OHR BiH Media Round-up, 25/9/2002

Print Media Headlines

Oslobodjenje: A suspect in Repovci case escapes from police; Ashdown: Three measures for BiH future; Sokolac police chief assassinated

Dnevni Avaz: Ashdown's plan of measures – Criminals to be expelled from poltics; Kuwaiti Minister in Sarajevo

Vecernji List: New elections in Croatia because of Bobetko case; Removed judge sues Wolfgang Petritsch before local court

Dnevni List: Testimony of former Croat inmate from Zenica prison: I am never going back there alive

Nezavisne Novine: Sokolac chief of police- another victim of terror in Srpsko Sarajevo; Ashdown announced major cleaning

Glas Srpski: Sokolac chief of police murdered – victim of mafia

Blic: Sokolac chief of police assassinated, international organizations and political parties condemn the murder

PIC SB session/ OHR activities

Following a two-day session of the **PIC Steering Board** in Sarajevo, the High Representative, **Paddy Ashdown**, announced that, immediately following the October 5 elections, he will present a set of measures aimed at purging politics of crime and criminals. *"Our aim is to turn BiH into a most attractive space in the region for foreign investors and businessmen. You can rest assured that we will undertake strong measures in order to protect the BIH political scene from criminals, who are in politics only to protect themselves from the law,"* Ashdown said. Commenting on the conclusions of the PIC SB session, Ashdown explained that BiH authorities and the International Community have made an agreement of sorts about a comprehensive judicial reform aimed at providing justice and

rights for all. *"If BIH authorities continue with reforms, and work on a speedy and successful implementation, the International Community will provide assistance."* Front page in **Dnevni Avaz** "Purging politicos of criminals", **Oslobodjenje** "Three measures for future of BiH", **Jutarnje Novine** "Curb corruption through reform of judiciary", **Nezavisne Novine** "Ashdown announces major cleaning"; **Vecernji list** p. 3 "Turning the page after elections", **Dnevni List** p. 3 "Five key obligations of BIH institutions". **Dnevni List** also carries the PIC SB Communiqué. **Glas Srpski** p. 3 "An Agreement between the IC and BIH reached: the Rule of Law, not corruption".)
First item in **Federation Radio, BH Radio 1** PM news, second item in **FTV** and **RTRS**, third in **BHTV 1** prime time news.)

Slobodna Dalmacija (page 11, conducted by Bisera Lusic) carries an interview with the High Representative in BiH, **Paddy Ashdown,** titled "*Croats from Herzegovina are an engine of BiH development*". Commenting on economic reforms, Ashdown stated that "*People in this country are very talented, and when it comes to enterprise skills, Croats in Herzegovina are potential nuclear plant of economic recovery. We should encourage such capabilities. This country will go through reforms or it will fail*".

Nezavisne Novine (p. 15) and **Oslobodjenje** (p. 16)carry lengthy excerpts of the **Viennese Der Standard** with the **PDHR Donald Hays.** *"Many things have changed in BiH so far. BiH is increasingly perceived as a single economic space. Tax systems throughout the country are harmonized and a special court for economic crime and corruption will be established in the near future."*

In today's issue, **Glas Srpski** publishes the fourth (and the last) in the series of articles related to the selection of judges representing the RS in the BiH Constitutional court. Gojko Dakic and Milenko Sajic argue that, according to the RS NA Constitutional Commission, the Bosniak veto on the appointment **Miodrag Simovic** and **Radomir Lukic** represents *"…a classic misuse of the term and mechanism of vital interest*

protection." The Commission requested the High Representative to prevent any further abuse of the mechanism of vital national interest protection. *"One question remains open, however: how is it possible that vital national interest of Bosniaks is endangered when we know that not even one Bosniak applied for the position of the BiH Constitutional court judge from the RS?,"* asks the daily at the end.

Vecernji List (front and page 3) reports that a Mostar judge **Nino Kozic** who had been removed by the former High Representative, **Wolfgang Petritsch,** over his role in the saleof Mostar's Hotel "Ero", has filed a lawsuit against the former HR with the Dubrovnik Court where Petritsch has a real estate. Kozic charges the former HR for emotional suffering. *"I am suing him because I do not know reasons behind my removal, to be more exact, there are no reasons for my removal. Friends told me to go for big financial compensation, 20, 30, 40 thousand marks but it is more important to me to prove that my removal is unfounded and confirm that Petritsch is not untouchable. That's why I asked for one Kuna only* (**NB:** Croatian currency, one Kuna buys you around 0,25 KM).

