

Foreign Press Office - Mostar

NEWS BULLETIN

Ulica Kneza Domagoja bb, 88000 Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina
Tel/Fax: +387 36 324 491 email: fpo@caausa.org



July 18-July 24

Bosnia and Herzegovina, unresolved puzzle

July 18, 2005 (Vecernji list)

Op-ed

Bosnia and Herzegovina will remain an unresolved puzzle for some time yet. Also unresolved is the issue of inequality of Croats, which is evident to all objective observers regardless of their political or ethnic affiliation.

One of the few issues that on which a majority of Croat politicians and the public agree is the right to a TV channel in the Croatian language. Croats have quietly been publicizing their position on the existing PBS law by refusing to pay the PBS license fee.

The Federal TV recently sent out thousands of bills threatening to seek payment through courts, thereby pitting the force of the law with the will of the people. True, it is a legal process founded on the Law on PBS. Likewise, it is a fact that such laws do not promote the principle of equality and that its implementation is contrary to the will of one of the peoples. It can thus be considered illegitimate. Spontaneous civil disobedience may soon receive judicial sanctions.

Politicians are publicly keeping quiet because fear of permanent indictments for subverting the order has overpowered the awareness of a people's representative. Croats, as the least numerous people, unfortunately, do not have the support of majority Bosniaks in their legitimate requests. The unprincipled partnership between the Muslim SDA party and Croat HDZ is a weak guarantee for justice and equality in a new BiH.

If the frightened HDZ cannot, will not or considers it unnecessary to take up a firm position on these matters, they could at least give consent to their Muslim colleagues and agree with their positions.

Namely, in one of SDA's "historical" declarations, it states: "No one can call upon a law whose implementation is against the will of one of the peoples, because the will of the people is a law above all others."

Now, when we have a law evidently against the will of a people, a Bosniak lack of understanding represents a departure from their principles.

The declaration on laws "against the will of the people" obviously has Orwellian ending: No one can insist upon a law whose implementation is against the will of the people – unless we are talking about another group of people!

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Interview: Aluminij General Manager Mijo Brajkovic

Aluminij currently employs more non-Croats than there are Croats living on Mostar's east side
July 18, 2005 (Slobodna Dalmacija)

Aluminij Mostar General Manager Mijo Brajkovic is set to retire soon. Nevertheless, the charismatic manager and recipient of Southeast Europe's Best Manager Award still thinks about implementing new projects and increasing employment in his company.

It seems you can be satisfied with your results thus far. However, you are planning new projects?

Aluminij will set a new record this year in terms of aluminum and aluminum alloy production. That is why, along with Daimler-Chrysler and other companies and with loans from Hermes, we decided to build another facility for aluminum refinement. This is an investment worth 25 million Euros.

More precisely, in a couple of days, on July 26, together with FEAL from Siroki Brijeg, we will be placing the initial foundation for a new plant which will work with aluminum and employ 100 new employees. That is what we have been discussing for several years; besides Aluminij, we need new, small firms that will work on aluminum refinement.

Let me mention that there are about 150 people currently employed with Aluminij from Croatian companies such as Enikom, Montig, Vig, Koncar, Samoborka, etc. We follow the principle that the future BiH needs small and medium enterprises and we support that. However, we also realize that those companies need a giant like Aluminij.

For example, around 40,000 people currently live off of Aluminij and that is the force and engine of development in the whole region and country.

What about your new electrolysis project?

Two years ago Aluminij requested a feasibility study for a new electrolysis. However, that has been slowed and is simply sitting still due to certain conditions that we can control. Namely, the privatization process needs to be completed and electricity secured. This 300 million Euro investment should already have been implemented. However, we can expect that our partners will go elsewhere because they will not wait for BiH to wake up. We are asking if anyone will take responsibility for this.

Information has been released that you might take over TLM Sibenik?

I love Aluminij Mostar and I am at the end of my career. Although I have an excellent relationship and many friends at TLM Sibenik, nothing will become of that. Personally, I think there are plenty of competent people at TLM.

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The state has not investment a single mark in Aluminij. Did you receive anything from the international community?

BiH has received six billion dollars in investments and we wonder where the money went. Aluminij did not receive anything.

You have been accused for employing people from only one ethnic group?

We finally have published statistics that 95 percent Bosniaks and only 5 percent others work in public and state-owned companies in the Federation. However, one needed to suffer through ten years of attacks, knowing you are right and yet being stigmatized. Following the war, those in the majority worked in companies in that area. However, that has changed with time and for Aluminij today it is important whether or not you know the job, not what nationality you are.

I have said it before and let me repeat it again. Aluminij currently employs more non-Croats than there are Croats living on the east side of Mostar.

Many say that there is an anti-investment climate present in BiH? People look at capital's "nationality," especially if it comes from Croatia?

If we examine in detail some of the problems Croatia Osiguranje faces in purchasing Sarajevo Osiguranje, or INA when purchasing Energopetrol, the issue of political obstruction arises. In all this, certain forces, especially the Party for BiH, play a negative role and I really do not know the reasons for such policies. They certainly are not good for BiH. (Excerpt)

Ashdown's successor only with BiH approval

Debate in Parliament

July 19, 2005 (Slobodna Dalmacija)

Paddy Ashdown, the international community's High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, is selling his vacation home on Lake Jablanica and preparing for his departure. A new high representative will arrive in a few months. Of what, perhaps only the European Union or... One of the key questions is, with what authorities and responsibilities.

