OHR SRT News Summaries, 12 Sept. 1997

Sarajevo – the Presidency session – Presidents did not agree on allocation of ambassadorial posts, nor did they establish the delegation for Council of Europe. Prior to the session, the Presidency met NATO Secretary General Solana, and discussed the forthcoming elections and SFOR's role in the process. Krajisnik said that he had also met General Shinseki and HR Westendorp, and assessed the meeting as successful. We discussed the current situation in which SFOR should help so that we organise the elections the best that we can. Krajisnik said that they also talked about the establishment of the SCMM, and agreed to have an SCMM session at the National Museum next Monday. He said that the Presidency discussed the issue of diplomatic and consular offices, resolving many different points, but the issue required further negotiations which would hopefully end with a definite agreement reached at the next session on Monday. Presidency also discussed signing of contracts with WB, establishment of various commissions for human rights, etc.
4:00

Sarajevo – the CoM session – the CoM met Solana and the head of NATO in Europe, Clark, and adopted the MOU's on opening of the three airports. They also signed the Telecommunications Memorandum and agreed on appointment of the delegation for the annual WB and IMF conference as well. WB signed an agreement with CoM regarding the financing of the telecommunication system. A three-day non-visa regime was established for Slovenian citizens coming for the U2 concert. Solana expressed his satisfaction with results that have been achieved after several months of blockade.
3:00

Flash news:

BBC World interviewed former US Envoy for the Balkans, Holbrooke, who gave his comments on the situation in RS. Commenting on Plavsic's post and power, he said that at the time she was legally elected for the president, she was Karadzic's protégé and member of SDS, the fascists who imposed this war on us. Later on she cut her ties to them, proving that she wants to support the DPA and that she is not a separatist anymore. SFOR and the IC support her as a legitimate RS representative. She leads a severe struggle with the Pale leadership, and her past is at the same time her advantage and disadvantage – advantage because she was a nationalist, which means that she is not a toy of the West, and disadvantage because she still cherishes some unpleasant relations.

But our test will be to discover the source of her power which will stay secret to us for another month. If the Pale leadership wins, the separation of RS from BiH is more than certain. However, if Plavsic wins, then one BiH consisting of two parts is very possible to preserve. President Milosevic is the top Serb in this conflict. Milosevic openly despised Bosnian Serbs in Dayton, but now when Plavsic and the Bosnian Serbs are in open conflict which will last until one side wins and the other loses, it seems that Milosevic is supporting Pale. Therefore, Holbrooke returned to the Balkans to, as he said, teach the people in the region a good lesson.

At its session in Bonn, the Contact Group firmly supported free and fair elections and said that all sides are expected to take part, otherwise the IC is determined to implement the decisions from Sintra. German media reported that a large number of absentee voters and OSCE sudden changes of election rules may call the regularity of the election process into question. Sie Deutsche Zeitung said that substantial changes of the rules opens possibility for manipulations in favour of the Muslim side, which means that Serbs and Croats don't stand a chance. Frankfurter Rundschau said that the IC wants to hold

the elections no matter what, quoting HR Westendorp's statement that elections must be held since the IC invested a lot of time and money into the process.

Tages Zeitung said that the biggest loser in the elections could be the IC itself, especially if its puppet, Plavsic, loses. ICG claims that elections are meaningless because the results are known in advance, adding that elections were actually 'held' during the registration process and completion of voters' lists. Le Figaro reported that although there are no borders between the entities since the DPA was signed, only a few people brave enough dared to go across from Pale to Sarajevo. The ethnic image of Sarajevo has changed since last year, and the Muslim majority now equals to 80% of the overall Sarajevo population. The IC is not able to restore normality to this city.
4:00

Serb Unification Congress invited the Serbs to cast their ballots on the elections. Everything is ready for the elections in the RS. 892 polling stations in 61 municipalities will open at 7 a.m. tomorrow. 83 polling stations will open in the FRY and 67 in Croatia. President of the local EC Brcko, Gavric, called on all Brcko citizens not to miss the chance to vote. He said that Frowick approved another 259 complaints of Serbs, and that it is still uncertain whether 3,619 Muslims, who don't have grounds to vote in Brcko, will vote there in the end.
5:00

Modrica – the Court in Modrica completed the proceedings against Ferid Halilovic, a member of HVO military police, who is charged for crimes against civilians committed in Muslim camps for Serbs. The Court received photo evidence and medical findings for Serb prisoners tortured in camps, as well as original orders he received from the 102th HVO brigade. The prosecutor demanded a death sentence. The Court will pass the verdict on Monday.

