

BAKIR IZETBEGOVIC

RS Leader Openly Violated Dayton Agreement

Leader of the main Bosniak party and a member in the BiH Presidency urged the state prosecution and the international overseer of the peace agreement implementation in Bosnia to sanction Bosnian Serb leader for hate speech against Bosniak returnees

Bakir Izetbegovic said a July 7 statement of the Republika Srpska president Milorad Dodik in Bratunac was "the most dangerous statement given by an official in BiH since the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed". At a commemoration for Serb victims of the Bosnian war in eastern Bosnia, Dodik accused unnamed Islamic organizations of financing the return of expelled Bosniaks to the region bordering Serbia, in a bid to "occupy the Drina river (region) again".

"Milorad Dodik made an open anti-constitutional and anti-Dayton statement, committing a criminal offence (defined by) the Criminal Code of BiH. Since there was no expected reaction from the Prosecutor's Office of BiH and the OHR, I addressed those Bosnian and international institutions, as well as members of the PIC Steering Board, asking them to react and sanction this kind of behavior of the RS president," said Izetbegovic.

"It is evident that (Dodik) believes the



Bakir Izetbegovic

Bosniaks were occupiers in the Drina river region until 1992, which is why (the Serbs) forced them to leave their homes (...) by committing war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide against them, and that their right to

return, under the Dayton Peace Agreement and the Constitution of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is a repeated occupation of that part of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which should be stopped," said Izetbegovic.



Milorad Dodik, RS president: Where did (Valentin) Inzko come from? He probably stopped by in Sarajevo and upon seeing what the Bosniak media wrote, he rushed to support them without reading (my) statement and understanding its context



Dragan Mektic, security minister: In a phone session (of the Council of Ministers), I voted for (joining) the Transport Community, but the HDZ ministers voted against. The HDZ blocked the (Transport Community) agreement



Dragan Covic, BiH Presidency (HDZ): (Bosnia's internal organization) is a matter of BiH, not the EU. (...) The European Parliament has a clear position on the country's organization, especially in parts related to constituency and federalism

Bosniak Leader Calls for Investigation into Islamic State Threat

The Bosniak member of the Presidency called for an investigation into Islamic State group death threats to leaders of Bosnia's Islamic community

The latest Bosnian edition of the militants' magazine Rumiya published photos of top Bosnian clerics and described them as Islamic outcasts, saying killing them was better than killing infidels.

"I call on the relevant state institutions ... not to underestimate these threats, to investigate them thoroughly and support religious leaders," Bakir Izetbegovic

told reporters.

The Bosnian version of the ISIS magazine has since last September been justifying the attacks carried out by the terror group throughout the world. The magazine is issued in several languages, including Arabic, English, Turkish, German and French, by ISIS's media arm Al-Hayat. Its name means "Rome" and is thought to allude to the fall of the Roman Empire.

Security Minister Says Two Terror Attacks Prevented Recently

The Security Ministry and law enforcement agencies thwarted two terror threats in Bosnia a month ago, the security minister told a press conference.

"Intelligence-Security Agency (OSA) identified and prevented two serious terror threats. In accordance with this information, individuals responsible for those actions were found and apprehended. Credibility of the information

was confirmed, which means we are doing our job and monitoring the situation," Minister Dragan Mekic told a press conference in Sarajevo, and congratulated OSA members on their success.

He added they are closely monitoring situation and they are always engaged in monitoring persons and groups registered by law enforcement agencies.

Entity President Claims He Was Followed and Wiretapped

President of the Federation entity, Marinko Cavara, told a press conference in Sarajevo that he was illegally followed and wiretapped recently. He added that he had "a strange situation on a motorway 12 days ago with two vehicles" and expects the competent bodies to complete the investigation soon.

"I asked the investigative bodies to determine reasons for those strange actions. I found out there are plans to politically disqualify (me). I have certain



suspicions, but I need to have evidence in order to go public," said Cavara.

Covic Visits Brussels

On his first day of chairmanship at the BiH Presidency, member of the Presidency Dragan Covic traveled to Brussels, where he met with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice President of the European Commission Federica Mogherini. He also met with the

Commissioner for Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn and President of the European Council Donald Tusk.

On the second day of his visit to Brussels, Covic will meet with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Belgium Didier Reynders, the Presidency said.

Daily Markers

Dodik: Two Options for Making Chaos

The situation in the RS is very complex and threatens to escalate in the coming period.

The reason for that are the numerous facts that the authorities in the RS can no longer hide: companies, mines and banks are failing, debt is accumulating, agriculture subsidies and welfare payments are late for months, the healthcare is collapsing, and pensioners and educators have the lowest income in the whole region.

