



BALKAN WATCH

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A Review of Current Events

SERBIAN RADICAL PARTY WINS ROUND ONE OF PRESIDENTIAL VOTE. Tomislav Nikolic, candidate of the Serbian Radical Party headed by war crimes indictee Vojislav Seselj whose trial is underway at The Hague, led the first round of voting at 31.62 percent. Boris Tadic of the Democratic Party placed a surprisingly strong second place with 27.93 percent. In another surprise, Bogoljub Karic took nearly 17 percent of the vote for third place while Dragan Marsicanin, of Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica's DSS party, came in fourth with around 13 percent of the vote. Nikolic and Tadic will face each other in a runoff ballot on June 27. Less than 50 percent of the electorate turned out for the June 13 voting, but the previous requirement that at least half of eligible voters cast their ballot was dropped after three earlier attempts to elect a president failed to generate the necessary 50 percent.

SREBRENICA COMMISSION ISSUES REPORT. An official investigation into the 1995 Srebrenica massacre by the Bosnian Serb government has found that thousands of Bosnian Muslims were indeed killed by Bosnian Serb forces. The report issued by the commission is the first time in which Bosnian Serbs have officially recognized the Srebrenica massacre. The war crimes tribunal at The Hague had previously declared the massacre an act of genocide. The commission announced the location of 32 mass grave sites, 11 of which were previously unknown, where many missing bodies are believed to have been buried. Military, police, and parts of the interior ministry were all involved in the massacre. The commission consisted of seven members, one Muslim and one international, the rest all Bosnian Serbs.

ASHDOWN: BOSNIAN LEADERS SHOULD RESIGN. Following a report on spending issued by Bosnia's chief auditor, High Representative Paddy Ashdown called upon the three leaders of the country's tripartite presidency to resign. Auditors "found evidence of frequent irregularities in procurement, excessive spending, underreporting of expenditures, and inflated state salaries," according to the High Representative's office. The auditors noted that this was hurting Bosnia's economy, which suffers from 40 percent unemployment. The tripartite system created by the 1995 Dayton Peace Accords fosters high bureaucratic costs. Samir Musovic, head of the Bosnian auditing office, told reporters that, "The three presidents themselves were surprised by the result of the audit and probably never heard a report about the spending of their institution. We have been pointing out those mistakes which keep repeated themselves for years and not only in the presidency."

BOSNIAN ARMY DOWNSIZING COMPLETED. Bosnian Defense Minister Nikola Radovanovic said June 4 that the Bosniak-Croat army had been reduced from 23,000 to 8,000 troops, and the Bosnian Serb army from 16,000 to 4,000 soldiers.

REXHEPI ANNOUNCES INDEPENDENCE PLAN. Kosovo Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi told the newspaper *Zëri* that if the final status of Kosovo is not decided in 2005, Kosovo should declare independence. If a final status solution is not agreed upon by 2005, Rexhepi proposes unilateral action by holding a referendum in Kosovo to determine the final status. Rexhepi also said that making reforms within the current government should be made easier, allowing for ministers to be able to be replaced if necessary. He added that the process of privatization needs to be accelerated, allowing for Pillar IV of the UNMIK mandate to be fulfilled.

HOLKERI CONCERNED BY FRAGILE KOSOVO SECURITY. Outgoing UNMIK chief Harri Holkeri warned June 10 that Kosovo's security situation was very fragile. He ascribed inter-ethnic problems to the terrible economic situation and 60 percent unemployment rate. Many ethnic Albanians, however, blame UNMIK for Kosovo's problems, especially the lack of progress toward independence. As Holkeri spoke, several hundred Kosovo Albanian protesters were demanding that UNMIK pull out.

KOSOVO SERB TEEN MURDERED. Teenager Dimitrije Popovic was killed on June 4 in Gracanica, near Pristina. Serbia-Montenegro President Svetozar Marovic sent a letter to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan demanding a prompt investigation into the killing. Marovic noted that continued violence against Kosovo Serbs has worried many in Serbia. Marovic noted that acts of violence undermine attempts to rebuild trust between Serbs and Albanians in Kosovo, making the conflict harder to manage and eventually resolve. Shortly after the murder, two ethnic Albanian suspects were arrested by police. Serbian leaders in Belgrade continue their calls for increased Serb self-rule in Kosovo, fearful that Serbs stuck in enclaves there will be subjected to future attacks. Kosovo Prime Minister Rexhepi announced that those guilty of attacks will be brought to justice. Various international organizations were fearful that the murder might renew widespread ethnic violence similar to that of March which followed the drowning of three Kosovo Albanian children.

SOLANA DEMANDS PROGRESS ON STANDARDS. Javier Solana, responsible for EU foreign and security policy, reiterated EU support for achieving "standards before status" during a visit to Kosovo the first week of June. He was also highly critical of the murder of an ethnic Serb teenager in Kosovo, claiming that a society in which this kind of killing took place did not belong to Europe. "I do not know where it belongs," he added. Solana announced that the government needed to step up efforts to reconstruct Serb homes destroyed during ethnic rioting in March.

DEL PONTE TOURS CROATIAN COURT. Carla Del Ponte, head prosecutor at the war-crimes tribunal at The Hague, inspected a Croatian district court in Zagreb to investigate the

possibility of transferring more low-level war crimes cases to that judicial level. Del Ponte noted that trying cases at the local level allows for a greater sense of reconciliation among the various parties involved in conflict, recognizing the potential benefits of trying indictees at home rather than abroad. The investigation is one part of Del Ponte's plan to narrow down cases handled by the tribunal, whose mandate expires in 2010. The president of the Croatian bar association, Ratko Pelicarić, announced he felt that his country's court system would be prepared to handle the cases and its lawyers and judges are "professionally qualified." Del Ponte also was to meet with various Croatian leaders, including Prime Minister Ivo Sanader and Defense Minister Vesna Skare Ozbolt.

CHARGES FILED IN MURDER OF MONTENEGRIN EDITOR. Charges have been filed against Damir Mandić, a former karate champion, in the killing of Dusko Jovanovic, editor of the pro-opposition *Dan* newspaper in Podgorica. Mandić is believed to have aided Jovanovic's killers. Jovanovic had been a controversial figure because of his positions on various issues. He was indicted last year for revealing the identity of a protected witness in the trial of former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic. Mandić has ties to organized crime gangs in Podgorica.

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"But if we see that there is no international readiness to start definition of the status during 2005, then the only alternative remaining for us is to take unilateral decisions, and one of them could be declaring a referendum for the independence of Kosovo."—Kosovo Prime Minister Bajram Rexhepi (*Zëri* 6/4/04).

"The society where 16-year-old kids are killed is not a healthy society. That society does not belong to Europe."—Javier Solana, EU foreign policy minister, remarking on the murder of a Kosovo-Serb teenager by ethnic Albanians, while visiting Kosovo (*AP* 6/6/04).

"What happened in the spring could be repeated in the summer, autumn, and winter if we don't overcome this crisis and see the UN leave."—Kosovo Albanian protest leader Albin Kurti, warning of further violence in Kosovo (*RFERL* 6/11/04).

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