BiH Media Round-up, 30/7/2001

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BiH State-related State

Petritsch wants a direct mutual communication between BiH Council of Ministers and CRA

Saturday's Dnevni Avaz quoted OHR Spokesman Oleg Milisic as saying that the High Representative was supporting a direct communication between the BiH Council of Ministers and the Communication Regulatory Agency (CRA), as well as the CRA's independent position. Milisic said that the OHR had not received any official request of the BiH Council of Ministers, but that it had learned from media about the Council's demand for the annulment of the tender for the third GSM license. The demand was addressed to the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch. However, according to Milisic, the CRA is an institution responsible and authorized for the issue of the third tender. CRA Spokesperson Amela Odobasic told the newspaper that the Agency did not want to comment on the BiH Council of Ministers' demand since it had also not received any official request.

BiH Trade Unions Association requests Petritsch and Torngren to annul tender for the third GSM license

According to the Sarajevo dailies, the BiH Trade Unions Association requested on Friday High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch and CRA Chief Executive Jerker Torngren to immediately annul the tender for the third GSM license. The Association believes that if Petritsch and Torngren insist on completion of the procedure related to the disputed tender, they will leave room for a permanent doubt in their fair approach and impartiality.

Silajdzic says BiH to access Council of Europe in September

Party for BiH leader Haris Silajdzic told Saturday's Dnevni Avaz that Sonya Mosser Starrach, the Council of Europe special

representative in BiH, had said to him during their Friday telephone talk that BiH would be admitted into the Council in September regardless of possible non-adoption of the election law. However, the RTV BiH reported on Sunday that Sonya Mosser said it was still premature to announce when BiH would access to the Council. The Banja Luka Nezavisne Novine quoted Mosser as saying that she would be more than happy to call a press conference and announce that BiH would become a member of Council of Europe.

Money from former SFRY arrived in BiH's Central Bank

RS dailies report that a first part of 130 million KM that BiH got based on succession of property of former SFRY, arrived in BiH's Central Bank. The same amount will be paid in the following couple of days and payment of the third part of 200 million was also announced, the dailies report. This money will be at disposal at BiH Central Bank, while the entities would be in charge of paying BiH's foreign debts.

BiH Minister of Civil Affairs and Communications raises issue of responsibility of signatories of a BiH-Croatia 1999 border agreement

Glas Srpski reports that BiH Minister of Civil Affairs and Communications Svetozar MIhajlovic called on the citizens of Srpska Kostajnica to raise the issue of responsibility of signatories of a border agreement with the Republic of Croatia. The agreement related to the Bosanka/Srpska Kostajnica border area was signed by late Croatian President Franjo Tudjman and Bosniak member of the BiH Presidency Alija Izetbegovic on July 31, 1999. and it foresaw that the disputable border between the two countries should go along river Uncica and not along river Una, as defined by the Annex 2 of the Dayton Agreement. Mihajlovic accused Ostoja Kremenovic, who was President of BiH Commission for Border Issues at the time, as well as other of its members of selling the Republika Srpska territory for personal purposes. "We have an information that the members of BiH and Croatian state

commissions were meeting secretly in the Banja Mljecanica, where all was agreed", said Mihajlovic.

A half of deputies in the Brcko District Assembly receive double salaries
Dnevni Avaz reported on Sunday that the deputies in the Brcko District Assembly working in the companies, which are budgetary users, will have to leave their jobs or the sits in the assembly. According to the newspaper, this concerns almost a half of deputies. Brcko International Supervisor Henry Clarke is expected in coming days to make a decision, which will resolve the issue.

Rebuilding of Brcko White Mosque started
Dnevni Avaz reported on Saturday that rebuilding of the Brcko White Mosque had been started a day earlier at the same location at which the facility had been placed until its devastation in 1992. Hasan Osmic, a member of the construction board, told ONASA that there would be no cornerstone laying ceremony for the mosque.

Federation

BiH Federation to start forcible collection of taxes
All three Sarajevo dailies report on their front pages on Saturday about a meeting of BiH Federation Finance Minister Nikola Grabovac with tax inspectors and his announcement that he would resign if taxes are not collected. "I will resign but before that all those will suffer consequences who avoided tax payment or did nothing to help taxes collection," Grabovac said.

