OHR SRT News Summary, 16 May 1999

Headlines:

- Belgrade, Smederevo, Bor, Prizren and Pec targeted in NATO aggression
    - Roads, bridges, gas stations and electric power installations attacked
    - Greece to propose a 48-hour lull in bombing
    - Cessation of NATO attacks also anticipated in a new Italian peace plan that is to be considered by EU foreign ministers tomorrow
    - The FRY Army Supreme Command reports on the continuation of military units' withdrawal
    - The first round of elections in Slovakia yields no president
    - Several thousand residents of Vucjak and.. attended May Rallies at the legendary site of Lipa

Dead bodies of 81 Albanian refugees have so far been found in the village of Korisa, nearby Prizren. BETA quotes military investigative authorities as saying that the refugees had been attacked by 8 thermo-visual bombs. Another 78 Albanian refugees are currently being treated at the Prizren hospital. Report by correspondents from Pristina and Belgrade on the 54th day of the NATO aggression against the FRY. NATO targeted surroundings of Belgrade, Bor, Smederevo and the Fruska Gora area. NATO airplanes bombed the area of Prizren in the afternoon. The area of Pec was also bombed at about 11:35 hrs today. The same area and settlements south-west of Pristina were also bombed during last night, along with the areas of Metohija and Decani.

The Greek Foreign Minister, Jorgas Papandreu, stated that

Athens was going to request a suspension of NATO bombing for 48 hours to allow for diplomacy to develop initiatives for a political settlement to the Kosovo problem.

The French Foreign Minister, Hubert Vedrine, has expressed expectations that the next few days will see strong diplomatic efforts to reach an agreement on a possible UN peace presence in Kosovo. According to Vedrine, the EU will request that such a presence should be under the Union's command.

EU Foreign Ministers will be meeting with the Russian Foreign Minister, Igor Ivanov, in Brussels tomorrow and, will, amongst other topics, be discussing the crisis in the FRY.

After consulting several Western countries' leaders, the Italian Prime Minister, Massimo D'Alema, proposed that the NATO bombings of the FRY should immediately stop on condition that the Belgrade authorities accepted a UN SC resolution on solving the Kosovo crisis. Brussels sources report that such a resolution would be based on principles recently adopted by the G8 and supported by Russia and China.

According to a report by an Austrian news agency, APA, the UN Envoy for the Balkans, Carl Bildt, met with the Norwegian Ambassador to Vienna, Kai Eide, and OSCE experts on the situation in the region.

The German Government has stated that following the bombing of Albanian refugees at the village of Korisa and other similar cases involving civilian casualties, the German Chancellor, Gerhard Schroeder, is planning to step up efforts for a political settlement to the Kosovo crisis

"Iter Tass" has quoted the Japanese Foreign Minister as saying that NATO air strikes against the FRY have no legal grounds under international law.

BETA reports that the "New York Times" today carried an article saying that the Pentagon had blocked plans by NATO

involving the use of combat “Apache” helicopters to fight Serb troops, out of fear for the safety of their pilots.

Today’s issue of the “Washington Post” carried an article admitting that the nearly 8-week long NATO air strikes against the FRY had caused little damage to the FRY Army. The newspaper published assessments by unnamed air force experts claiming that General Clark and NATO had poorly organised this war and that it was already lost as the FRY Army had defeated the KLA.

The London-based “Sunday Times” newspaper today reports on the presence of U.S. troops in the border area of Albanian engaged in a secret operation of supporting the terrorists of the so-called KLA.

A Belgian newspaper, “Libre Belgique”, today notes that the U.S. had decided to launch air-strikes against the FRY before the Rambouillet talks and that the offered agreement was unacceptable for any sovereign country.

(Reactions by FRY parties and institutions) On returning from a two-day joint visit to Pristina with the Head of the ICRC delegation in Belgrade, Dominique Duffoure, the Secretary-General of the FRY Red Cross, Rade Dubajic, in a statement given to Tanjug, stated that humanitarian activities in the area of Kosovo had been made rather difficult due to destruction caused by NATO bombings.

BETA reports that the SRS has today assessed that it will not take long before the Serb people wins this war and NATO pays for the aggression. Radicals gave credit to the Serb military and police for their courageousness and irreparable damage caused to the enemy.

The SPO today stated that by daily bombing and destroying the area of Kosovo NATO was trying to turn this area into a “burnt land” and thus prevent Albanian refugees from returning.

The FRY Democratic Party today stated that the new killings of civilian, Albanian refugees, in Kosovo were yet another confirmation that NATO bombings must stop immediately. It is obvious that no returns are possible under NATO bombs.

The President of the Party of Serb Unity, Zeljko Raznatovic-Arkan, today assessed that NATO air-strikes had not reached their objective as almost no damage at all had been caused to the Serb police nor military.

The Union of Vojvodina Hungarians will invite all local Hungarian political parties to meet next week and discuss a new concept of the position of Hungarian community within Serbia and the FRY. This new concept involves the idea of a territorial autonomy which needs to be reviewed in the light of similar concepts that function successfully in other countries, BETA reported.

BETA has quoted the Montenegrin Deputy PM, Novak Kilibarda, as stating that Montenegro has still not carefully considered the possibility of the FRY turning into a confederation but will do so if the status of Kosovo is eventually changed. Referring to reliable sources, Kilibarda added that the majority of Montenegrins wished to continue to live in federation with Serbia.

A UN humanitarian team has arrived in Belgrade this evening to assess the humanitarian situation in the FRY. The Leader of the team, Sergio de Mello, has stated that the task of the team was to familiarise itself with the humanitarian needs of the country.

The Head of the FRY Army General-Staff Information Unit, Colonel Milivoj Nonkovic, has stated that in spite of intensified NATO air-strikes, the FRY Army continues implementing the decision by its Supreme Command on the partial withdrawal of military and police troops from Kosovo. Nonkovic went on to accuse NATO of intensifying air-strikes

after every peace-leading move by the FRY Army.

An Austrian poet, Peter Handke, in a statement given to "Suddeutche Zeitung", stated that NATO bombs had made Serbia into a new Auswitz for exterminating one nation.

(Report on a regular NATO PC in Brussels) Jamie Shea thanked the Montenegrin Government for making it possible for refugees to cross over to Albania. Shea reiterated that NATO was going to continue pressurising the FRY to resolve the crisis and that NATO had hit a legitimate military target in the incident which took place in the village of Kores. General Jertz stated that NATO had started flying at low attitudes and stressed that the human shields used by the FRY were complicating NATO missions. On bombs found in the Adriatic Sea, Shea stated that such situations were rare and had happened only in the five areas where boats could remove the bombs.

Anti-war concerts continue in Belgrade. Tanjug reports on a strong protest rally in New York. Tanjug also carried a report by the AFP saying that about 200 Americans had met the U.S. Secretary of State in Tisane protesting against the NATO aggression. Tanjug carries a report by "Sing Hua" agency about a joint Chinese protest rally in Canada. Protest rallies also in Peruggia, Prague and Sweden.

According to news reports by Sarajevo media today, the current Finish President, Martti Ahtisaari, will most likely be the person taking over from the HR, Carlos Westendorp. A German General, Klaus Naumman, the Mediator for BiH Federation, Christian Schwarz-Schilling, and the German Government Envoy for the reconstruction of BIH, Hans Koschnik, are also amongst possible candidates.

Responding to a letter recently addressed by the HR to all RS political parties, the President of the Serb Coalition for the RS, Predrag Lazarevic, has warned that any attempt to centralise BiH, circumventing the DA, would only speed its end

and recommended Westendorp to return to the original text of the DA.