Aware of this state of affairs, the ruling parties in the RS want to expand the crisis to the state level, and then to the Federation level. They seek partners for that among the Federation's political parties in the BiH Parliament, Slobodna Bosna news website reported. Dodik's goal is to collapse the Council of Ministers. To achieve that, the SNSD and its supporters came up with two options. Option A is to play the card of animosities between parties and leaders in the Federation, which should be enough to have the report on the work of the Council of Ministers not adopted. This would make Dodik achieve two goals: he would have a chaos at BiH level and achieve a strategic advantage over the SDS and the Alliance for Changes, as a failure of the CoM would be interpreted in the RS as a collapse of the Alliance's "traitor policies".

Option B, in case the CoM passes a vote of confidence, is "entering the Council of Ministers" through the HDZ ministers. An agreement on that was reached by the HDZ and SNSD in Mostar; the HDZ officials will protect the interests of SNSD, or the RS, at BiH level.

An unseen absurd, which is unfortunately already being carried out, and which threatens to bring the CoM into a state of complete blockade. Whatever happens, the fact is that the SNSD will not stop with the CoM, and its devastating campaign will be directed to the Court and the Prosecutor's Office of BiH, OSA, SIPA, BiH Armed Forces etc.



The Srebrenica Jokes

I read articles on Srebrenica on Serbian news websites the other night at 2 am, and I stumbled upon a joke.

They do that sometimes, telling Srebrenica jokes in the middle of night

BY BORIS DEZULOVIC
OSLOBODJENJE, SARAJEVO



And so, Mujo was on a train and the man sitting across him seemed strangely familiar. "Sorry," Mujo said, "Are you by any chance Ratko Mladic?" "I am," the general confirmed. "It can't be!" Mujo said, surprised. "And who are you?" Mladic took interest in the conversation. "I am Mujo," Mujo said. "Where are you from?" Mladic asked. "From Srebrenica," Mujo said. "It can't be!" Mladic said.

In a study on the phenomenon of

Auschwitz jokes, German ethnologist Thomas Hauschild and his colleague from Berkeley Alan Dundes argued that the root of such humor in German society lies in the ironic toponymy of name Auschwitz: Au – German for ouch, Schwitz – German for sweat, and Witz – German for joke, also transliterated in the Balkans as vic, a joke. However, that is not the subject. In their study, professors Dundes and Hauschild argue that the sick Auschwitz jokes on "sweat and pain" have a hidden key for understanding them: when they emerged in the German urban folklore of the sixties – not the Jew jokes, but the Jews in Auschwitz jokes – they were a reliable sociological sign that the German society has included the fact of death camps in its consciousness. Not conscience, but consciousness for start. Sigmund Freud could talk about it for hours: "Witz" - by definition always incorrect and rude – is man's way to cope with own inhibitions. And there was no stronger inhibition in the history of Germans than Auschwitz.

When I heard that Veselin Gatalo wrote in his latest column that Mladic's humane army made sure they don't kill women and children at Srebrenica, I swear I thought it was irony and a joke. It would even be a good joke, not one of those idiotic wits that are never about Auschwitz but always about the Jews; that sick joke would be one of those German "Witz"es that put the fact of a crime into consciousness, and from there to "subconscience" – my word. It turned out that Gatalo wasn't joking. Of course, he didn't deny the massacre in his text – he just argued with the qualification of genocide painfully obviously. A "war crime beyond doubt" he wrote generously, but added in brackets like an asshole: "one of many in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also a rare one without dead women and children". The "undoubtedly" fact that some women and children were killed at

Srebrenica – in brackets, especially children – is explained as unintentional collateral, a glitch in the system. Men of military age were systematically killed at Srebrenica – true, with rather flexibly defined military age – so attention was paid to the lives of women and children, Gatalo argues. In brackets, with a high success rate.

In a magnificent twist, Gatalo uses one of the elements of textbook definition of genocide – a systematic annihilation of a group or part of the group by preventing natural reproduction – as a proof that there was no genocide. Just like if I said that the genocide against Croatia's Serbs in the Oluja campaign – if Gatalo has the right to have an opinion on a genocide confirmed by court sentences as an "ordinary crime", I guess I have the right to think that an "ordinary" ethnic cleansing of a whole minority is a genocide never proven in a court – wasn't a genocide because only the Serbs were driven out of Croatia.

Even more so, Gatalo describes the systematic killing of Srebrenica men – why not go through the door opened so wide to a malicious intention? – as an almost "civilized" crime, "one of many in Bosnia" but not like other savage, bloody and indiscriminate crimes; "one of rare" crimes against men only; not only humane, but also systematic, very German-like thoroughly organizes and executed. According to my understanding of Gatalo, the Srebrenica massacre was a big humanitarian operation of saving women and children who were left by their pathetic husbands and fathers to the mercy of the Serb army. In case you think this was my joke, here is some more Gatalo: "Many events; people from around the world will come to mark the anniversary of surrounded Srebrenica men breaking through the frontlines and getting killed in the process, and also the war crime of execution of the captured men. The men also left their women and children to the mercy of the enemy."