Cardinal Puljic, Bishop Peric and Ejup Ganic request abolishment of the BiH entities
Sunday's Oslobodjenje reports that BiH Cardinal Vinko Puljic and Bishop Ratko Peric last week told US Congress Committee for Foreign Affairs that the existence of the two entities had

legalized war injustice. The priests were supported by Ejup Ganic, former BiH Federation President, who told the US Congressmen that the international community should consider a possibility to abolish Republika Srpska since it was not implementing the Dayton Agreement's provisions concerning the return of refugees. The three officials were giving their testimonies on the situation in BiH at an invitation of Congressman Henry Hyde.

HNS welcomes Cardinal Puljic's and Bishop Peric's addressing US Congress Foreign Affairs Committee

According to Saturday's Dnevni Avaz, the Croat National Assembly (HNS) welcomed the last week's address of Cardinal Vinko Puljic and Mostar Bishop Ratko Peric to the US Congress Foreign Affairs Committee, in which they testified on the abuse of citizen's and religious rights of Croats in BiH. The HNS assessed that the testimony would help a realistic reviewing the political situation in BiH.

SDP Main Board satisfied with the work of the Alliance for Changes in first 100 days

The SDP BiH Main Board expressed a satisfaction with the Alliance for Changes work in the first 100 days at its session held on Saturday. However, according to Oslobodjenje, the Board pointed at "specific weaknesses," including the failure to complete legislative reforms, gain a satisfactory support from RS parties, and achieve better influence on the work of certain ministries and governmental agencies. The Board also concluded that the Party for BiH and the New Croat Initiative had opened door for former SDA and HDZ members, which created a false picture in the public that the Alliance was in secret coalition with the former nationalist officials. According to Sunday's Dnevni Avaz, NHI leader Kresimir Zubak and Party for BiH General Secretary Safet Halilovic denied such the SDP allegations. The Banja Luka Nezavisne Novine quoted Sead Avdic, the Vice President of the SDP, as saying that it was a high time to review relations within the Alliance as well as

behavior of individual political parties. He also announced that Cantonal Boards of SDP would review efficiency of Cantonal Governments and propose certain measures in terms of their possible reconstruction.

Alija Izetbegovic hosted Egyptian terrorists

Glas Srpski, on its cover page, carries TANJUG agency (based in Belgrade) news piece on arrests of two Egyptians in BiH last week, who are suspected of being closely connected with terrorist Osama bin Laden. According to the agency the two belong to the long list of wanted terrorists in Egypt from 1996. The agency goes further in explaining that, in 1996, a team of Egyptian security experts had visited Sarajevo. Alija Izetbegovic took up responsibility to cancel hospitality in BiH to a group of 10 to 12 thousand Islamic radicals and he failed to do so. He even gave BiH citizenship to all of them, Glas Srpski carries.

Vecernji List: Izetbegovic could testify before the Hague Tribunal

(provided by OHR Mostar)

The former member of the BiH Presidency and the wartime commander-in-chief of the BiH Army Alija Izetbegovic could testify before The Hague Tribunal. According to Sarajevo sources, Izetbegovic could testify in the process against former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic. Beside that, the former member of the BiH Presidency will testify in connection with crimes committed by the members of the BiH Army against the Croats in northern Herzegovina and central Bosnia. “I will comply with The Hague Tribunal if my testimony can help reveal any crimes that had happened during the war”, admitted Alija Izetbegovic, who is currently the President of the SDA. First arrangements on Izetbegovic’s testimony before the court have already been arranged and the details will be determined after the visit of Carla Del Ponte, who is coming to BiH with indictments against Bosniaks at the end of August. Since Izetbegovic is old and in bad health, our source stresses that