According to VL, Petritsch forwarded the charges to the OHR Sarajevo and the OHR responded saying that Petritsch, being a former High Representative, has immunity and therefore cannot be held accountable before a court in BiH or Croatia. However, Kozic says that he charges Petritsch as a private person and not as the High Representative adding that the OHR is not a side in the case.

Sokolac Police Chief assassination

Brutal assassination of the **Chief of Police in Sokolac**, Zeljko Markovic, was one of the top stories in nearly all media in BiH*. Front page splash in **Glas Srpski, Nezavisne Novine** and **Blic**; **Oslobodjenje, Dnevni Avaz** and **Jutarnje Novine**, as well as all electronic media **– BHTV, FTV, RTRS** – carry lengthy reports and quote numerous political parties, OHR, UNMIBH, BIH Presidency and the RS government as strongly condemning the

incident and urging local police to promptly investigate the assassination.
*(Although Croat electronic media noted the item in all prime time news, Croat(ian) press nearly ignored it)

BIH State Level Developments/ foreign relations

Dnevni Avaz (p. 4) reports that the expected visit of the FRY Foreign Minister, Goran Svilanovic, to BiH will be postponed. In a statement for the daily, the spokesman for the **BIH Foreign Ministry**, Amer Kapetanovic, said that this was agreed jointly by Svilanovic and his BiH counterpart, Zlatko Lagumdzija. *"Svilanovic and Lagumdzija agreed to wait with the adoption of changes and amendments to the Law on Dual Citizenship."*
In an interview with **Dnevni Avaz** (p. 5), the EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, **Javier Solana**, said that October elections are of crucial importance for the future of BiH. *"I believe it is time that BIH citizens make an important decision: either you will become a strong state moving along the path of European integration, a state which is ready to implement the necessary reforms in order to develop a system of functional democracy, establish the rule of law, and create conditions for opening new jobs; or, the reform aspiration will fail, and you will remain hostages of the past condemned to stagnation, while the rest of the region is moving forward to Europe."*

"The flow of foreign investment to BiH depends on its legal environment, widely seen as the major obstacle to attracting more capital," **Kuwait Finance Minister** Jusuf Hamad al-Ibrahim said on Tuesday. *"It is important to emphasize that the future of foreign investments would depend on a change of legislation with the aim to ease the foreign business here,"* al-Ibrahim told reporters after meeting with the BIH Minister of Foreign Trade and Economic Relations**, Azra Hadziahmetovic**. (**Dnevni Avaz, AFP**)

Commenting on the statement by the Russian Ambassador to BiH,

Alexander Griscenko, who rejected allegations of Russian mafia's involvement in privatization process in BiH, Deputy Speaker of the BiH Parliament's House of Peoples, **Sejfudin Tokic,** said he wasappalled. *"Griscenko should have learned from the Federation Ministry of Interior that some estimates say that between 500.000.000 and 1.000.000.000 KMs were laundered in BiH and that a hefty chunk of these transactions are related to phantom companies established by the Russian Mafia. Griscenko would be better off to learn about the problem on the Internet and how much Europe and its institutions take this problem seriously and what they do to prevent it",* says Tokic.

Federation Affairs

Oslobodjenje (p. 8) reports that yesterday's session of **the Federation Parliament's House of Representatives** was very "lively" as the deputies could not agree whether or not to include on the agenda the discussion on the **Proposed Law on Restitution**. The controversial item was at the end not discussed, but the conflict between representatives of the Party for BiH and the SDP did not subside, nor did the mass protests in front of the Federation Parliament building. The Federation Prime Minister, **Alija Behmen**, conceded that he has received a letter from the PDHR **Donald Hays** who told him that *"discussing the Restitution Law at this moment is unnecessary."*
(**Dnevni Avaz** "Who is hiding Donald Hay's letter?" also reports on this item on p. 10)

Dnevni List (front and page 5, by Vesna Leto) carries an interview with **Jozo Bulic**, a Croat inmate, who was transferred from Zenica prison to Mostar because of severe injuries inflicted upon him by his fellow inmates. Bulic said that "15 Arabs are real bosses" in Zenica prison, and that a group led by **Abu Hamza** (the informal leader of the Mujahedeen community in BiH) forced convicts to read Kur'an and pray. Bulic said that all Croats had the same treatment. After severe injuries and 29 days spent in hospital, and his brother's intervention

with IPTF, Bulic was transferred to Mostar prison.