A lot of things were said and written about the Bosnian war in the last 25 years; a lot of things were said and written about Srebrenica in the last 20 or so years. But I don't recall I have read anything as diabolic as Gatalo's defense of the Srebrenica genocide; first by reducing it to an "ordinary" war crime, "one of many" and "a rare one" in which women and children were spared. Women and children left by their cowardly men. Who deserved their fate. Of course, Gatalo doesn't think that, but he doesn't have any material evidence to prove it.

And so, Veselin Gatalo took a walk in Potocari cemetery and saw Fata's grave. "It can't be!" he said.

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CoE Urges Bosnia to Improve Protection of Child Victims of Trafficking

In a report published Monday, the Council of Europe's Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) welcomes the legislative changes that have been made since the publication of its first report on Bosnia and Herzegovina in May 2013

The introduction of the criminal offence of human trafficking in the criminal codes of the Republika Srpska, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Brcko District ensures that human trafficking is criminalized consistently throughout the country. GRETA also commended the introduction of legal provisions concerning the non-punishment of victims of trafficking for offences committed as a result of being trafficked, as well as the establishment of the right of victims to be granted a recovery and reflection period pursuant to the new Law on Foreigners. The enlargement of the composition of the four Regional Monitoring Teams coordinating anti-trafficking activities by including labor inspectors and staff of mental health centers and day centers for children is another positive development noted by

GRETA, along with the adoption of the 2016-2019 National Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings.

However, despite the progress achieved, a number of issues continue to give rise to concern. The majority of identified victims of human trafficking in Bosnia and Herzegovina have been children. GRETA urged the authorities to strengthen their efforts to prevent child trafficking, including by strengthening the role and capacity of social work centers to play a proactive role in alerting other relevant authorities to possible cases of human trafficking and exploitation. Further, GRETA calls on the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to improve the identification of victims of trafficking and the provision of adequate assistance to them, regardless of the victims' co-operation with the investigating and prosecuting authorities. As regards in particu-

lar child victims of trafficking, the report highlights the need for ensuring long-term monitoring of their reintegration and a proper risk assessment before returning children to their parents. GRETA also urges the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to adopt measures to facilitate and guarantee access to compensation for victims of trafficking from the perpetrators or the State. In addition, the report underlines the need to set up a comprehensive statistical system on measures to protect and promote the rights of victims of trafficking.

The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings entered into force in Bosnia and Herzegovina in May 2008. The report is the second assessment of the implementation of the Convention by the member country, said the Council of Europe in a press release.

Federation PM, French Ambassador Discuss Reform Agenda Implementation



Prime Minister of the Federation entity Fadil Novalic received Ambassador of the Republic of France to BiH Guillaume Rousson in an inaugural visit at headquarters of FBiH Government in Sarajevo, and talked to him about implementation of the Reform Agenda and current political situation in FBiH. Prime Minister of FBiH informed the French Ambassador about implemented reforms and their positive results. He

emphasized that for the first time after ten years these measures have contributed to economic progress of the country.

They also talked about future projects from area of energy efficiency and communal services, where good experience and practice from France can be used in their implementation. Ambassador Rousson emphasized that France supports implementation of the

Reform Agenda, and that its measures will improve business environment which will attract new French investments in BiH and strengthen economic cooperation between the two countries.

Ambassador Rousson said that France supports BiH's European path and emphasized that they will provide all necessary assistance to the country on this path, FBiH Government said.

Receiver of Agrokor Gets Final Say on Future of Mercator



The receiver of Croatia's indebted concern Agrokor, Ante Ramljak, will take over the management of Slovenian retailer Mercator majority owned by Agrokor under a Ljubljana district court ruling, Slovenian media reported

This in practice means that the Slovenian court had recognized the insolvency of the majority owner of Mercator, and that Ante Ramljak Ramljak will have the final say on the future of the Slovenian retailer, news portal Siol.net reported over the weekend. Ramljak approached the court recently, when Mercator refused to take over stores managed by its peer Konzum in Bosnia in an operation designed by the receiver with the aim of saving the performance of Agrokor in the country. Last week, Ramljak announced that Agrokor's retailer Konzum will retain under

its management 170 stores in Bosnia, while Konzum's remaining 83 stores in the country will be taken over by Mercator from August 1. Following the decision of the Ljubljana district court, Mercator no longer has a say in the matter as Ramljak has the powers to manage it and, if necessary, dispose of it entirely or a part of its assets, Siol.net said.

