



BALKAN WATCH

Monday, November 22, 2004

Volume 6.21

A Review of Current Events

KOSTOV RESIGNS. Macedonian Prime Minister Hari Kostov submitted his resignation following disagreements with an ethnic Albanian party in the current governing coalition. Kostov accused the Albanian Union for Integration (AUI) party of nepotism and corruption, saying that the party voted against two economic laws because 15 jobs were not created for ethnic Albanians in the state administration. Proportional employment in the government, however, is a condition of the Ohrid Agreements that prevented civil war in Macedonia. The spokeswoman for the AUI, Ermira Mehmeti, was surprised at Kostov's resignation, saying that her party had been cooperating with Kostov's party. Kostov's resignation came one week after the failure of a referendum to prevent devolution of powers to ethnic Albanian communities due to low voter turnout. The Macedonian parliament must first accept Kostov's resignation, allowing President Branko Crvenkovski to appoint a new prime minister. Kostov stated he felt the government was operating inefficiently because of "daily political bickering." Deputy Prime Minister Radmila Secerinska, also a Social Democrat, will serve as caretaker prime minister.

KOSOVO LEADERSHIP COALITION EMERGES. Following the October parliamentary elections, Ibrahim Rugova's LDK party and Ramush Haradinaj's AAK party have reached agreement on a governing coalition in which Rugova would serve as president and Haradinaj as prime minister. A number of observers have expressed concern over the decision by Rugova to choose Haradinaj as prime minister, in view of the indications by the Hague tribunal that the latter might be indicted before the end of this year for war crimes. This could potentially put Kosovo on a collision course with the international community at a time when efforts were underway to reach agreement on Kosovo's final status.

TADIC ENCOURAGES RUSSIAN FORCES IN KOSOVO. Serbian President Boris Tadic suggested that a contingent of Russian forces in Kosovo might be helpful toward the ethnic Serbian minority. Tadic's remarks came as he was visiting Moscow to attend a fundraiser for the construction of the Saint Sava church in Belgrade. Moscow condemned NATO air strikes against Serbia in 1999. Tadic was accompanied by the head of the Serbian Orthodox Church, Patriarch Pavle. Russia sent a contingent of 650 troops to join NATO's KFOR in 1999; however, the troops were withdrawn by Moscow in 2003 because of financial concerns.

MILOSEVIC PARTY ON RISE IN SERBIA. Since September, members of the ultranationalist Radical Party and the Socialist Party, the party of former President Slobodan Milosevic, have increased their representation in local elections. Various Western and pro-democracy groups have raised concern over the recent elections, worried that they might signal

that further setbacks could be expected for Serbia's democratic forces. Dragan Sutanovic, a leader of the Democratic Party, has accused current Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica of being too lenient in dealing with extreme nationalist groups in the country. Kostunica has refused to extradite top Serb war criminals to the Hague tribunal because he opposes the tribunal and he exploits anti-tribunal sentiments to hold his government together. His nationalist Democratic Party of Serbia has also forged alliances with some of the Milosevic supporters in local elections. Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic, head of the Serbian Renewal Movement, has stated that "new elections are inevitable" in the next few months, leading many to worry about the growth of the anti-Western parties. Kostunica suggested in a television interview that handing war crimes suspects over to the tribunal could jeopardize Serbia's relative political stability.

WAR CRIMES INDICTEES' BODYGUARDS KILLED SOLDIERS. According to Danica Draskovic, wife of Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic and a senior official of the Serbian Renewal Movement, bodyguards protecting indicted Serbian war crimes suspect Nebojsa Pavkovic shot and killed two soldiers at an army installation in the Belgrade suburb of Topcider in October. Draskovic's party is seeking a parliamentary commission to investigate the killings, instead of the current commission appointed by the Supreme Defense Council. The Serbian Renewal Movement also urged Serbian families not to allow their sons to join the military until the Topcider deaths have been investigated. Additionally, she charged that another soldier believed to have committed suicide in the southern Serbian town of Leskovac in August was actually killed by bodyguards of wanted fugitive Vladimir Lazarevic. If true, this would confirm reports that the Serbian military was trying to protect several war criminals from capture and extradition to The Hague.

MONTENEGRO TO VOTE ON INDEPENDENCE NEXT YEAR. According to Prime Minister Milo Djukanovic, Montenegro will hold a referendum next year to determine whether or not it will dissolve its state union with Serbia. Djukanovic has persistently criticized the lack of Serbian cooperation with the Hague tribunal. The state union was created after talks held under the auspices of the European Union, of which some officials worried that Montenegrin independence could lead to renewed violence in the Balkans. Djukanovic suggested that the referendum would be held by November 2005.

SANADER VISITS BELGRADE. Croatian Prime Minister Ivo Sanader met with Serbian officials, including Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica, in Belgrade. Sanader's visit is the first by a Croatian prime minister since Croatia declared independence in the early 1990s. Kostunica noted that Sanader's visit was a sign

of good relations between the two countries, who fought a bloody war between 1991 and 1995. In 2003, Croatian President Stipe Mesic met with his Serbia and Montenegro counterpart Svetozar Marovic in Belgrade. Kostunica noted that a prime issue between the countries is the question of ethnic Serb refugees returning to their homes in Croatian territory. Thus far, 100,000 of an estimated 280,000 Croatian Serb refugees have returned to Croatia.

BOSNIAN SERBS ARREST FIRST WAR CRIMES SUSPECTS. Officials from NATO welcomed the arrest by Bosnian Serb police of eight locally indicted war crimes suspects. The eight had been indicted by a Sarajevo court. The Bosnian Serb Republic, however, has yet to detain anyone indicted by the UN war crimes tribunal in The Hague, such as Radovan Karadzic.

SREBRENICA FAMILIES TO SUE FOR COMPENSATION. A representative for various families suing the Bosnian Serb and Serbia and Montenegro governments for compensation for acts committed against family members in the 1995 Srebrenica massacre noted that the families' suits will total more than €200 million (\$260 million). Munira Subasic, head of the "Mothers of Srebrenica" organization, noted that the "door is open" for the suit, after a Bosnian Serb commission released a report acknowledging the massacre of around 7,800 Muslim men and boys in July 1995. The families also requested around €2 billion in compensation from the Dutch government, saying that several hundred Dutch peacekeepers deployed to Srebrenica failed to stop the massacre. The recent Bosnian Serb report was itself a product of a lawsuit.

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"Serbia has obviously made a tragic return to the era of Slobodan Milosevic."—Vuk Draskovic, Foreign Minister of Serbia and Montenegro (*AP*, 11/16/04).

"Milosevic's military personnel are now running the army, secret service and the police."—Former Serbian Prime Minister Zoran Zivkovic (*AP*, 11/16/04).

"I think that this is great hypocrisy and that Serbia should no longer be prepared to sacrifice itself for Milosevic, his policies and his people. You see for yourself—he's holding the whole state leadership ransom."—Danica Draskovic, wife of Serbian Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic (*B92*, 11/14/04).

Prepared by John Sannar