready to treat the ICTY in The Hague appropriately. The RS must do this because it will thereby eliminate a significant part of the pressure," he pointed out.

RS Prime Minister: Payment of foreign debt without making new debts

Today's edition of "Glas srpski" quotes RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, as saying that, in the past year, the RS Government did not contract any new debt but rather managed to reduce debts from previous years, keep foreign trade solvent and give back abroad more than the RS got from it. "Earlier on, current expenditure could not have been covered with the so-called great aid of the international community but instead, fictitious claims were made. This is why I think that 2001 was the year of drawing a line and we demonstrated that we could work on our own and thereby create great self-confidence, so that I expect that we will show in this year, too, that we can do without someone else's funds", said Ivanic.

A year of work of Mladen Ivanic's government – Experts passed with D/OHR satisfied with Ivanic

Today's edition of "Nezavisosne novine" carries an article in which RS politicians assess the work of the RS Government for the past 12 months. Member of the ruling coalition are mostly satisfied with the work while the opposition is not satisfied. The paper also quotes OHR Spokeswoman, Sonja Pastuovic, as saying that one of the biggest successes of Ivanic's government is that he engaged state institutions, the office of the public prosecutor and the office of the supreme auditor in fight against corruption. "He also introduced financial discipline within the RS Government and initiated economic reforms, which will bring results in the forthcoming period. Ivanic intervened with the RS Interior Ministry in key moments – Ferhadija ceremony and the commemoration in Potocari. He initiated the adoption of the RS Law on cooperation with the ICTY and the failure of the RS authorities to arrest indicted war criminals cannot be taken as his failure only. He is not the only person who decides on arrest of indicted war criminals", said Pastuovic and added that the OHR expects Ivanic and other RS politicians to fulfill obligations they committed themselves to

Serb National Alliance will request creation of three entities and two districts unless political parties from the BiH Federation drop maximal demands

Both Banja Luka dailies quote SNS Spokesman, Vinko Lolic, as saying that the SNS stick to its view that the house of peoples should be introduced in the RS National Assembly, and if political parties from the BiH Federation keep insisting on their maximal demands, then the SNS will come up with maximal demands too, that is that BiH should be comprised of three entities (Serb, Croat and Bosniak) and two districts (Sarajevo and Brcko).

Radisic gets three votes for the SPRS presidency

At yesterday's session of the SPRS (Socialist Party of the RS) Executive Board the crisis within the party reached its peak, and the final outcome is expected to happen at the party congress scheduled for 23rd of February, Nezavisne novine reports. President of the party, Zivko Radisic accused the party members of trying to remove him with the support of some RS parties and the International Community. The paper learns from an SPRS source that the meeting discussed the changes in the SPRS leadership. The SPRS Executive Board proposed Miroslav Mikes, Tihomir Gligoric, Petar Djokic and Dragutin Ilic to run against Radisic for position of the SPRS president. On the other hand, Krsto Jandric, Drago Vucic and Biljana Rodic-Obradovic support Radisic's candidacy and they requested postponement of the party congress at which the new party president should be elected. The paper also reports that Radisic refused to say whether he accepts his candidacy and the candidacy of other SPRS members. The same source tells the paper that the list of Radisic's opposing candidates will be probably extended given that SPRS municipal boards have to propose their candidates for the party president.

Karadzic poetry book goes on sale in Yugoslavia

AFP reports that a book of poetry written by wanted Bosnian Serb war crimes suspect Radovan Karadzic has gone on sale in Serbia's second city Novi Sad. Some 300 people turned up on Tuesday for the promotion of the book entitled: "From the crazy spearhead to the black fairy tale" penned by the former leader of the Bosnian Serbs who has been indicted on genocide charges by the ICTY in The Hague. Karadzic, widely believed to still be living in RS, did not attend the event.

He was described in his absence as "a true poet and extremely important... force in politics, which he practiced with success". "Radovan Karadzic is a guardian of the Serb name, a cavalier in a slave and orthodox world who remains in the

hearts of Serbs," the book's editor Dobrislav Djurovic asserts in the book's blurb. Djorovic's Dobrica publishing house produced the book.

International Community

High-level talks on possible NATO troop cut in Bosnia

High-level talks were taking place at NATO headquarters in Brussels on Wednesday on a possible reduction in the international stabilization force in Bosnia, international media report this morning. NATO Secretary General George Robertson was meeting with Wolfgang Petritsch, the High Representative for BiH, on prospects for a cut in the NATO-led SFOR stabilization force ahead of the normal bi-annual review.