In 2014, following the takeover of Mercator by Agrokor, Konzum was put in charge of retail operations in Croatia and in Bosnia. Mercator's fast-moving consumer goods stores in Croatia and in Bosnia were leased out at arm's

length principle to Konzum.

In April, the Croatian parliament adopted a law, commonly known as Lex Agrokor, in response to financial troubles at the country's biggest private concern. It allows the government to appoint temporary administrators to lead a restructuring process at the request of creditors of the company or the debtor itself.

Crnadak and Dacic Will Open New Building of Bosnian Embassy in Belgrade

Foreign ministers of Bosnia and Serbia, Igor Crnadak and Ivica Dacic, will open the new building of Bosnian Embassy in Belgrade today. The opening will be attended by high officials from Serbia and Bosnia, as well as ambassadors and other representa-

tives of diplomatic corps, MFA said. Opening of the new embassy building is another confirmation of good bilateral relations between Bosnia and Serbia, but also of intention to build good lasting relations between the two countries, the ministry said.

Mass Grave Discovered near Foca

A mass grave was discovered in the Foca region, in the village of Miljevina. Spokeswoman of the Missing Persons Institute of BiH Lejla Cengic told FENA that the remains of five persons were exhumed from the mass grave so far. It is presumed that the bodies belong to Bosniak civilians killed in the region during the Bosnian war. Under the order of the Court of BiH, the exhumation is run by the BiH Prosecutor's Office.

Bosnia's Economic Growth Should Be at 6% for 25 Years to Reach EU Level



Chief of the Office of the World Bank in Bosnia and Herzegovina Tatiana Proskuryakova said that BiH could achieve an economic growth of more than three percent, which is the forecast for this year, if the structural basis of the country's economy changes

Proskuryakova said that this change is also the essence of the Bank's strategy, news agency Srna reported.

"If we assume that this growth of three percent will not only be realized but sustained, although its sustainability is a matter of concern, it is not enough to bring BiH closer to the EU. BiH should have a six percent growth in a period of 25 years to reach the level of the Union," says Proskuryakova.

She noted that some Asian or European countries yearly "grow" seven percent, even more, and assessed that it is indeed possible for BiH will achieve a much faster economic growth. She stressed that the first problem in BiH is

that the public sector is too big and inefficient and as such suffocates the private sector.

"The second problem is that growth is driven by consumption rather than investments, and the third is that jobs are not opened in the real private sector. There is another thing that is not mentioned in our strategy, but there is a clear need to be mentioned. If you look at the system of taxation and social protection in BiH, you see that it is based on a Yugoslav model that presumes that everyone is working for the state," says Proskuryakova.

She went on to say that the entire social protection system is based on social contributions or labor taxation, which

means that people who are employed in the real sector must pay it, even more than labor productivity, which leads to a lack of employment in economy.

"If this does not change, everyone will run away from the real sector into grey economy and then there will always be a budget deficit for social spending. As the structure of the economy changes, social protection reform and pension insurance reform must be carried out," she noted.

If there is a political will in the country to embark on these reforms, as Proskuryakova pointed out, the World Bank will provide financial, as well as technical and analytical support.

Book Fair Opens at Sarajevo Children Square

Seventh mini book fair organized by the Rabic publishing from Sarajevo, which gathered 26 publishers from BiH, Croatia and Serbia, opened at Sarajevo Children Square. Director and owner of Rabic, Goran Mikulic, told FENA it is an outdoor sale exhibition of books and the aim is to enable citizens to buy books cheaper.

Discount at this fair, which will last until July 27, is from 10 to 80 percent.

May Average Net Salary Grew by 2.7%

The average net monthly salary in Bosnia increased by a nominal 2.7% year-on-year in May, reaching 860 KM, after rising by 1.0% in April, official figures showed on Monday. On a monthly comparison basis, the average net monthly salary in Bosnia increased by a nominal 2.6% in May, after falling 1.8% in April, according to data published on the website of the country's Agency for Statistics.

The average gross salary increased by a nominal 2.8% on the year, reaching 1,336 KM in May.

