

Foreign Press Office - Mostar

MEDIA REPORTS

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U.S. – HAGUE: Indictments against Croatian journalists before Congressional Committee
Amendment to stop Hague funding withdrawn
McCotter withdraws amendment

Vecernji list
By Zoran Kresic

July 25, 2005

Immediately before a scheduled vote United States Republican Congressman Thaddeus McCotter withdrew his amendment seeking to withhold financing the International Criminal Tribunal at The Hague (ICTY) in 2006 until charges against four Croatian journalists who “filed reports critical of the work of the ICTY” are dismissed.

Instead of a vote, the U.S. House of Representatives International Relations Committee will hold a hearing on the ICTY’s threat to freedom of the media and indictments against the Editor-in-Chief of “Hrvatski list” Ivica Marijadic, former HIS [Croatian Information Service] director Markica Rebic, Stjepan Seselj and former Editor-in-Chief of “Hrvatsko Slovo” Domagoj Margetic. The hearing is to take place after summer recess.

Prosper’s demand

We have learned that U.S. Ambassador for War Crimes Pierre Richard Prosper explicitly demanded a vote not occur. In turn, Congressman McCotter withdrew his amendment “at the very last moment.”

“The actions of the ICTY 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,” says McCotter’s previous press statement.

Lobbyists of the Croatian American Association (CAA) are responsible for initiating this amendment and in recent days they urged their elected representatives to support the amendment.

Congressman McCotter’s decision to withdraw his amendment is also the result of pressure from the State Department, which does not want to condition the Tribunal’s operation in any manner, as well as insistence by colleagues on the International Relations Committee because it would put members of Congress in an unacceptable position.

In case the amendment was passed, it would have placed the United States in a subversive position towards the ICTY.

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Compromise

At the same time, voting down the amendment would be interpreted as an American effort against freedom of the media.

McCotter thus accepted a compromise to hold a hearing before the committee chaired by Congressman Henry Hyde.

Up until now two hearings have been held before the International Relations Committee on Bosnia and Herzegovina which also warned of the difficult position of Croats in BiH.

Ivo Miro Jović: BiH PBS law has elements of racism

FENA

July 25, 2005

“There is no such constitutional court, there is no such institution in this country and there is no such international factor that can forbid us to consume our fundamental human rights – the rights to language, culture, education and protection of our tradition and culture through media. The fight with legal means will not stop with this Decision of the BiH Constitutional Court which contains elements of racism.”

The Chair of the BiH Presidency, Ivo Miro Jović, visited the Municipality of Domaljevac-Šamac in the evening hours yesterday where he had talks with the leaders of the three Sava River Basin (Posavina) municipalities on the current problems.

Commenting on the Decision of the BiH Constitutional Court, which had concluded that the Law on the BiH Public Broadcasting System (PBS) was not destructive of the vital interest of the Croatian people in BiH, Jović said he was disappointed with the Decision. He maintains that there are domestic and foreign forces acting to the detriment of the Croatian people in BiH. Such forces are anxious to de-constitutionalise the Croats and leave them in the media darkness.

The Croats in BiH, as a constituent people, deserve at least the level of rights guaranteed to the national minorities in Europe. "There is no such constitutional court, there is no such institution in this country and there is no such international factor that can forbid us to consume our fundamental human rights – the rights to language, culture, education and protection of our tradition and culture through media. The fight with legal means will not stop with this Decision of the BiH Constitutional Court which contains elements of racism" - said Jović.

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Speaking about the situation in Canton 2 (Posavina), Jović said he was surprised with the lack of care for this region on the part of the state institutions. Water supply for households, wastewater disposal, protection against floods – are only some of the problems begging solution. These problems cause many diseases and floods. The repair of the dyke near Domaljevac would solve the flood problem. But all this requires a lot of funds so that the support of the state is necessary, Jović concluded.

BiH Croat officials slam decision against radio/TV broadcasting in Croatian

HINA

July 25, 2005

BiH Croat officials have harshly criticised the Constitutional Court's decision to endorse a bill on public radio and television broadcasting which does not envisage the establishment of a special channel in the Croatian language, as requested by the Croat deputies in the state parliament.

Several Croat officials in Bosnia-Herzegovina's bodies of authority said on Monday [25 July] they would appeal against the decision with the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

State Presidency chairman Ivo Miro Jovic said the bill in question contained elements of racism because it prevented Bosnian Croats from nurturing their tradition and culture through the public radio and TV broadcasting system.

Some BiH Croat officials also said that following the decision, one should once again consider the establishment of a third entity in Bosnia in order to protect Bosnian Croat interests.