There has been talk for some time now on the need for local officials to take responsibility for BiH's future. However, their work the past few years does not offer any hope they truly can and want to do this. Really, their work, especially the executive branch, is "submitting drafts of reformist laws" from the laboratory of international representatives into the parliamentary process. Pressure and threats then lead to reforms. No one has their own vision, creativity or proposals; in case they do, then the parties cannot come to an agreement on them.

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At the initiative of the HDZ-Christian-Democrats in the state Parliament, a public debate was held on the proposed Resolution on the relation of BiH institutions towards the mandate and appointment of the international community's new high representative in BiH. The Committee for Foreign Affairs, headed by Martin Raguz, verified the conclusions that will be before the House of Representatives today.

The conclusions state that participants in the public debate arrived at complete agreement regarding the beginning of BiH institutions becoming an equal partner in both "nomination consultations and the very nature of the high representative's mandate." A majority of the participants believes the institution of high representative is still necessary, but with necessarily redefined authorities.

The Committee points out the incompatibility of the high representative's existing authorities and the "democratic principles of European states and BiH sovereignty." Furthermore, the Committee states the Office of the High Representative (OHR) has gone beyond its authority by violating "fundamental human rights and freedoms and in that sense OHR needs to take responsibility." There is also consensus that the "so-called Bonn powers must be reduced."

The Committee also agreed that the future role of the high representative in BiH should transform into the role of a special representative of the European Union without the Bonn powers, as well as a "key partner of BiH on its Euro-Atlantic path." The Committee confirmed it is necessary to define an exit strategy for the OHR with a clearly defined timeline. (Excerpt)

Interview: Ljubo Beslic, Mayor of Mostar

July 20, 2005 (Dnevni list)

MOSTAR – The Old Bridge and Mostar's historic old core have been added to UNESCO's World Heritage list and if Mostar takes advantage of this opportunity, the city on the Neretva River should achieve significant progress and prosperity.

Ljubo Beslic, Mayor of Mostar, explains what now awaits Mostar, what are our responsibilities and what do we receive from the UNESCO symbol.

What does it mean to be added to UNESCO's list? What awaits Mostar?

Joining UNESCO means entering a club known throughout world. It is a difficult goal to achieve. Fortunately, we have succeeded and now we need to fulfill the requirements for remaining under UNESCO's protection. The City needs to implement regulations and standards as stipulated by UNESCO, including conservation and restoration norms.

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Also, we need to determine how to make everything financially sustainable. We will do our utmost to assure that the Old Bridge and old city core are an authentic locality and preserved as such for the future. Domestic and foreign experts who already worked on this project will oversee future restorations.

During the UNESCO preparations, there was disappointment with certain objects in the old city core because they do not satisfy authenticity requirements and are illegally built. What will the City do with these?

First, we need to prepare for an audit of all objects. Some we will attempt to resolve and rebuild in their original design and some, unfortunately, will be torn down. There will be some problems, but entry on UNESCO's list is too important to lose, because the City expects considerable financial profits in the upcoming period.

What is with the Agency for the old core?

On Monday we will sit down with the World Bank and discuss establishing the Agency and how it will function. The Agency should begin operations after summer vacations.

What kind of support can we expect from UNESCO?

We can expect certain financial support for projects. Also, we can expect assistance from UNESCO's experts who oversee our project.

Besides that, Mostar becomes a recognizable brand. The City will have material profits, as well as citizens because there will be more and more tourists arriving in Mostar. (Excerpt)

Hague must drop indictments

July 22, 2005 (Vecernji list)

Republican Congressman from Michigan Thaddeus McCotter submitted an amendment seeking to withhold funding for operations of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) for 2006 and 2007 "until the tribunal dismisses all criminal charges against four journalists who have filed reports critical of the work of the ICTY."

In his press release, McCotter reminds the U.S. Government that the Hague Tribunal has recently brought charges against four Croatian journalists for "contempt of the tribunal."

The four Croatian journalists could face up to seven years in prison and pay a fine of \$122,000 because they revealed the name of a protected witness.

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The Congressman believes that such “actions of the tribunal are a direct threat to the evolution of liberty in the Former Yugoslavia, and we should be more determined in our efforts to defend a strong, free media as the ferment of every democratic process.”

The proposed amendment carries the title “Protection of Freedom of the Press in the Former Yugoslavia.” It is expected that the process could result in a positive vote due to the fact that McCotter is a member of the U.S. House of Representatives International Relations Committee, which is chaired by the powerful republican Henry Hyde.

Republicans hold a majority in the Committee.

The proposed amendment is a result of forceful lobbying by Croatian intellectual circles in Washington. Our lobbyists believe this is the beginning of intensified lobbying of the current Administration, which should relieve some of the Tribunal’s pressure on Croatia.

Certain powerful republicans have been calling for strong pressure on the Hague Tribunal for some time now. Their goal is to remove Carla del Ponte.

Jovic disappointed by BiH Constitutional Court’s decision

July 24, 2005 (FENA)

BiH Presidency Chair Ivo Miro Jovic on Sunday said that he did not wish in this function to comment on the BiH Constitutional Court’s Decision on the Draft law on PBS, but that as an individual he was very disappointed by this decision.

He told the press in Doboj that the Law on PBS “in some way contains elements of racism”.

Namely, the BiH Constitutional Court on Saturday ruled that the Draft law on PBS is not destructive for the vital interests of the Croat people in BiH.

The Court issued this decision at a plenary session in debating the request of the BiH House of Peoples Speaker, Velimir Jukic, for the Constitutional Court to reassess whether this law was damaging to the vital interests of Croats in BiH. ■