Bosnia Ranks Sixth in the World by Growth in Tourist Numbers



Destinations worldwide received 369 million international tourists (overnight visitors) in the first four months of the year, 21 million more than in the same months of 2016, an increase by 6 percent, according to the latest UNWTO World Tourism Barometer

Bosnia and Herzegovina found itself on the list of countries which have recorded the largest growth in the number of tourists, occupying 6th spot with annual growth of over 26 percent, which is four times more from the average growth in Europe. The January-April period usually represents some 28% of the yearly total and covers the winter season of the Northern Hemisphere and the summer season of the Southern Hemisphere, as well as the Chinese New Year and Easter holidays, among others. International arrivals reported by destinations around the world were positive overall, with very few exceptions. Most of 2016's strong performers maintained momentum, while destinations that struggled in previous years continued to rebound in the first part of 2017. "Destinations that were affected by

negative events during 2016 are showing clear signs of recovery in a very short period of time, and this is very welcoming news for all, but particularly for those whose livelihoods depend on tourism in these destinations", said UNWTO Secretary-General Taleb Rifai. International arrivals in Europe (+6%) rebounded in January-April after mixed results last year, as confidence returned to some destinations that were impacted by security incidents, while others continued to grow strongly. Results improved particularly in Southern Mediterranean Europe (+9% as compared to +1% in 2016) and Western Europe (+4% as opposed to +0% in 2016). Northern Europe (+9%) continued to record strong growth, while Central and Eastern Europe recorded 4% more international arrivals, in line

with results of last year.

The current strong momentum is reflected in the UNWTO Panel of Tourism Experts confidence index, based on evaluations and prospects of worldwide experts surveyed every four months since 2003. Experts evaluated tourism performance in the first four months of 2017 with the highest score in 12 years, clearly exceeding their already positive expectations from the start of the period. Responses to the survey were strongest from Europe, in line with the rebound in arrivals. Experts also show strong confidence in the current May-August period, as their prospects are the most optimistic in a decade, also driven by upbeat expectations in Europe. The May-August period includes the peak tourism season in most of the world's major tourism destinations and source markets.

Sarajevo Brewery Launches New Product

Sarajevo-based brewer Sarajevska Pivara has launched a new product - natural spring water Lejla. It is a pure, natural, spring, domestic water whose spring is located in the pristine nature of Trebevic mountain overlooking the city of Sarajevo. It springs from underground reservoirs of water, protected from pollution, the company said in a statement. "After redesigning Sarajevsko Pivo beer

and the expansion of the beer product range, the company is now modernizing its water segment. It is known that we are one of the few breweries that have own water source, even three wells. The quality of our water is superior, controlled daily and unchanged for more than 150 years and we are confident that this product will also find its way to consumers," Sarajevska Pivara's

general director Zlatko Ramic said in the statement.

Natural spring water Lejla is of exceptionally stable quality and has a constant, unchanged and balanced mineral ratio. It has a beneficial effect on the human body, it is suitable for consumption at all ages and can be consumed in unlimited quantities, says the statement.

Mostar Becomes a Big Gallery of Street Art



Mostar's historic buildings have been a draw for generations of tourists but the city's walls now offer a more modern attraction – street art

For the sixth year in a row, Mostar hosted the Street Arts Festival. The influence of the graffiti and mural artists is visible almost on every corner: on renovated constructions; on destroyed blocks; on the street that marked the city's division during the 1990s war. The art crosses the ethnic lines that soldier sought to impose.

"At least when it comes to the urban culture the graffiti and murals gave a new identity to this city. And having in mind that the city has over a hundred painted murals, the city itself has become one big gallery of street art," said Marina Mimoza, the festival organizer.

Success Seemed a Long Way Away

Thanks to her and the team that work besides her, great number of artists are coming to Mostar every spring. This year's edition of the festival gathered artists from Croatia, Slovenia, Serbia, Montenegro, but also group of artists from Uruguay and Argentina.

Based on the number of artists who are painting the walls of this southern Herzegovinian city and the interest that the graffiti and murals are evoking from tourists, it is clear that the festival is getting its international recognition. But as Mimoza pointed out, when they first started in 2012, this success seemed a

Euronews

long way away.

"Tourists really like the street art here. But if someone had told me six years ago that the street art will become so popular and known in here, I wouldn't believe it," said Mimoza.

"I really think this is nice, and particularly since we have a lot of abandoned space, lots of ruins and there is still a lot of space to work on."

Unlike previous years when the artists focused on the Glass Bank, a tall destroyed building in the center of the city, this year, artists were mostly devoted to Santic street and the Konak, a former Yugoslavia military headquarters.

"It's half ruined building. We cleaned it, children planted flowers, they also painted the walls outside. But also, we painted inside and made an art gallery from one of the devastated rooms," explains Mimoza.

This year's guest artists from Uruguay and Argentina did the most work on Santic street, which once divided Serbs and Bosniaks in the city and still bears the scars of war.

"My personal belief is that Santic street is ideal to become a mural street. It used to be a division line during the war. And now, just when you meet with the people who are still living there, you see how hard our reality is. But you can't live

in the past, you need to live now. Of course, you have to understand suffering of others, but we have to continue with our lives," notes Mimoza.