AFP reports that Robertson made clear last week that no decision was expected before the Spring review of security structures in BiH. "This question will be dealt with in the framework of the normal review of our presence in Bosnia-Herzegovina," he said in Lisbon on January 10 after meeting with Portuguese Foreign Minister Jaime Gama, whose country chairs the OSCE. "No decision will be taken, either before this review is complete or before the Spring ministerial meeting" of NATO, set for May 14 in the Icelandic capital Reykjavik.

"Some countries, including the United States, want a substantial reduction in the Bosnia forces," Robertson said in Lisbon, but added that US Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld had been clear it would not be "a unilateral American decision." Rumsfeld last month proposed a one-third cut in the SFOR troop strength, now at 18,000, by the end of 2002, suggesting that the European Union lead an international police force in Bosnia to ease SFOR's peace-keeping duties.

Robertson said any decision on the SFOR troop strength would be "taken by consensus on the basis of the security situation at the moment," adding, "We are linked together, we will succeed together and we will leave together," he said.

Wolfgang Petritsch in Brussels for NATO talks

At yesterday's press conference, OHR spokesman Kevin Sullivan announced that the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, departed to Brussels on Tuesday where he is to address the NATO's North Atlantic Council . In his speech, Oslobodjenje notes, Petritsch will highlight the progress that has been made in the recent economic and political development in BiH and describe the changes which are being made in the entity armed forces. BBC World this morning also reports on the Brussels meeting, stressing that the High Representative will argue against essential cuts of the NATO troops in BiH. Recently, the US announced that it would reduce its troops serving within the SFOR by one third. In an interview with the BBC, the High Representative said that such cuts could be highly detrimental for the country. "This is crucial year for BiH. The general elections are to be held in October and the mandate of the UN police is running out," Petritsch said, adding that the international mix of troops is very important for the stability of the country. He also stressed that some parts of the job of the International Community are still unfinished, such as the return of refugees and the economic reform. In addition, Petritsch, argued, the situation in BiH is still not full back to normal and there are numerous cases of individual violence in the minority return areas, especially in the RS, where nationalists are doing their best to obstruct and prevent the return of minorities.

In the course of the day, Petritsch will also meet the NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson.

Petritsch leaves in June at the latest

Slobodna Dalmacija and Vjesnik carry the statement of OHR Spokesperson Alexandra Stiglmeier published in Dnevni Avaz yesterday, where she said that Ambassador Wolfgang Petritsch will most likely leave the post of the High Representative as early as May. Radio Herceg-Bosna and Slobodna Dalmacija comment that if it proves to be true that Petritsch has already decided to leave BiH by the end of this spring, that will mean that he sees the implementation of the constitutional reforms as his last major task in BiH.

After leaving BiH, says the daily, Petritsch will assume the post of Head of the Austrian Mission with the United Nations in Geneva.

High Representative removes Ivan Mandić, head of the municipality Southwest

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, removed on Tuesday Ivan Mandić from his position as Head of Municipality Southwest in Mostar and barred him from holding any official, elective or appointive public office and from running in elections or for office within political parties. In a statement for the press, the OHR said that the main reason for Mandić's removal is his continued obstruction of implementation of the property laws with the result that the rate of property implementation in Municipality Southwest has been well below the general BiH Federation implementation rate. (Oslobodjenje carries the press release on page 6, Dnevni Avaz on page 4, Jutarnje Novine on page 2, Federation TV and the BiH Radio 1 and nearly all news agencies in the Federation also carried the item, Slobodna Dalmacija, Vecernji List and Dnevni List extensively cover the press release)

Names of Hercegovacka Banka suspects still not

disclosed; Robinson says Jelavic obstructing the investigation

The Spokesperson for the Provisional Administration of Hercegovacka Banka, Johan Verheyden, stated for Slobodna Dalmacija that they still do not know when the names of persons responsible for crimes committed in the Bank will be made public or when criminal charges will be pressed against those responsible. He did not want to comment on the allegations that the High Representative could file criminal charges one of these days as the case "Jelavic and others" comes to an end.

The daily notes that the OHR Spokesperson Mario Brkic denied the possibility of publishing the names of the persons involved in crimes in Hercegovacka Banka one of these days. He said it would make no sense to speculate with the names beforehand and that one should wait for the relevant institutions to declare themselves and take adequate actions.