2:00

Summary SRT TV News Banja Luka

The RS President Biljana Plavsic received the special American envoy for “the Balkans” Robert Gelbard in BL. The biggest attention during this meeting was paid to holding of the local elections. “Our wish is to hold the elections in the best possible atmosphere”, said the RS President after the meeting, and added that the MUP under the authority of Minister Pavic would do its best in order to prevent any kind of incidents. She also talked about the Parliamentary elections and economic projects with Mr. Gelbard. “The local elections are another step towards providing and strengthening democracy in this country. The USA also support the idea of organizing the Parliamentary elections in RS”, said Mr. Gelbard. The decision of the President to dissolve the National Assembly is also supported by the High Representative of the international community for BiH Carlos Westendorp.
3 min
The announcement from the office of the Head of the OSCE mission Robert Frowick on prolonging of the electoral campaign today from 12 to 19:00 hours. This unexpected decision changed Article 230 of the electoral rules on the time of stopping all pre-electoral activities before the actual voting.
35 sec

On the occasion of tomorrow’s beginning of the local elections, the Supervisor for Brcko Robert Farrand held the press conference. He removed all the uncertainties about holding of the municipal elections in that town. The preparations had been done without a single problem. About 50 polling stations are expected to be opened, and about 40,000 of registered voters are expected to vote. Farrand also mentioned the Pale Studio of SRT, saying that it represented a center of misinformation and lies. For the first time Farrand accused not only Pale but also Belgrade for the fear which was obvious. He also emphasized that about 650 refugee families

had come back to that town.
1 min

The session of the BiH Presidency was held in Sarajevo today, attended also by Carlos Westendorp, Robert Gelbard, and Secretary General of NATO Solana. The topic of today's meeting was the issue of citizenship, situation in RS and Federation, and local elections.
30 sec

The conference of the international organizations about the beginning of the elections was held in BL. The OSCE spokesman reported on the agreement between Carlos Westendorp and Croatian President Franjo Tu|man that HDZ should take part in the municipal elections. In the pre-electoral activities, SFOR assists with the distribution of the material and that job should be finished during the day, said the representative of the Stabilization Forces, and confirmed that the airplanes of the USA Ministry of Defense for disturbing radio and TV signals had come to Italy. The task of IPTF is to ensure the full freedom of movement, but also to monitor the work of the RS and Federation police during the electoral weekend. According to the IPTF estimations, the busiest traffic is expected along the roads BL – Drvar – Glamoc – Grahovo, Bihac – Sarajevo, Zenica – Jajce, Sanski Most – Prijedor, and Tuzla – Zvornik – Bijeljina.
2 min 10 sec

In the RS and Federation everything is ready for the local elections, confirmed the official representatives of the international organizations. The local elections can start because the very last obstacle was removed, because the Croats from BiH, under a big pressure of the European Union, NATO, and USA, first of all on Zagreb, gave up the idea of boycotting the elections at the last moment. On that occasion, Carlos Westendorp addressed the citizens of BiH appealing to them to vote at the elections. Optimism is obvious also in the OSCE, which is the main organizer of the local elections. Five

countries – members of the Contact Group gave the public announcement in Bonn today, emphasizing the support for holding the local elections. Solana stated that the international community must support only the forces in BiH which were ready to continue with the realization of DA. The agencies inform about Solana's arrival in Sarajevo today, but do not mention the purpose of this visit.
2 min 10 sec

Together with the beginning of the political crisis in RS, began the crisis in the Republic soldiers' organization.
2 min 45 sec

On the occasion of the current situation in education, the Republic Trade Union for education, science, and culture, and Educational – Pedagogical Institute issued their announcements. Today, the Town Board of the Trade Union for education, science, and culture made the decision that the school year in the primary and secondary schools in Banja Luka would not begin on September 15th, as decided by the Town Assembly, but only when the Government paid all the missing salaries. The trade Union scheduled the protest gathering in front of the Municipal building on September 15th, at 10 a.m. The Republic Pedagogical Institute gave the announcement proposing to organize a discussion on the modalities of urgent overcoming of such a situation in education.
1 min 50 sec

The office of the European Commission in BL informed about the valuable projects of the international organizations for helping BL and Gradiska municipalities. These projects are a part of the humanitarian help which value is about 1 million of German marks, and which will be financed by the British organization – former ODA.
1 min

The members of the Security Council of the UN expressed concern because Croatia did not show any improvement in

realizing the project of the return of refugees.
55 sec