they would determine whether Izetbegovic should testify in Sarajevo or directly via satellite link before The Hague Tribunal in the process against Milosevic. In the case of massacre of 32 Croats of Grabovica from September 1993, the former commander of the BiH Army Sefer Halilovic will testify along Izetbegovic. Although he was labeled by the Croat Prisoners (of war) Associations as the main culprit for genocide, Halilovic could be a witness together with other commanders of the BiH Army, including the retired general Rasim Delic. It is also mentioned that Carla Del Ponte will bring indictments against perpetrators of the crime committed against 42 Croats in Uzdol on 14th of September. The last visit by The Hague investigators to Uzdol and Grabovica in summer of 2000 was crucial for pressing charges against commanders of the BiH Army. The ICTY Prosecutor will request the Bosniak side to arrest the former Heads of Municipalities from where the Croats and Serbs were expelled on a mass scale. First of all, the Hague Tribunal has on its mind the wartime Mayor of Bugojno Dzevad Mlaco. The indictment is charging him with expulsion of thousands of Croats of Bugojno and the mysterious disappearance of 21 Croat prisoners of war whose destiny is yet to be revealed, reads Vecernji List.

Vecernji List: Fifty culprits for Hercegovacka Banka-related incidents to be arrested

SFOR and IPTF in coordination with the Federation of BiH Ministry of Interior are planning to arrest 50 people identified as main culprits for the Hercegovacka Banka-related incidents in April. Although the indictments are not made known to public, it is assumed that around 50 people will be indicted of organizing protests and mistreating the OHR and Federation of BiH Ministry of Finance auditors and the members of the IPTF and SFOR. Most of the culprits have been identified in Mostar, Grude and Siroki Brijeg. The SFOR Headquarters did not want to comment on the issue and the Federation Ministry of Interior says that they know nothing about it, reads Vecernji List in its Sunday edition.

Vecernji List: HR did not completely support raid into Hercegovacka Banka

A high-ranked official of the Federation Government stated with Saturday's Vecernji list the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, had not completely supported the plan on the raid into Hercegovacka Bank, while Ralph Johnston, former Principal Deputy High Representative, insisted on it. He added that one of oil lobbies, ruled by former HDZ members, felt endangered because Cro Herz AG, owned by people close to the HDZ, was supposed to sell 51% of shares to Austrian Company MOL, which has the cheapest oil in Ploce terminals. Herzegovacka Bank is the absolute owner of Cro Herz Company. It was agreed that on April 10 they would sign a contract with MOL on the sale of a control package of shares.

Jutarnji List: Leader of Neum businessmen says they might block Adriatic Highway

Jutarnji List in its Sunday edition, quotes Tomislav Kresic, the President of the Association of Businessmen in Neum, as saying that the Association would block the Adriatic highway unless the residents of Neum are allowed to transport their commodities through Opuzen, Metkovic and the Doljani border crossing. For now, they are only allowed to use the Svitava road, whereas Croatian citizens on their way to and from Dubrovnik can go through Neum. In addition, they demanded re-opening of the customs office in Neum.

BiH Federation House of Representative leadership says concept of RTV BiH brought into question

The Collegium of the BiH Federation House of Representatives maintains, according to Saturday's Dnevni Avaz, that a concept of RTV BiH has been generally brought into question since further worsening of the situation concerning the political, economic, editorial, professional and social status of the media house. The Collegium has therefore sent a letter to High representative Wolfgang Petritsch requesting that BiH Federation Parliament is fully informed on all problems

related to the RTV BiH's transformation.

Republika Srpska

Sarovic meets with Hombach
Republika Srpska President Mirko Sarovic said on Friday following his meeting with Stability Pact for Southeastern Europe Special Coordinator Bodo Hombach in Banja Luka that the RS strongly supported basic goals of the Pact. He added that the former Yugoslavia's area could join Europe and the democratic world only if it comes out from permanent poverty. Hombach said that the region needed better cooperation in which Belgrade, Sarajevo and Zagreb were playing the key role.

Bosniak immigrants in Canada say Karadzic to move in Toronto
Saturday's Oslobodjenje quoted a leader of Bosniak refugees living in Canada as saying that Ljiljana Zelen Karadzic, wife of the most wanted war crime suspect Radovan Karadzic had bought an apartment in Toronto. The source, who wanted to speak only under the terms of anonymity, said that he had personally seen Karadzic's wife and his daughter Sonja as they were making a deal related to the purchase of the apartment. He added that one could not be surprised if Karadzic wanted to find shelter in Canada because of a strong Serb nationalists lobby in this country.