In an interview with Dnevni Avaz, the Provisional Administrator of the Bank, Toby Robinson, said that the comprehensive investigation of the HB business will be concluded in a few months, and the first criminal charges will be filed already in the upcoming week. "In a situation like this, it is completely normal that the investigation takes a long time, sometimes up to a year," Robinson said. She added that many dubious transactions are connected with the HDZ leadership, and stressed that, although Ante Jelavic has no direct ties with the bank, his names often appears in the process as he is one of the key persons obstructing the investigation and the return of loans. (Full translation to follow)

**Provisional Administrator for Hercegovacka Banka:
We still do not know when we will publish names of**

persons involved in crime

"We still do not know as to when we will go public with concrete names regarding the Hercegovacka Banka case or when criminal charges will be filed against people involved in illegal activities in the bank," the Spokesman for the Provisional Administration of Hercegovacka Banka, Johan Verheyden, told Slobodna Dalmacija.

Verheyden did not want to comment on recent media speculations according to which the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, could, one of these days, file criminal charges for alleged criminal activities in Hercegovacka Banka committed by persons close to the HDZ BiH and the bank's stockholders.

Spokesman of the OHR Sarajevo, Mario Brkic, also denied the possibility of publishing the names of the persons involved in alleged crimes in Hercegovacka Banka one of these days. "We still have to wait and it would make no sense to speculate with names in advance," said the OHR Spokesman adding that one must wait for the relevant institutions to declare themselves and take concrete actions, reads Slobodna Dalmacija.

Ante Jelavic calls Robinson's statements are satirical contribution to BiH political scene

Reacting to Robinson's interview in Dnevni Avaz, the HDZBiH Public Relations Office came out with a press release aimed to clarify the situation: "In one of many abortive attempts to criminalize the business in Hercegovacka Banka, Toby Robinson nebulously but obviously very calculatedly, is launching pieces of misinformation and slander according to which Ante Jelavic obstructs the repayment of debts and credits to the Hercegovacka Banka. The nonsense of Toby Robinson and her mentors would not be worth mentioning if such allegations and her whole interview were not an announcement of criminal and political persecutions of people who with their knowledge and skill made the Hercegovacka Banka the most respectable in the

country until it was raided by SFOR tanks and specialists. Unable to prove their fabricated accusations against the HDZBiH and its political leadership, the international protectors and tutors of Ms. Robinson have decided for public assaults on me, and for persecutions of the members of the Management and other bodies of the Hercegovacka Banka.

If this country were not the worst form of a protectorate, in which international administrators are allowed to do whatever they please, and Ms. Robinson by its position protected against any and every court prosecution, I would surely sue her for slander and libel. As it is, I take her allegations as a satirical contribution to the BiH political scene.

Croatian officials say Petritsch should apologize to Croatia

The statement of the High Representative of the international community in BiH, Wolfgang Petritsch, in an interview published in the Sarajevo daily "Dnevni avaz", that if a House of Peoples should be introduced in the Republika Srpska, such a House should also be introduced in Croatia, met with indignation in Croatia. "Because of such a statement, Petritsch should apologize to Croatia", said Zdravko Tomac, the vice president of the Croatian Parliament (Sabor), and chairman of the Parliamentary Committee for Foreign Policy, for the Novi list, Rijeka. This statement opens "two circles of hell". The first in BiH where the Croats are reduced to national minority giving Croatian radicals an argument for the allegations about inequality and for the demand after a third Entity, and the second in Croatia, where Petritsch restores the concept of the Serbs as constituent people, which was the cause of the war – said Tomac, adding that Petritsch's statement undermines the Dayton and the very foundations of BiH leading to new disasters.

The leader of the Croatian Liberal Party, Drazen Budisa, said that the Croatian Government should have also reacted to this

disgraceful and impertinent statement of Petritsch's. (Fena news agency and today's Dnevni Avaz and Dnevni List also carry this item)

Commenting on the reaction in Croatia, OHR spokesman, Mario Brkic, said that the High Representative's statement was a matter of a principle and should be regarded as such. He also pointed out that there are individuals outside actors who are always ready to suggest constitutional arrangements in BiH, while at the same time, they do not want to address the same arrangements in their own countries.

Russian Federation does not support BiH's membership in the NATO Partnership for Peace

Ambassador of the Russian Federation to BiH Aleksandr Sergeyevich Grishchenko told SRNA that the Moscow authorities are not ready to support proposals and demands by some parties for the cantonization of BiH and the abolishment of the RS. Grishchenko said that the Russian Federation viewed BiH as "an integral, multiethnic and democratic state made up of two equal entities, the RS and the Federation". "Russia's principled official stance is that any problems in the Dayton structure of BiH can be resolved exclusively as a result of a consensus by all sides, in a way laid down in the BiH Constitution," Ambassador Grishchenko said. He recalled recent talks in Moscow between the chairman of the Bosnia-Herzegovina Council of Ministers, Zlatko Lagumdžija, and Russian Foreign Minister Igor Ivanov, who said on that occasion that Moscow viewed the Dayton Agreement as "a living organism", a process that included possible changes. "When it comes to BiH joining NATO programmes, "the Russian Federation does not believe that the enlargement of the alliance is conducive to the consolidation of security and trust in Europe". "This only leads to other divisions. NATO is a military-political organization which is represented throughout Europe, because of which Russia would not greet Bosnia-Herzegovina's possible membership of the Partnership for Peace and NATO," he said.