Claudio Nunez, an artist from Uruguay who painted one of the murals on Santic street said that it felt really good for him and his Colectivo Licuado to take a part in a Festival and to share their art with the people of Mostar. Members of Colectivo are traveling around the world and they are trying to visit as many places and to leave the traces of their art.

Art Makes Life Brighter

As Nunez explains, it is their belief that art can always unite people, even though it takes time sometimes.

"So many people have worked together as volunteers to make the festival possible, and they are working for a better future, putting up colors in Mostar."

Mostar's complicated political system has enabled local elections to take place for nine consecutive years, but the city is still searching to recreate the joy and unity it was once known for.

As Mimoza notes, art makes life brighter and everyday challenges more bearable: "It is nice that we are becoming a city that embraces street art, because we don't have a lot of that in this country."

PDHR BRUCE G. BERTON

The Election Campaign Never Seems to Be Stopping

The Croat proposal of the Election Law deepens divisions instead of leading towards a solution, said Bruce Berton, an American diplomat and the Principal Deputy High Representative, at the end of his mandate

"It remains to be seen now what the SDA will propose and how far they are prepared to go, or whether they will propose changes to the Election Law only or changes to the Constitution, too," Berton said.

He said that the OHR's role is not finished yet because the conditions and goals have not been fulfilled, making an assessment that the OHR could stay on for some time.

"There is a clear awareness among the members of the PIC SB that the conditions and goals have not been met. And, to be honest, I do not see any debate about a possible change of those conditions," Berton said.

Nationalist Divisive Rhetoric

Over the last twelve months many things have happened, from the referendum, revision of the judgment, etc. How do you see BiH today?

As the High Representative said, we have one positive and one negative trend. We can see sporadic progress on the European road, and then again, we can see this nationalist divisive rhetoric,

Nezavisne novine

which brings more and more division among people. We want to see more efforts directed at reconciliation, dialog instead of divisions. And it seems quite often that we make one step forward and two backwards.

Is the divisive rhetoric, after all, more profitable for the leaders?

You are right. It seems that it is easier for the politicians to use nationalist rhetoric instead of choosing the harder road trying to make compromise with other politicians. What is the declared goal of this country is that it aspires towards a compromise – the EU. We would like to see more progress on this road. Obviously, the electoral climate of 2018 can already be felt and the election campaign never seems to be stopping. However, it seems to me that there is an opportunity to do something within the next few months before the campaign starts in earnest.

You mean the Election Law? Can this question be really resolved before the election, considering the rather contra-

dictory initiatives?

We must resolve this, in this or that way. I think there must be some change before the election. You have heard Croat representatives who really insist on the resolution of this, and they have made their proposal. I am afraid that their proposal only deepens divisions in this country instead of resolving problems. It remains to be seen now what the SDA will propose now and how far they are prepared to go, or whether they will propose changes to the Election Law only or changes to the Constitution, too. And when you look at the unresolved cases from the European Court for Human Rights, it seems that the solution will require certain constitutional changes, which are hard to achieve because a two-thirds majority is required. The OHR is ready to help and has both the experience and experts that can be well used if the two sides make an agreement.

If I am not mistaken, the Constitutional Court of BiH should make a decision concerning the constitutionality of the Election Law...?

Yes, it seems that the SDA is waiting for that decision before they present their proposal. I really don't know what they will propose, that is what we are all waiting for now.

5+2

Brcko is one of the 5+2 conditions and objectives for the closure of the OHR. Has it been fulfilled?

Yesterday I had meetings in Brcko and I believe that the situation is stable, but there are still some open issues. Until they are resolved, I don't think we can say that that condition has been met yet. Of course, there has been progress, for example prompt organization of elections last year and the subsequent forming of authorities. Then the adoption of the budget, although this year they managed to do that in June, last year in September, which is not very encouraging. They adopted four laws in the area of financing, which is also good not only in the sense of greater transparency and fight against grey economy, but also harmonization with entity- and state-level laws, which also



Bruce Berton

helped with the IMF. Amendments on prevention of money laundering were adopted as well, and so on.

So, out of 5+2, state and defence property remain?

Those are two very sensitive issues, but there is also financial sustainability and Brcko District. Also, it is required to have a positive assessment of the political situation in BiH, which will probably be the hardest one.

It is interesting that in the PIC session this time there were no differing opinions. Was that a coincidence or did something happen "behind the scene"?

It is not a coincidence. We made joint efforts to come to agreed positions. We did not spend hours on proposals and drafts that would result in footnotes and differing opinions of individual members. One of the reasons is that we have returned to the old format of communiques, shorter ones, and we spoke about those issues that we thought were important for the leaders to agree on – solutions for the Election Law, Mostar, progress on the EU agenda, IMF arrangements, freedom of media and funding of public broadcasters. We also spoke against divisive rhetoric and in favor of dialogue and reconciliation.

