OHR Local News Issues, 16 February 1997

Tuzla Podrinje Canton's Governement held its extraordinary Assembly session which was attended by Ejup Ganic, Acting Federation President, among others. Discussion focused on the tasks concerning Brcko – the town "whose northern gates have been opened after the Tribunal arbitrage decision": establishing of communications with Brcko; setting up a State Corporation for Brcko harbour; setting up custom and state branches in accordance with agreements with the Republic of Croatia and economic regional co-operation with Slavonia. Also: preparation of documents for refugee return; implementation of multi-national police powers, and; good colaboration with American NATO led SFOR powers as well as the opening of the airport Dubrave for the civil traffic.
2'30"

Ejup Ganic met with American General Miegs, Commander of SFOR division North.

RS Assembly Deputies accepted in Pale last night, without SDA and one Croat representative, a Statement on the International Arbitrage Tribunal for Brcko. They found authorities given to the future Supervisor too wide. They also expressed their non confidence in the behaviour of the "Moslem side" in the transitional period. In concluding, they pointed out that the Arbitrage Tribunal will award Brcko to RS in March 1998 in order to avoid one of the largest dangers to the Dayton Accord.
2'30"

BiH TV correspondent's report from Brussels was very critical toward Roberts Owen and Arbitrage Tribunal for Brcko, stating that the postponment of a decision for one year was just placing a hot potato into somebody else's lap.

2’00”

The situation in Mostar was calm last night and latest news is that it remains so. There were no incidents and no evictions! It is supposed that SFOR and IPTF powers contributed to this normal situation. Yet there is no free movement and communications between two parts of the town without their help. Some families were taken back to their homes also with the help of SFOR and IPTF. IPTF members did not wish to say how many people could return to their apartments in the western part of the town, as long as all those who belong there have not yet returned.
1’30”

IPTF confirmed that two 60 mm mortar bombs were fired on eastern Mostar on Saturday and hit a family house. No-one was injured.
1’00”

The Hague Tribunal Experts who worked last year on an exhuming the rest of the Bosniaks killed after the Srebrenica exodus, handed over total of 713 bodies to the State Commission. The world must ensure that eternal marks are placed at these places of mass executions to avoid an error made after the II World War, when at the same place for thousands of Bosniak civilians brutally killed no sign of remembrance was made.
2’00”

World agencies report that Madeline Albright is travelling Europe on her first working visit tour as US Secretary of State. She held talks in Rome today and her meeting with Yeltsin has been announced in which they will discuss NATO expansion on the East. 1’00”

Belgrade’s stands off ended yesterday but will be continued if all Zajedno demands are not fulfilled.
1’00”

The Federal Ministry for Internal Affairs in co-ordination

with the Cantonal Ministries has undertaken an action to arrest perpetrators of many criminal acts, especially attacks at gasoline pump stations in recent days. The citizens should know that on some roads police control is being stepped up and check points are be set up on some of them.
3’00

Summary SRT News

It is very important for the RS to show the world what it really wants, which was not possible until now because of the media blockade and anti-Serb propaganda. However, the RS got its chance when its delegation was invited by Her Majesty the Queen to visit UK. The RS delegation headed by President of the Government Kalinic will present the RS position and desires, as well as the current situation in the RS. The Queen insisted on a RS multi-party delegation.
2:00
Pale – SDS party session regarding Brcko decision – prior to the session, SDS acting president and Foreign minister Buha said that they ‘cannot be absolutely satisfied with the Brcko decision since it is not a final one. It is important that Brcko was not taken from the RS and that the ZOS has not been changed. This decision will require extra measures foreseen by the DPA: freedom of movement (to all directions), and refugee return. Besides, the international conference which will specify the decisions with regard to this issue will be held in March. We will see where we stand then (although we already know where we stand, but only globally). We cannot be very happy with this decision, but it satisfies our strategic interests. Our people in Brcko can live normally. Economic and living conditions will be better, not just in Brcko, but in whole of RS, because the international community position and reaction (economic aid) will directly depend on our behaviour (which is much better compared to the Federation), and the international community knows and respects that.’

3:00

World different media opinion:
Western governments support the international community decision, whereas media think that it was changed in the last minute in favour of the Federation. Croatian media and authorities fully supports the decision because it is much better than having new conflicts. Swedish daily Svenska Dagbladet reports that Serbs presented all arguments and strong reasons to keep Brcko since it is a very important strategic point.

German media reports that international community was induced with the current Mostar situation and Izetbegovic's threats to change its decision and seek for the most painless solution for Brcko. The international community did not want another burden on its shoulders apart from Mostar. The west dreams of refugee return and establishing of multi-ethnic society, but they already 'suffered shipwreck' in Mostar.

'Some very important political circles' noted that if Brcko would have been given to the Federation, that would have directly violated the DPA, and meant definite division of BiH, SRT reports.
3:00

Serb Intellectual Forum sent a letter to HR Bildt with regard to postponing of the final decision for Brcko. They invoked article 5 of Annex 10 of the DPA (HR Bildt's final authority), asking Bildt to declare the Tribunal decision as final. Roberts Owen went beyond the authority he has when he gave the town to international community and decided on its supervisor. 'Mr. Bildt, with your persistence and common sense, you are strengthening the peace in BH… [and] implementing the DPA in a principled manner. We are sure you will act in the same way regarding this request too. Otherwise, we have reason to believe that a new neuralgic point has been made by Mr. Owen's decision, which could cause new bloodshed any moment.'

2:00

World News: Mostar – SDA sent a request to HDZ to provide a peaceful life for Muslims who still live in west Mostar. The situation is very tensed regardless of SFOR and IPTF increased patrolling.
1:00