International Community

Petritsch meets with Annan
The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, met on Friday in New York with United Nations Secretary General Kofi Annan to inform him on the developments in BiH since their last meeting in March. (PR carried prominently and almost in full by all three Sarajevo dailies on Saturday)

OHR calls on BiH Federation House of Peoples to urgently adopt amendments to the Law on Judicial and Prosecutorial Services

The Senior Deputy High Representative, Matthias Sonn, and Independent Judicial Commission Director Rakel Surlien appealed on the BiH Federation House of Peoples to urgently, on July 30, adopt amendments to the entity Law on the Judicial and Prosecutorial Services. (PR carried prominently and almost in full by all three Sarajevo dailies on Saturday, Slobodna Dalmacija carries the press release in full on page 15, under BiH section)

Bush extends US peace-keepers mandate in BiH for another year

US President George Bush informed the US Congress about a decision to extend for another year participation of the US forces in the international mission securing the implementation of the Dayton Agreement in BiH, at a request of the United Nations Security Council.

Jutarnje Novine: interview with John Shearer, the High Representative's Broadcasting Agent

UN's Roberts says worst results in property returns achieved in Banja Luka and Prijedor

According to Saturday's Dnevni Avaz, UN/IPTF Spokesman for the Banja Luka and Bihac regions Alun Roberts said that the worst results in returning properties to the pre-war owners had been achieved in Banja Luka and Prijedor. Roberts added that only between 10 and 13 percent of claims have been solved so far in the areas.

SDHR prepared to meet with Serb representatives in BiH House of Peoples and discuss their dissatisfaction with the work of the House

Saturday's Dnevni Avaz quoted OHR Spokesman Kevin Sullivan as saying that Senior Deputy High Representative Matthias Sonn was prepared to meet representatives of the Serb people in the BiH House of Peoples, who had expressed dissatisfaction with

the work of the House in a letter sent to High Representative Wolfgang Petritsch. Sullivan added that the OHR was also not satisfied with the work of the House due to long procedures of laws passage caused by a not constructive approach of the deputies.

Jutarnje Novine: interview with US Ambassador to BiH Thomas Miller

US Ambassador to BiH Thomas Miller denied in an interview with the weekend edition of Jutarnje Novine that he had requested the US Government to insist on the removal of the High Representative to BiH, Wolfgang Petritsch, and the appointment of an American to this position. The agreement was made yet in Dayton that an American is appointed head of the SFOR as an European diplomat is appointed High Representative, Miller emphasized. He welcomed the idea of merger of the international organizations in BiH, pointing out that he was not worried that this would give too much authority to the OHR, because he hoped that it would be used for the partnership with the BiH authorities.

OHR assesses Mehmedagic's proposal as a direct strike on returnees

OHR Spokesman Oleg Milisic told SRNA news agency that a proposal made by BiH Federation Minister of Urban Planning and Environment Ramiz Mehmedagic, according to which the rest of not privatized apartments in the entity should be sold for cash, was a discriminatory one, and it represented a direct strike on the returnees. It is clear that this is about a discrimination, since those who did not leave their apartments were allowed to purchase them for vouchers, according to Milisic.

OHR reiterates the restitution is responsibility of entities

According to Sunday's Dnevni Avaz, BiH Federation Prime Minister Alija Behmen said at the last session of the entity's Government that the issue of restitution had to be stipulated

by the BiH state law. He added that, as long as he is Prime Minister, there would be no entity law on the issue. However, the OHR spokesman, Oleg Milisic, told the newspaper that the restitution was a very complicated, expensive and long process. The entities are responsible to carry out the process and they should therefore make all relevant decisions on the issue, according to Milisic. “If the Federation and Republika Srpska want that the issue is regulated at the state level, that is their decision,” Milisic emphasized.