The head of the Croatian Democratic Union's club of deputies in the parliament of the Croat-Muslim entity, Ivan Madunic, said Croats in Bosnia would build their state from the start because the people had to have a space to live in.

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Court avoids constitution and international charters

Vecernji list

By Miroslav Vasilj

July 25, 2005

Disappointment is the only word that can describe the feeling of Croat parties and citizens regarding the decision of the BiH Constitutional Court, which ruled that the draft PBS Law is not destructive of Croat vital national interests in BiH.

HDZ representative in the state Parliament Ruza Sopta stated that she learned of the negative decision a few days before it was made during a meeting with OHR officials.

“I do not understand how OHR knew that if the judiciary is independent. This constitutes involvement in judicial independence,” stated Sopta. During a recent meeting with Paddy Ashdown she told him that Croats would remember him for taking away from Croats their right to use their mother tongue in education and the media.

Sopta told Vecernji list that legal experts would analyze whether or not anything further can be done within BiH institutions.

“Only after that will we head to the Human Rights Court in Strasbourg, where we expect a positive answer,” added Sopta.

The opposition is also disappointed. The coalition HSP [Party of Rights]–Dapic-Juriscic stated that the Constitutional Court’s decision is the straw that broke the camel’s back in terms of denying Croats their rights.

Federal Parliament representative Mate Bandur was surprised by the decision.

“Croats must have a program in the Croatian language because it is guaranteed by all international conventions,” argued Bandur.

He added that following this latest decision all Croat parties must work together. He announced a suit before the Strasbourg Court.

The petition initiator for a Croatian language program Stjepan Jurkic claimed that the Constitutional Court avoided BiH’s constitution and international charters and conventions on the rights of people to their mother tongue.

“It is obvious that Croats will have to go before the UN General Assembly and Council of Europe in order to present their position in BiH to the world,” stated Jurkic. (Excerpt)

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Discrimination in Federation Education Ministry

Vecernji list
By Zoran Kresic

July 25, 2005

The Federation Education Ministry, whose headquarters were supposed to be transferred to Mostar more than ten years ago, is completely dominated by Bosniaks, who are using the “majority” model in an attempt to steer the current education reform process.

As a rule, this ministry has been headed by more radical members of the Party of Democratic Action [SDA]. Bosniaks are the exclusive aides to current minister of education and science Dr. Zijad Pasic. His “branch” office in Sarajevo is staffed by Chief of Staff Suada Nusic, secretary Adnan Zekovic and advisor Dr. Alija Piric.

The Chief Federation Inspector of the Ministry, which would more appropriately be called the ministry of national discrimination, is Mensur Suljagic. The sole employee who works out of Mostar and is in charge of the Department for economic and financial affairs is also a Bosniak – Ramiz Leto. The director of the Department of construction, reconstruction and supply for educational institutions is Dzemko Ruzdic.

The only Croat holding a position is the assistant for preschool, elementary and secondary education Severin Montana.

Amra Avdagic is the assistant for science, while the position of assistant minister for higher schooling remains vacant.

This ministry is often the author of unconstitutional attempts to transfer jurisdiction over education from the cantonal to the federal level, which would be fatal for Croats who have retained some form of a constituent people only on the cantonal level.

The constitutional and legal committee of the BiH Parliament House of Representatives did not pass the draft Law on Higher Education submitted by representative Momcilo Novakovic, determining that it was not in accordance with the BiH Constitutional Court’s recommendations.

The Constitutional Court ruled against an earlier draft submitted by the Ministry of Civil Affairs because Croat representatives argued it violated their vital national interests.

Chairman of the BiH House of Representatives Martin Raguz stated that Croats expect the Law to be passed in a form which would confirm the jurisdiction of the cantons or the state, but not the entities.

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Dzihanovic receives political advisor in U.S. Embassy to BiH

FENA

July 25, 2005

BiH Federation Vice-President Sahbaz Dzihanovic on Monday received Dana Murray and Larry Henderson, the political advisor in the U.S. Embassy to BiH.

They exchanged opinions about the situation in BiH primarily from the aspect of the key reforms that must be implemented on BiH's road to the EU.

Dzihanovic and Henderson agreed that implementation of constitutional reform is the basis for implementing all other reforms and making progress on the road to Euro-Atlantic organization, and that the current state structure established by the Dayton Accords is far too complicated.

The FBiH President presented Henderson and Murray with the Platform for the new Constitution of the Republic of BiH, which could serve as a basis for designing the new democratic BiH Constitution based on European standards.

Such a Constitution, said Dzihanovic, is the basic precondition for launching reintegration, economic progress and self-sustaining development of BiH.

Dzihanovic and Henderson also talked about defense reform, and concluded that Federation BiH should carry out all necessary tasks within this process.