Dnevni List (page 4) reports that **Bozidar Matic** of the Association of Employers in Federation BiH, was elected the first president of the Economic-Social Council of Federation BiH, the highest institutional form for tripartite social dialogue. **Edhem Biber** from the Association of Independent Trade unions and **Hasan Becirovic**, Federation Minister of Energy and Industry, have been elected Vice Presidents. Economic-Social Council has 15 members and all decisions are made through consensus of social partners. (**Oslobodjenje** p. 3)

In an OP-Ed in **Vecernji List**, Robert Bubalo argues that "***Safet Halilovic**, the President of the BiH Federation, has mobilized right-wing Bosniak politicians because of the Pogorelica case. His initiative that Pogorelica case suspects be granted a pre-trial release is an wrong initiative of a man who holds such position. He has not done anything to make possible that six Croats charged with the murder of Leutar are also temporarily released, and there are indications that the Leutar case is a political process.' 'Luckily, SDP has distanced itself from the Halilovic's initiative. **Mijo Anic** stood against **Halilovic**, **Silajdzic**, **Kadic** and others and Anic noticed that those charged with the Leutar murder, have been imprisoned for four times longer period of time than the suspects in the Pogorelica case.'*

War Crimes

All the CRO dailies prominently cover the Bobetko case (**VL:** front page *"Possible elections because of Bobetko"*; **Jutarnji List:** front page*"General Bobetko on pressures on Croatia: "We must not give in to sanctions"*; **Slobodna Dalmacija:** front page: *"Archbishop Josip Bozanic on consequences of Bobetko case: 'We must think about future'"*; **Vjesnik:** front page *"New indictments have not arrived, Government goes into legal dispute with The Hague"* and **Dnevni List:** page 17: *"Government enters legal not political dispute with The Hague".*
Vecernji List quotes the Croatian Foreign Minister, **Tonino**

Picula, as saying that he has not received any threats and warnings pertaining to sanctions and isolations from Croatian partners to date. Picula also announces meetings with foreign diplomats in Zagreb during the week. Picula: *"Almost 97% of the Court's (ICTY) requests were fulfilled by Croatia through the Office for Co-operation. Now, we have to explain to the Court that we have a legitimate right to contest. We are not comfortable with parts of the indictment and we will do everything to contest those parts in a legally stipulated way (…) It is about a defence of a man and about the dignity of Republic of Croatia. We cannot accept charges that whole military operations were crimes, that they were planned as such".*

Jutarnji List carries a short interview with General Janko Bobetko himself. Bobetko reiterates that he would not make it to The Hague alive.The daily also carry an opinion poll, according to which, out of 600 interviewees, 84% of them are against Bobetko's extradition. Out of this number, 85% say that Croatia should not extradite the general even if it means sanctions.

The papers also carry the Zagreb Archbishop, **Josip Bozanic,** as saying: *"Croatian people feel that it has been hurt and that's something that carries a value. We must be united because we feel it is important and we must not succumb to outside pressures".*

Vjesnik on page 3 carries the Deputy Speaker of Croatian Parliament, **Zlatko Tomac** (SDP), as saying that general Bobetko will not be extradited to The Hague. *"There is no question about it",* says Tomac and adds *"I am sure about that, because that is the general mood of the people and all political parties and the Croatian Parliament".*

Miscellaneous

Slobodna Dalmacija (front and page 15, by Tomislav Zoric)

reports that Iraq might attack the US with chemical weapons developed in Mostar in 80's and early 90's. Zoric claims that chemical weapons (sarin) produced during **Slobodan Milosevic**'s regime in Yugoslavia was sold to Iraq with complete know-how of production. However, all the technology of developing and measuring effects of the weapons was conducted in the former JNA (Yugoslav People's Army) military technical institute in Potoci near Mostar. In February 1992 the whole system was transported from Mostar to Lucani (FRY).

Electronic Media Headlines

BHTV 1

- A head of the police in Srpsko Sarajevo killed at Sokolac.
- List of candidates for the elections contain the names of those who are under criminal investigation
- Laws on dual citizenship and restitution are still on hold
- Children who suffer leukemia do not have adequate hospitalization at the Koševo hospital

FTV

- Željko Marković, a chief of the police in Srpsko Sarajevo, killed this morning
- The international community persist on reform of judiciary regardless its outcome.
- BiH diasporas face loosing the dual citizenship due to failure in adoption of the dual citizenship law.
- Croatian Government refused the Hague Tribunal's request for extradition of General Bobetko.

RTRS – no report