Editorials

Oslobodjenje: Destruction of the television
In a column on, as he says, the destruction of the television published on Saturday, Oslobodjenje journalist Mirko Sagolj writes that an example of TV BiH, which has already become a case, confirms that the international representatives in BiH dealing with media are showing a high level of political amateurism. Sagolj wonders how will the new two TV stations deriving from the TV BiH, the Federation TV and the BiH PBS, look like. He concluded that they would probably be organized as the state itself: in numbers, or one building, two televisions, three peoples, four million of viewers, five-six marks subscription etc.
Oslobodjenje: Church in place of HDZ
Oslobodjenje columnist Zija Dizdarevic wrote in the newspaper’s Sunday issue about the more and more aggressive Catholic church’s political engagement in BiH and in Croatia. The Catholic church leadership in BiH is, according to Dizdarevic, fully supporting the HDZ and the Croat National Assembly (HNS), as a creation which has illegally taken over constitutional authorities.

Oslobodjenje: We do not know
In another commentary on the transformation of the RTV BiH, Oslobodjenje columnist Ibrahim Prohic wrote in the newspaper’s

Monday issue that this process was becoming a paradigm of the general situation in the country. According to Prohic, the problem is not a fact the most important media house in the country is in a such bad situation, but in a fact we do not know how to find the resolution of the problem.

Feral Tribune (also carried by Monday's Oslobodjenje): Neither war nor protectorate

By Ivan Lovrenovic (provided by OHR Mostar)

Since the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in 1995 and since the first post-war elections were held late in summer 1996, the political power was divided in two. One 'half' is being held by the institutions of the International Administration (political ones: OHR, OSCE, UN Mission, and a military one: SFOR) while the other one is being held by domestic Authorities, structured in endlessly complicated scheme of 'state', entity, Cantonal and Municipal levels. Until a few months ago, parties and politicians with a nationalistic concept of the state, peoples, politics and democracy itself, held a monopoly over this other half of the Authority within the BiH Federation and the RS.

The HDZ and SDA tried to practice this absurd system, through a deadly and hopeless relation of a cat and dog tied in the same bag. The only plan, that they constructively cooperated on, was the division of interest spheres, where the interest was realized as a special one (a partisan, group-private) and not as a general one in any form (a social, economic, civic..). I do not have to remind that in the RS nationalism was and it has remained the system in power, and political conflicts and rivalry, which are sometimes very hard, are always dealing with concrete interests and never with the issues of a true political and democratic transformation.

In accordance to the principles of multi-cultural values and pluralistic democracy, that they advocate, the first ones objected the other ones that they do not lead the country by the road of a social, economic and political integration.

However, at the same time, as guards and interpreters of the Dayton Peace Agreement, which systematically defines BiH as a forked, political being – between ethnicity and democracy, between integrity and division, they themselves actively

contribute to the preservation of the legitimacy of nationalistic parties and politicians.
The other ones, for the needs of a demagogic manipulation with the people and electorate, always keep an open front against the International Community, strangers in a colloquial political language, as against a mythic address that all evils are coming from. By using different phrases in different forms all three leading Bosnian nationalistic projects have been cultivating this kind of relation toward institutions and individuals from the International Community. In some cases the relation reached the fever pitch and the hostility broke out. During the last weeks, it was the most obvious in the cases of the HDZ, Hercegovacka Bank and the removal of Jelavic and his party colleagues.
However, there were similar situations earlier, for instance when the High Representative cast out from the political life the SDS leaders Momcilo Krajisnik, now a prison resident in The Hague. The SDA and its leaders in the early years quarreled with the International Community the least of all, but this relationship gradually deteriorated so much that the internationals started to bluntly accuse the people from the SDA top leadership of corruption, and Alija Izetbegovic himself entered public polemics in which he, via the newspapers, told the US diplomat Richard Sclar: Get off our backs!
The thing with corruption turned into a bizarre story after Chris Hedges elaborated on it in what must be the most influential paper in the world – The New York Times. The then SDA-HDZ Federation Government under the leadership of Edhem Bicakcic (with Deputy Prime Minister Dragan Covic seconding) put their backs into raising huge amounts of money to pay the US team of lawyers that were to save the face of the SDA family and partisan leadership before the court. The results of the action remain unknown to this day and only some independent papers in Sarajevo published that the Bicakcic-Covic Government paid over 1.3 million DEM for the services of the legal team.
If the allegations by the disempowered nationalists about the Alliance being a “quisling creation” devised in the international circles, are quite certainly exaggerated, it is as certain that the Alliance would have hardly made it without

support and political sympathy from those circles. However, the ways in which some of the Alliance leaders have recently been entering open conflicts with International Community representatives on some issues of crucial importance for BiH, seem to be changing this conception and bringing about a brand new side to the typical relations between the nationals and the internationals.