International organizations do not know what to do about Karadzic and Mladic calendars

Oslobodjenje writes that representatives of international organisations could not on Tuesday provide any concrete answers about the fact that calendars with photos of two most famous war criminals, Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic, were being freely sold on the streets across the RS. "You are aware that the High Representative repeatedly demanded the arrest of Karadzic and Mladic because their freedom presents a great obstacle to the full implementation of the Dayton Peace Agreement," said OHR spokesman, Kevin Sullivan at yesterday's press conference. "We hope that, as the country is moving away from the 1992-1995 war, the public opinion will clearly see the reality of what was done under Karadzic and Mladic," he added. Responding to journalists who were not satisfied with such vague statements and who stressed that, only a few years back, posters and public appearances by the two were banned, Sullivan said that such measures referred to the election period. "The responsible bodies are those who are responsible to take steps about those photos," he said. UN spokesman, Stefo Lehman could only say that if such posters were found in any police stations, they would be immediately removed.

Editorials

Dnevni List: Man, remember you are just a mortal

(Comment on the High Representative's decision to remove Ivan Mandic)

By Vesna Leto; full translation

Among our people, it has already become proverbial that whenever the OHR issues a press release, one can expect massive dismissal.

One gentleman made a very interesting remark: "Are there any Croats left for that supreme autocrat to remove and whoever will remove whom?"

In his most recent "epistle," and I must not say it is the last because who knows who is next, the gentleman who makes the Sun shine and clouds build up, but mostly the latter – as soon as he issues a press release, our sky gets dark – mentioned the sins that Mandic allegedly committed in 2000 and 2001.

We are surprised that he has not accused Mandic of obstructing Annex 7 ever since 1995, when it was signed in Dayton, for who knows what Mandic had in mind back then? Why would our supreme autocrat deal with dates anyway when it is determined in advance that any Croat appointed to a leading position will be replaced? The reason is well known: Annex 7. What would the High Representative be doing if it were not for that Annex? Nothing, you will surely say, because he would make up another one. You judge by yourself how impressive, pathetic or hypocritical is the first sentence in the Decision removing Mayor Mandic, and it reads: "It was to my deep regret that I established that you with your behavior seriously obstructed the implementation of Annex 7."

Every day we fear he might die of being so regretful about Croats. Judging from the number of those that he has removed "to his regret," we are surprised he still feels like signing what we call "Petritsch's epistles." The worse curse is: "May Petritsch remove you!"

Our High Representative is a "principled" promoter of human rights. He is impeccable in his efforts, he worked wholeheartedly for hundreds of Croat families to be able to mark this Christmas in basements, garages, at their relatives', and other "alternative accommodation." Deceived are those who think the Tourist Union deserves credit for the New Year's Eve celebration.

Petritsch removes Mandic and reproaches him for not having forced a sufficient number of Croat families out to the street. 43 evictions are disputable. He also reproaches him because Mandic said third-country refugees should be the last category to come into possession of their property. Mr. Mandic made a huge mistake in not realizing on time what category Mr. Petritsch thinks should be the last.

How could those with thick wallets be the last? They either come here or hire a lawyer, because they have enough money to do it, they claim their property "with the intention to return." With big stories about being nostalgic and hard living with 1,000 to 2,000 DEM of welfare money, they force out those who cannot afford buying bread, let alone a place to live, they get hold of the key and then the business starts. These stories of ours could be called Business Annex 7 because then follows the process of either selling or renting of those apartments, and at sky-high prices. They all say their night lasts five or six months, they work 12 hours a day, they do their share of crying and then go back with the money, because they say: "Who would live here now?" We even get compliments for being so unrelenting because "only the persistent ones and those who have nowhere to go stay here."

We have learned so much about many of the European cultures since our "returnees" started coming that we already feel like going where they have already been. Unless we do it ourselves, there are the people who will make us do it with their decisions, laws, disenfranchising. With our supreme authority, the High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch, there is no right to appeal. What appeal? We are heading for the West, there is no time to waste because time is money.

It all reminds me of the ancient Rome where many identified themselves with God. People used to go next to one of those, telling him: "Man, remember you are just a mortal."