

# BiH Media Round-up, 8/1/2002

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## BiH State-related Issues

### **Big Croatian port in center of (mis)understanding between Croatia and BiH: Tombstones for confederation (NB: Ploce in Croatian language means stones)**

Written by **Dino Mikulandra**

Slobodna Dalmacija reads that the Ploce Port is again in the center of attention especially in the light of an announcement that the misunderstanding surrounding the Agreement on the Ploce Port could be soon resolved. The magic wand which should cut the Gordian knot of the phantom agreement signed by the then Presidents **Tudjman and Izetbegovic** in 1998 reads something like this: An annex to the Agreement on the Ploce Port that regulates the abolishment of the seventh member of the inter-state Committee, who is, according to the Agreement, a foreign national with authorities that his ruling is binding and final in case of possible disputes, will be made. Although it should be a secret operation, following a certain logic, Croatian Ambassador to BiH, **Josip Vrbosic**, went public saying that some members of the Council of Ministers have shown readiness to support such annex which would Croatia and BiH use to settle every potential dispute without resorting to an international arbitration. The news was still fresh when the Chair of the Council of Ministers, Zlatko Lagumdžija, personally denied that the negotiations with Zagreb have started yielding results. The chief of the Alliance has openly thrown the gauntlet in Vrbosic's face saying that not even an informal discussion within the CoM has taken place. We also record the current BiH Ambassador to Croatia's statement (Zlatko Dizdarevic) who said that the most acceptable solution would be that the Agreement be ratified by the Croatian Parliament, and only then the two sides could sit down and amend it to satisfy their needs. Even the (Croatian) PM **Racan** is aware that the suggested provision, under which Croatian

citizens are not the majority in the Committee, is absolutely against the Constitution. Just to remind you, this unfortunate agreement was made under the unbearable pressure coming from the US diplomacy with its geo-political component, prior to the signing that took place in Dubrovnik, being the existence of the never realized confederation relation between Croatia and BiH (...) Although there is no love between the SDP and HDZ in Croatia, when it comes to the Ploce Port, they have a joint stance: a protectorate will not go through! **Ivan Pavlovic**, the CEO of the Ploce Port, requests that a compromise be reached according to which the Ploce Port would get a concession in the next 30 years, which is the duration of the Agreement on the Free Transit. A situation in which four foreign votes (three from BiH and a judge of the IC) tailor the policy of the Croatian second most important port, the people of the Neretva valley see as the biggest nightmare in the year 2002 and they will fight it with all legitimate means, reads Slobodna Dalmacija.

## **Foreign capital finds no fertile ground in BiH – 20 times less foreign money per capita than in Croatia**

Dramatic was the statement by the High Representative that BiH currently attracts only US\$14 per capita whereas in Croatia this amount is set at US\$299, notes Vecernji List, adding that the unemployment rate in BiH is three times higher than in Croatia.

Experts think the main reason why the foreign capital is reaching BiH so slowly is the fact that the BiH market is disorganized. The too slow privatization process adds to the not so rosy picture of BiH, says Vecernji List. In spite of the unfavorable tendencies in the BiH economy, the High Representative gives us hope by comparing the current economic picture of BiH with the picture of his mother country Austria back in the seventies and the eighties when the foreign investment helped transform the country's productive base,

says Vecernji List.

## **Liberal Democratic Party: High Representative to help abolish visa-regime for BiH citizens**

ONASA news agency and Oslobodjenje report that the Liberal-Democratic Party (LDS) expects that citizens who hold BiH passports will this year be finally allowed to travel across Europe without visas. At a press conference held on Monday, the party president, Rasim Kadic, said he expects the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, to urgently undertake special activities directed at the introduction of no-visa regime for BiH citizens. "The LDS expects Petritsch to make a plan of activities in order to ensure that BiH citizens become real citizens of Europe before the end of his mandate. I am convinced that the admission of BiH into the Council of Europe, the continuing reforms in BiH and the activities of the High Representative will indeed cause the abolishment of visa requirements," Kadic told reporters on in Sarajevo.