Finally, what is the fate of the OHR? What will happen to it?

5+2 were determined in 2008. There is no doubt that the role of the OHR has changed significantly over the years. It is now much smaller, but the Bonn powers are still there if a need for them arises. I think that there is still a clear role for the OHR, in particular before the forthcoming election year. All in all, I think the OHR will remain in BiH for a certain period of time because there is a clear awareness among the members of the PIC Steering Board that the conditions and objectives have not been met. And to be honest, I see no debate about changing those conditions.

"For a certain period of time" sounds like three or four years at least?

It is difficult to say how long exactly, but that cannot be ruled out. BiH is the most complicated place I have served in so far.

Your mandate as the Principal Deputy High Representative is ending. You have spent two years here, what are your experiences like?

This is without a doubt the most complicated place in which I have served. And obviously there are challenges that are sometimes frustrating not only for us in the international community but also for local actors and ordinary citizens. However, I think that I now understand the people here better and I have learnt to appreciate this country of fascinating beauty and good people. I hope that I will remain present here and be a part of the processes in this country.

Businessman Accepted Sentence for Bribing Tax Authority Chief



Businessman Sedinet Karic will receive a one-year sentence for bribing the former director of the BiH Indirect Taxation Authority if the court accepts his plea bargain with the prosecutors, reported the Center for Investigative Reporting

The Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina has been deliberating the plea bargain agreement that Sedinet Karic made with the BiH Prosecutor's Office in May 2017. Justice Biljana Cukovic said that the Panel of Judges could not decide and will make its announcement next week. The Prosecutor's Office and the defense counsel agreed that Karic would receive a one-year prison sentence. Prosecutor Dubravko Campara said that Karic cooperated with the prosecutors in providing important evidence. According to the prosecutor, the defendant described how he has given money to the director of the BiH Indirect Taxation Authority.

Karic is accused of bribing the former ITA director, Kemal Causevic, with 425,000 KM to obtain preferential treatment for his two firms that were importing textile. According to the indictment, in 2007, Causevic got in touch with Anes Sadikovic and Karic, the owners of companies importing textile from Turkey, China and Hungary. Causevic offered no detailed inspections of cargo, and customs would clear importers' fake invoices or make them smaller in value. In exchange, Causevic asked Sadikovic and Karic to pay him 1,000 KM per each truckload of goods. Between 2007 and 2011, Sadikovic's and Karic's companies imported more than 1,722 truckloads of textile. According to the indictment, the two have paid Causevic at least 1.72 million KM.

If the Court upholds the agreement, Karic would be a prosecution witness on

the trial against Causevic and Sadikovic. Campara said that Karic was the key prosecution witness.

"I think that his testimony will be paramount in proving what the lead defendant and Sadikovic had done," said Campara.

Justice Cukovic asked the prosecutor to clarify the length of sentence since Karic had been sentenced earlier to five years in prison on tax evasion charges. According to the new indictment, he bribed Causevic with nearly half million KM.

Campara answered that Karic has served the earlier sentence and that his firms have no debts toward UIO BiH.

The trial of Causevic, Sadikovic and Karic began on July 6, 2017. After the prosecutors informed the Court that they made an agreement with Karic, his case was set apart before the Panel decides if it will give a go-ahead to the agreement.

The indictment also describes how between 2004 and 2012, Causevic invested illicit gains into legal economy by buying a number of expensive real properties worth around 1.2 million KM, in and around Sarajevo. CIN has written about this in detail.

The ITA former director is also charged with abuse of office in relation to a public bid for printing revenue tags. Causevic approved a KM 200,000 restitution to a complaining bidder, Glas Srpski – Grafika AD Banja Luka, even though there were no grounds for it as no damage had been done.

West, Russia Battle for Balkans Gas Corridors



The West and Russia are battling for control of the transport of natural gas through the Balkans, as both sides pursue their geopolitical agenda in the volatile region

Moscow has suffered a series of setbacks in the Balkans. Montenegro has joined NATO, while Macedonia's new social democratic government seems to be distancing itself from its previous pro-Russia stance. But while the West can offer Balkan countries incentives such as the prospect of membership of the European Union or investment locally, Russia can play the energy card.

Political Dependence

Gas accounts for a quarter of the European Union's energy consumption and in 2016, Russia's Gazprom supplied a third of Europe's gas. And in the Balkans, dependence on gas looks set only to increase as coal fired power stations shut down - under pressure from the EU. Croatia is already an EU member, but the other so-called Western Balkan countries - Albania, Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia - are all at different stages on the path to joining the bloc.