The first sign that hinted those relations would not be idyllic, was the well-known non-adoption of the Election Law. Although this example may not be the best one, because, judging from all that is happening in this parliamentary vicious circle, there was much confusion and double games within the Alliance itself, it showed that the new political structure in BiH is not a blind instrument in the hands of the international administration.

The case with license granting for the so called third mobile exchange network added to this impression and produced an even stronger friction between the Council of Ministers and the OHR. The CRA, Communication Regulatory Agency (in the competence of the OHR) was conducting for months the procedure for granting another mobile exchange network license, in addition to the existing two that are practically a "repetition" of the political scheme of the two entities. The CRA decision to grant the third network without a public competition to one of the international contenders, and for the price of 2 million DEM, caused a fierce public reaction from the BiH Foreign Minister and SDP President, Zlatko Lagumdzija, who recognised the ways of classical colonialism in the decision.

The decision was postponed and an avalanche of accusations fell down onto the back of Jerker Torngren, the CRA expert who signed the decision. The accusations culminated in the statement by Nijaz Durakovic, a prominent SDP member, who said that Mr. Torngren should be a persona non grata.

How will this dispute end, there are not even hints. Torngren has patiently elaborated on few occasions that the decision was useful and good, because the future operator will be obliged to cover the whole country, which is not the case at the moment with the current two and invest in the gear and that eventually the prescription fees for mobile phones in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which are highest in Europe, will be

cut down. Beside that, Torngren claims that the Council of Ministers had a draft of his decision months ago, but nobody reacted to it until a day before the planned official announcement. But nobody pays attention to his arguments.

The collapse of the Sarajevo/Bosnia and Herzegovina Television is one of the most tragic examples of several-years-long inefficiency and shabbiness of the International Community. Really, if Radovan Karadzic "deserves credits" for the first, intensive phase of destruction of the Sarajevo/Bosnia and Herzegovina Television, the current state of total collapse can be attributed to the international management in Bosnia and Herzegovina since 1996 until present days. All those big promises about restructuring of the BiH TV, developing of a single public service for the whole country and one Federation Television are now winding up in a more evident editorial and staff-professional debacle.

The key figure of the downhill is John Shearer, the OHR's "governor" and factotum in restructuring business. The man was, so they say, a magus in organizing the BBC, but it is obvious that he is not doing well in Bosnia. Or the whole thing is set up not work out at all. In a recent TV show, journalist asked Shearer a concrete question: tell us, finally, what have you done in two years of you bossing on television in Sarajevo?

The gentleman briskly took the floor, spoke for five or six minutes without a single break, the interpreter broke her tongue trying to follow him, and all he said was a trivial and unconvincing phrase: I love this country and believe it will be in Europe…

In the meantime, the Television in question will, by all accounts, be left without its crown product. It is about the outstanding authorial show Zivjeti s prirodom (Living with Nature) by the journalist and ecologist Nijaz Abadzic, an author with such a personality and personal authorial hallmark that he would be a star on any self-respecting television in the world. A month ago, Nijaz Abadzic was told, in a bureaucratic manner and without any explanation, that his show would no longer be broadcast. Zivjeti s prirodom was supposed to mark 20 years of continuous broadcasting in September this year. Regardless of who or what stands behind this program decision, abolishing Abadzic on the Sarajevo television is an

act that most evidently shows how deep is the collapse of the once powerful media house that was developed over 30 years.

Dnevni Avaz: A strategic importance of the Bush's decision

Dnevni Avaz journalist Armin Zeba commented in the Sunday's Commentary of the Day on the US President George Bush's decision to extend for another year participation of the US soldiers in the mission securing the Dayton Agreement's implementation in BiH. According to Zeba, the majority of the BiH citizens saw in this move a fresh hope for the one day's establishment of BiH as a normal state. The main importance of Bush's decision is in a fact that there will be no lasting peace in BiH all until war criminals are not brought to justice. And this cannot happen without the US participation in SFOR, Zeba concluded.