## **Federation**

### **Will Halilovic's BPS leave the Alliance?**

The Coordination Board of the Alliance Parties is to hold a consultative meeting on Wednesday in order to discuss recent requests of the Bosnian Patriotic Party (BPS) leadership asking for the removal of one minister in Tuzla Canton who is no longer a BPS member, as well as better (i.e., more favorable) apportioning of directorial post of several large companies in the Sarajevo Canton. Oslobodjenje notes that the additional contentious issue is the return of the party president, Sefer Halilovic, to the post of the Federation Minister of Refugees and DPs after he has been granted a temporary release from The Hague prison. Although there is a general agreement that individuals indicted, but not yet convicted, by the ICTY are eligible to hold a public post,

many Alliance officials are hesitant to make any positive statements about this matter. Meanwhile, the BPS continues to insist that Halilovic should re-assume his ministerial post as soon as possible, and speculations have it that the party, small but influential, could even get out of the Alliance if its demands are not met.

Dnevni Avaz reports on its front page that even the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, is quite concerned about the Halilovic affair. The daily writes that Petritsch has warned the Alliance leadership at a recent meeting that it would be unwise to keep Halilovic on the post of the Federation Minister of Refugees, while he is awaiting a trial in The Hague. OSCE mission's spokesperson, Urdur Gunnarsdotir, refused yesterday (Monday) to comment on this issue, and simply stressed that there are no legal obstacles for Halilovic to return to this post. It is expected that Alliance members will attempt to resolve this issue at a meeting scheduled for Wednesday.

## **Federation asks the Human Rights Chamber to review its ruling on military apartments**

The Federation government had asked on Monday the BiH Human Rights Chamber to review its December ruling which granted the right to former JNA (Yugoslav national Army) officers to repossess their abandoned apartments across BiH. Although the decisions of the Chamber are final and binding, Oslobođenje notes, Federation representatives are hopeful that they will win the legal battle with this institution. The entity's Seada Palavric told the daily that there were several irregularities which prevented the Chamber judges to make a fair decision. She stressed that the ruling was made at a plenary session, not a Council, which automatically excludes a possibility of appeal by any party. Secondly, Palavric argues, several judges may have been biased in the process and have acted more as legal representatives to the plaintiffs than as judges. Additional argument on the part of the Federation is that the

chamber allegedly fully ignored the report made up by the Badinter Commission on the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia, which indicated that the JNA did not have legitimate control over the entire country and, consequently, could not undertake the privatization of apartments. Finally, Palavric argues, the Chamber failed to take into consideration the OHR opinion, dated July 2001, that the JNA may have in 1992 undertaken the privatization of apartments on the territory of BiH in order to collect additional funds and gain the loyalty of its officers.

Federation Defense Ministry representative before the Chamber, Nura Zimic, stressed that, if the ruling remains, the Ministry will lose 1,500 apartments, half of which had been granted to families of fallen soldiers and war veterans.

## **Eronet: Property of Hercegovacka Banka or the Federation?**

The chairman of the Mostar HPT (Croat Postal Service) Steering Board, Slavo Kukic, told Oslobodjenje that Eronet will be granted the license for the third GSM operator a week after its shares are returned to the HPT and the Federation. Oslobodjenje reports that Croatian media are blaming Kukic for the potential failure of this operator and the defeat of its foreign financiers, Deutsche Telecom and Hrvatski Telecom, as he refused to buy the Eronet shares dubiously obtained by CroHerc and Hercegovina Osiguranje. The later two are now a property of Hercegovacka Banka, which is presently under the provisional administration of Toby Robinson. Robinson's spokesperson, Johan Verhayden, told the daily that it is the bank who is now a legal owner of Eronet shares. He added that these shares are still not for sale. However, once they are on the market and if the HPT and the Federation manage to return 51 percent of the shares, the Eronet will be able to obtain a GSM license. "If not, a new tender will be open, and Eronet will get the license only if it offers the best price," Kukic stressed at the end.

## **Television stations from both banks of the Neretva engaged in a joint project 'Grad' – First recording session starts over a half an hour later than planned**

The single Police Administration in Mostar is the subject of the first in a series of shows to be produced within the project 'Grad' (City) which is being made by the HTV Oscar C from the west and RTV Mostar from the east part of the city. The recording is financed by the Irex Pro Media, the American production company that launched the 'Mreza Plus' program consisting of five BiH television stations from both entities. The first recording session, which started over a half an hour later than planned due to technical problems, hosted the Canton 7 Minister of the Interior Goran Bilic and his Deputy Sead Sehic, as well as the Mostar Mayor Neven Tomic and his Deputy Hamdija Jahic. The anchors of the show, which was recorded in an improvised studio at the Croat Center Herceg-Stjepan Kosaca, were Mario Vrankic and Mirsad Behram. Vrankic told Vecernji List that the shows will be dealing with problems that both parts of the city have in common and which both television stations speak about on a daily basis.