"In Serbia, Bosnia, Bulgaria and Macedonia, Russia tries to convert dependence on gas supplies into political dependence, and obstruct their integration with the West," said Timothy Less, head of the Nova Europa political risk consultancy.

Nevertheless, for the moment at least, Russian influence in the Balkans' energy sector is limited by a lack of infrastructure. Without gas pipelines, it cannot supply most of the countries in the region, said Less. And it is here that the West hopes to steal a march on Moscow by backing rival projects. The competing interests of the West and

AFP

Russia in the Balkans gas market only serve to increase the geostrategic importance of the region.

"Southeast Europe lies at the crossroads of energy corridors linking East and the West," Albania's former foreign minister Paskal Milo told AFP.

"The region does not interest them as an economic resource, but it is becoming more important as a transit territory for other strategic markets in Europe and for gas storage."

According to analysts, the West feels it must respond to Moscow's use of energy as leverage for control in the region. "After some years in which Russia was winning in the energy game, the West seems to be gaining the advantage," Less told AFP.

A number of gas transmission projects that will ultimately reduce the region's energy dependence on Russia are underway.

The EU-backed Trans-Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) project to bring Azeri gas via Turkey to Greece, Albania and across the Adriatic to Italy is expected to make its first deliveries in 2020. In terms of capacity - 10 billion cubic meters annually - the 870-kilometer TAP may not appear that important in economic terms.

"It is more a geopolitical project that could enhance, even if only minimally, EU gas security," said Nicolas Mazzucchi, a researcher at the IRIS French think tank.

The West is pushing for a way to reach the Caucasus, and one day perhaps even tap into Caspian or Middle Eastern gas, while circumventing

Russian territory, he said. The EU and the US are willing to extend TAP to create a "gas ring" circling the Balkan region from Albania, through Montenegro and Bosnia, to Croatia.

Along with a planned liquefied natural gas terminal (LNG) on the northern Croatian island of Krk, partly financed by EU, it would create strong competition between the West and Russia.

In May, seven Balkan nations - Albania, Bosnia, Bulgaria, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro - signed a deal to jointly develop a natural gas pipeline that could diminish their dependence on Russia. The project is backed by the US development agency USAID. And the Europeans are backing the Ionian-Adriatic Pipeline (IAP), that would run from Albania, through Montenegro and Bosnia, to Croatia.

A Sensitive, Demanding Project

For its part, Russia signed a deal with Turkey in October 2016 to build the TurkStream pipeline pumping Russian gas through Turkish waters in the Black Sea towards Europe. Visiting Turkey this month, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic said he wanted the pipeline linked to his country. But experts say the project is highly sensitive in geopolitical terms and technically very demanding. It would require work at depths of up to two kilometers under the sea. It depends on a whole number of issues, said Igor Dekanic, a professor at the Zagreb Faculty of Mining, Geology and Petroleum Engineering. These included relations between Turkey, Russia and EU, the migrants issue, Syria, the expert said.

PHOTO OF THE DAY



Firefighters arrive at the site of a wildfire about to reach a village in Herzegovina

CLASSIFIEDS

A furnished three-storey house (or separate apartments) for rent, located above Skenderija, 50m from Tranzit, near the Stari Grad Radio and the Russian Embassy. Each apartment has a terrace, and the house has a front yard terrace with a grill. Gas/electricity heating. Parking available. The house has a garden. Viewing available every day.

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If I Were a Boy: Comedy. Jeanne wakes up one morning and her life is about to take a funny turn. At first sight nothing has changed about her – save a small detail.

WEATHER OUTLOOK



Air pollution in Sarajevo

LOW

Sarajevo

Today: Sunny. High 27C.
Tonight: Low 11C.
Wednesday: Mostly sunny. 30C.

Banja Luka

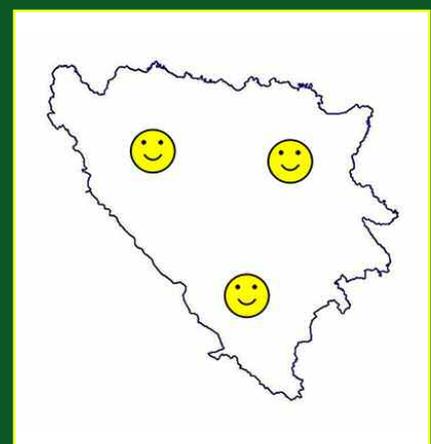
Today: Sunny. High 29C.
Tonight: Low 12C.
Wednesday: Sunny. Close to 32C.

Tuzla

Today: Sunny. High 28C.
Tonight: Low 11C.
Wednesday: Sunny. Close to 31C.

Mostar

Today: Sunny. High 34C.
Tonight: Low 18C.
Wednesday: Sunny. Close to 35C.



UV Index

High