



BALKAN WATCH

Monday, August 23, 2004

Volume 6.15

A Review of Current Events

JESSEN-PETERSEN BEGINS UNMIK MISSION. Soren Jessen-Petersen, appointed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in June as the replacement for outgoing Kosovo UNMIK chief Harri Holkeri, has formally assumed his new position. Jessen-Petersen has served in various other international positions, most previously as EU special representative to Macedonia. Upon assuming his new office in Kosovo, Jessen-Petersen remarked that it was his goal to bring Kosovo closer to Europe and European integration. He related the stability of the whole Balkans region with the problems in Kosovo, noting that "clarity of status" regarding Kosovo would benefit the whole region. In a letter to Jessen-Petersen, Serbian President Boris Tadic claimed that previous administrators had failed in accomplishing their mission in Kosovo. Tadic suggested working on improving conditions regarding security for minorities and taking measures to reduce violence and organized crime. Serbian official Nebojsa Covic accused Jessen-Petersen of wanting to bring Kosovo closer to full independence from Serbia. Covic encouraged Serbians to unite against potential independence plans, while noting the continued exodus of ethnic Serbs from Kosovo.

NEW U.S. CHARGE ARRIVES IN KOSOVO. Philip Goldberg has arrived in Kosovo to take charge of the U.S. mission there. Goldberg replaces Marcie Ries, who completed her one-year stay in Kosovo. Goldberg is expected to remain in Kosovo for the next two years. Prior to this appointment, he served as acting Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Legislative Affairs and had considerable experience at U.S. embassies around the world.

UNMIK RELEASES FUNDS FOR MARCH REBUILDING. The Kosovo government and UNMIK have released nearly €4.2 million (\$5.2 million) to rebuild historic Serb churches destroyed and damaged by rioters in March. Yelena Baldanova, a Kosovo government official responsible for coordination between the government and UNMIK, confirmed that the money would be earmarked for the reconstruction work. She noted that of the total amount of money, the Kosovo government would be contributing the majority of the funds, €3.7 million. The remaining €500,000 would be provided by the international community, through UNMIK.

SERBS STILL BOYCOTT KOSOVO ELECTIONS. Despite the official position of Serbian Prime Minister Vojislav Kostunica that ethnic Serbs in Kosovo boycott the October elections, the UN has urged Kosovo Serbs to participate in the voting. Deputy UNMIK chief Charles Brayshaw declared that, "Clearly we want the Serbs to participate in these elections, although some of the due dates have passed." The Civic Initiative of Serbia party remains the only Serb party that has registered to vote in the October 23 elections to fill one hundred parliamentary seats. Twenty seats are filled by

appointment in the 120-member parliament of Kosovo.

TADIC MEMORIALIZES VIOLENCE VICTIMS ON ANNIVERSARY. Serbian President Boris Tadic marked the first anniversary of the deaths of two Kosovo Serbs in an act of violence carried out by Kosovo Albanians. The act occurred on August 13, 2003. Tadic cited continued violence that he suggested was hampering attempts by the international community to bring stability to Kosovo, remarking that that there has been continuing violence against ethnic Serbs there. He suggested that the international community step up efforts to find and bring to justice those guilty of perpetrating the attacks against the two Serbs who were killed last year and urged that the security situation for remaining Kosovo Serbs be improved.

SERBIAN STATE SYMBOLS CHANGED. The Serbian parliament voted to authorize the restoration of Serbia's national anthem and coat of arms. The two symbols are from before World War I, before communism took root in Yugoslavia. Serbian lawmakers voted unanimously to adopt the old symbols, which would replace the current ones that include communist themes. Prior to the parliament vote, members of the Serbian Socialist Party of former leader and indicted war criminal Slobodan Milosevic walked out, refusing to vote. Additionally, non-Serb citizens were offended by the change. For example, an ethnic Croat living in Serbia noted that she felt no allegiance to the new coat of arms and anthem. The anthem was adjusted slightly in its lyrics, with monarchical references replaced to avoid confusion. Last week, the joint government of Serbia & Montenegro failed to vote on adopting a common anthem to represent the state union. In July, Montenegrins also voted on approving their own flag and anthem.

SEKARIC WINS SILVER AFTER SHOOT-OFF. Serbian shooter Jasna Sekaric won the silver medal in women's ten meter air pistol competition at the Athens Summer Olympics. Sekaric was tied after the final round, with Olena Kostevych of Ukraine. Sekaric and Kostevych faced each other in a one-shot tiebreaker. Kostevych edged out Sekaric by a score of 10.2 to 9.4, winning the gold. Sekaric, nonetheless, was pleased to have won the silver, noting the poor training conditions found in Serbia for shooters.

SERBIA & MONTENEGRO EU INTEGRATION OFFICER RESIGNS. Milica Delevic-Djilas resigned her position as Serbia & Montenegro's EU integration minister because of a lack of agreement among Serbians and Montenegrins on how to bring the state union closer to EU membership. Delevic-Djilas noted the stubborn refusal of many people in Serbia & Montenegro to want to conform with EU standards, while expecting the EU to conform with their own conditions. Delevic-

Djilas refused to place the blame squarely on either Serbia nor Montenegro, saying that both entities are to blame. Many officials fear that Serbia & Montenegro will vote to split from each other in 2006 to form their own independent governments, not linked by a state union.

THIRD ANNIVERSARY OF OHRID AGREEMENT. International officials from the United States and European Union praised Macedonians for their efforts to bring the country closer to multiethnicity. EU Special Representative Michael Sahlin and U.S. Ambassador Lawrence Butler noted in a joint statement that they approved of the passing of a controversial decentralization bill, which would grant ethnic Albanians more say in government matters, improving democracy. Sahlin and Butler's remarks come after many ethnic Macedonians protested the decentralization bill, leaving dozens injured. Other opponents feared that the bill would further divide the country along ethnic lines, leaving Macedonia in worse condition than before. More protests are expected as the law is carried into action and municipal boundaries are redrawn. The city of Struga, one hundred miles southwest of Skopje, for example, would become an Albanian-majority town, as several Albanian villages are added into the boundaries of the ethnic Macedonian town. The Macedonian parliament will vote on more decentralization bills in November. The decentralization process began with the signing of the Ohrid Agreement in August 2001.

QUOTABLE QUOTES:

"I firmly believe that Kosovo is the last piece in a puzzle taking the western Balkans from the conflicts of the 1990s toward normalization, stabilization and European integration."—Soren Jessen-Petersen, new UN Administrator of Kosovo on his first day in office (*AP*, 8/15/04).

"There is a limit to how long you can keep a place in limbo. It is incumbent on me to try to lead the process with a greater sense of urgency."—Soren Jessen-Petersen, new UN Administrator in Kosovo on his second day in office (*Reuters*, 8/17/04).

"It is often heard here 'we want into the EU but under our conditions,' which is, I have to say, tantamount to saying 'we do not want into the EU.'"—Milica Delevic-Djilas, Serbia & Montenegro official responsible for EU integration (*AP*, 8/16/04).

Prepared by John Sannar