## **Prlic is skiing, lawyers are preparing evidence material**

No one from the official circles could confirm the information published in Dnevni List that Jadranko Prlic has recently testified before ICTY investigators. Prlic's colleagues told the daily that he is out of country, skiing in Austria or Germany.

The paper found out from the BiH lawyer's circles who, by the nature of their jobs, keep in regular contact with the Tribunal, that Prlic allegedly testified on December 11, 2001. The daily's source said that Prlic had some contacts with the ICTY in December, at the request from the Tribunal Prosecutor's Office. He said Prlic was not talking to ICTY

investigators and could not say why Prlic was in contact with the Tribunal or in what capacity.

The Croat Liaison Officer with the Hague Tribunal, Goran Mihaljevic, has no information about Dr. Prlic testifying, either.

Prlic has reportedly hired a few domestic lawyers to defend his interests and he also has a lawyer in Croatia whose name is Camil Salakovic. Salakovic is allegedly preparing the evidence material related to Prlic's testimony before the ICTY investigators.

At length, the daily says regardless of whether this most recent news is true or served from the intelligence and political circles of his opponents, it is certain that Prlic will eventually have to appear before the ICTY investigators, either as a witness or an indictee.

## **Republika Srpska**

### **Nacional: Ratko Mladic will not turn himself in to the ICTY**

Former Bosnian Serb military commander Ratko Mladic, one of the most wanted war crimes suspects of the war in BiH, has no intention of surrendering to the UN tribunal in The Hague, Belgrade daily Nacional said on Tuesday. "He is not even thinking about surrendering to the tribunal, but he is intensively trying to find a way to safely go to the mountains of Herzegovina or Montenegro," the paper quoted a "well-informed" source as saying. Officials at the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia

(ICTY) say Mladic is reported to be living in Belgrade. But the source was quoted as saying that Mladic had been sent "clear signals that he can no longer count on unlimited



protection of the Yugoslav and Serbian state leadership". For "security reasons" Mladic was sleeping in the basement of his house in a Belgrade suburb, "thinking what to do next", the source said.

AFP notes that reformers in Belgrade have often denied Mladic is in the city. However, he was regularly seen there in the years that followed the end of the war in BiH in 1995, reportedly under the protection of the then president Slobodan Milosevic.

## **Miscellaneous**

### **Vecernji List Personalities of the Year: Brajkovic first, Jelavic on the fifth, Petritsch on the ninth place**

Mijo Brajkovic, the General Manager of Aluminij Mostar, has been declared the Personality of the Year in an opinion poll conducted by Vecernji List. Brajkovic is on the first place with 22% of votes, Ante Jelavic is the fifth with 7.5%, Zlatko Lagumdzija is the sixth most popular person with 5.5%, and the High Representative is on the ninth place with 3.5% of votes. The High Representative has also been given the Media Press award as the person with the most extensive presence in the media in the course of the last year.

## **Editorials**

### **Vecernji List: Silajdzic – new American man for BiH**

**Written by I. Barbaric**

Vecernji List notes that Haris Silajdzic, the President of the

Party for BiH, is preparing to take up one of the important state functions again and to become as influential as possible now that Alija Izetbegovic's health condition has deteriorated. Silajdzic's recent visit to America had only one goal – discussions on the abolishment of the RS. The aim is to divert the attention from the major problems, one of them being the charges that the RS Government and Prosecutor's Office pressed against Izetbegovic. It is said in the Sarajevo lobbies that Izetbegovic had a hard time accepting it, which, allegedly, was also one of the reasons why his health condition worsened, says Vecernji list. Silajdzic is, reportedly, trying to cause a crisis in BiH in order to put Izetbegovic's alleged responsibility for war crimes to the background and Silajdzic, in return, would be awarded with the position of a new, modern Bosniak leader fighting for a single BiH with a different territorial organization, which might be the future American policy in BiH. What speaks in favor of this option is the harsh vocabulary that the High Representative used during his visit to Banja Luka, when he openly told the RS leadership that the current situation will not be tolerated.