



# BALKAN WATCH

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## A Review of Current Events

**RADICALS RESUME CALL FOR GREATER SERBIA.** Serbian Radical Party leader Tomislav Nikolic, who finished second in the last Serbian presidential election, told a Bosnian news magazine that Bosnian Serbs should hold a referendum on departing Bosnia and joining Serbia. Asserting that he did "not see Bosnia as a state," Nikolic also called for Croatia's Krajina region to join a Serb state. This is the second time in the past month that Nikolic has called for a Great Serb state joining all Serbs. Observers noted that the Balkan wars of the 1990's resulted from former Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic's attempt to achieve a state gathering all Serbs together.

**RADICALS, DEMOCRATS LEAD IN MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS.** Elections held September 19 in 148 municipalities throughout Serbia demonstrated the strength of both the Radical Party and the Democratic Party as well as the sagging popularity of Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica's Democratic Party of Serbia, according to preliminary vote projections. Final results are expected to be made available later in the week. A week prior to the voting, violence broke out between two rival Muslim parties in the Sandjak region.

**TENSIONS IN VOJVODINA.** During a visit to Belgrade, Hungarian President Ferenc Madl met with Serb leaders and drew attention to recent acts of violence against the ethnic Hungarian minority living in the province of Vojvodina that borders Hungary. The acts of violence included attacks on ethnic Hungarian property and death threats made against ethnic Hungarian politicians. Hungary also recently filed a complaint with the Council of Europe over the anti-Hungarian violence. Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica downplayed the violence as "individual incidents," and asserted that Hungary was over-reacting. Serbia-Montenegro joined the Council of Europe in April 2003. Katlin Szili, speaker of the Hungarian parliament, said that, "By joining the organization, Serbia-Montenegro pledged to defend human and minority rights," and promised to draw U.S. congressional attention to the "gravity of the situation in Vojvodina" during an upcoming visit to the U.S.

**SERB REFUGEES RELUCTANT TO RETURN TO CROATIA.** A poll conducted for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) revealed that 85 percent of Serb refugees who fled Croatia between 1991 and 1995 are unprepared to return to their former homes. Approximately 200,000 Serbs left Croatia in 1995, when Croatian forces recaptured areas previously taken by Serbs in 1991. Further data in the study showed that 60 percent of the refugees surveyed said they "definitely" would not return to Croatia, while 25 percent acknowledged that they would

"probably" never return to Croatia. One percent indicated that they would definitely return. The survey showed that Croatian citizens also did not want the Serb refugees to return. Of Croatians surveyed in a complementary study, 63 percent did not want the Serbs to return. Nearly 70,000 ethnic Serb refugees have returned to Croatia since the Serbian-Croatian war ended.

**TADIC CRITICIZES JESSEN-PETERSEN OVER KOSOVO ELECTION REMARKS.** Serbian President Boris Tadic criticized remarks made by UNMIK chief Soren Jessen-Petersen. Tadic accused the UN envoy of discouraging Kosovo's ethnic Serbs from participating in next month's elections. Tadic was offended by remarks that linked non-participation in the election with being left out of future talks over the status of Kosovo. Jessen-Petersen had previously stated that Kosovo Serb non-participation in the election would prevent them from being invited to participate in future talks.

**KOSOVO ALBANIANS CHARGED IN TEEN'S DEATH.** Neeraj Singh, UNMIK spokesman, announced that two suspects have been charged in the drive-by shooting of a Kosovo Serb teenager on June 5. Dimitrije Popovic was shot while standing outside a hamburger stand in the primarily ethnic Serb town of Gracanica. The two suspects could each face at least ten years in prison for the murder charge alone. Singh also noted that three ethnic Albanian suspects were charged with inciting hatred leading to sizable property loss. After rumors that three Kosovo Albanian children were drowned in a river last March, the three suspects participated extensively in subsequent rioting.

**DUTCH FM URGES MACEDONIANS TO ACCEPT DECENTRALIZATION.** Dutch Foreign Minister Bernard Bot has urged Macedonians to accept a decentralization law that will be put to a parliamentary vote following a November 7 referendum on decentralization. Bot noted that if the bill is rejected, the country's prospects of joining the European Union would be harmed. The law would have to be passed in order to comply with the terms of the Ohrid Peace Accords of 2001. Decentralization will improve the Albanian minority's representation in the government. Many ethnic Macedonians fear that the law will lead to the eventual division of Macedonia.

**MILOSEVIC TRIAL DELAYED.** Judges at the Hague international tribunal have postponed former Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic's war crimes trial. The trial was adjourned for one month, to allow Milosevic's new defense team to prepare their case, after the court ruled that Milosevic would no longer be allowed to represent himself without counsel

because of health concerns. The court had appointed British attorneys Steven Kay and Gillian Higgins to represent the former Yugoslav president. Since the appointment, Milosevic has refused to meet with the two lawyers, not accepting their legitimacy as his appointed counsel. Various witnesses listed by Milosevic earlier have refused to testify to the court, now that it has appointed counsel for him. George Kenney, former deputy Yugoslav desk officer at the U.S. Department of State, reportedly called the hearings "inherently unfair." Ambassador James Bisset of Canada also reportedly refused to testify before the court unless it allowed Milosevic the right to represent himself again.

**MUJAHEDDEEN MEMBER CHARGED.** Bosnia's state prosecutor has filed charges against Iraqi-born Abdullahim Maktof for participating in the 1992-1995 war. Maktof is believed to have participated in war crimes in 1992, having kidnapped and detained five hostages. The hostages were subsequently taken to a mujahedeen camp, where one was beheaded and the rest were beaten. Other mujahedeen fighters left after the Bosnian war ended; however, Maktof stayed in Bosnia, where he opened a business in Travnik. Maktouf was first taken into police custody in June, believed to have been using his business as a front for drug operations.

## QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"If the Kosovo Serbs decide not to participate, that means they are letting down the interests of those Kosovo Serb citizens whom they are supposed to represent; it means that they decide not to be part of the dialogue that will secure a multiethnic Kosovo, that will secure the future of the minorities, notably the Kosovo Serbs."—Soren Jessen-Petersen, UNMIK chief in Kosovo, urging Kosovo Serbs to vote in the October elections (*AP*, 9/9/04).

"I insist on everyone being on his own territory. That is my political stand under which Serbia, Montenegro, Republika Srpska and, God willing, the republic of Serb Krajina [in Croatia], should all be in one state."—Serbian Radical Party leader Tomislav Nikolic, in an interview with a Sarajevo weekly news magazine (*Slobodna Bosna*, 9/19/04).

"A rejection of decentralization would seriously jeopardize the rapprochement with the EU. I'm hopeful people will act in a responsible way knowing what is at stake."—Bernard Bot, Dutch Foreign Minister, remarking on the importance of Macedonian acceptance of the decentralization awaiting a vote (*AFP*, 9/14/04).

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