

International Intelligence

Power struggle rages in Croatia

The death on May 4 of Croatian Defense Minister Gojko Susak, and the resignation of Hrvoje Sarinic as head of President Franjo Tudjman's office, have brought to the surface a raging power struggle in that country, European newspapers report.

With Susak, the head of the powerful Herceg-Bosna faction of Croatian hard-liners (and enemies of the Dayton Accords) inside the governing HDZ party, has departed. Tudjman's position has been further called into question with the resignation the week before of his son Miroslav, as head of the Croatian intelligence agency. More such developments cannot be ruled out, in the coming days.

A catalyst in these resignations has been revelations about the role of key Herceg-Bosna figures in the privatization mafia, who are said to have prompted the collapse of Dubrovacka Banka, the nation's fifth-largest bank, in April. There is strong suspicion that Ivic Pasalic, a member of Tudjman's personal entourage, arranged the bank's collapse, in order to sell it off cheaply to Tudjman HDZ party cronies.

Russia, Uzbekistan cite 'fundamentalist' threat

Russian President Boris Yeltsin received President Islam Karimov of Uzbekistan on May 6, for talks on reviving economic and other relations. After their discussions, Karimov announced that they had agreed to combat the spread of "fundamentalist" groups, citing the situation in both Central Asia and the North Caucasus, Radio Free Europe reported, based on Russian television reports on May 1-3.

Uzbekistan now chairs the ministerial council of the Commonwealth of Independent States; newly appointed CIS secretary Boris Berezovsky is touring the member countries.

The week before Yeltsin and Karimov

met, Yeltsin's representative in Chechnya was abducted near the Chechen-Ingushetia border. The village of Assinovskaya, where Valentin Vlasov, his car, driver, and bodyguard disappeared, was described on NTV as under the control of Wahhabite irregular forces, not the Chechen authorities. The latter denied any involvement in the kidnapping of Vlasov, who was reportedly on his way to Baku, Azerbaijan, for talks of an undisclosed nature.

Security officials in Dagestan have recently expressed alarm about growing Wahhabite activities there. Chechnya, Ingushetia, and Dagestan are all regions within Russia in the North Caucasus, Chechnya having declared its independence. The Wahhabites are often identified with Saudi patronage, but in the North Caucasus they also include Chechen ethnic individuals who carry Jordanian passports.

German teachers call for education reform

The German Teachers Association, at a meeting in Berlin the weekend of May 2-3, called for a return to certain Classical features of the German *gymnasium* system of secondary education.

Josef Kraus, the chairman of the association, endorsed the initiatives in this direction that have been launched by the state governments of Bavaria and Baden-Württemberg (see *EIR*, April 24, p. 63). The association wants to convince the other 14 German state governments of the benefits of at least a substantial return to vital aspects of the system that existed before the 1972 "Brandt Reforms." This would include the reintroduction of mandatory core courses for all students.

Kraus recommended that grades 10-13 of the *gymnasium* system should be based on five study areas: German language, one contemporary foreign language, mathematics, history, and natural sciences. Fifty percent of the weekly school hours should be based on these mandatory courses; the other 50% could remain electives by the students, Kraus said.

Political pressure is increasing, particularly on the Christian Democrats, to give national support to these types of initiatives by the two state governments (which are run by that party), and to make this an issue in the election campaign for national Parliament next fall.

Egyptians grill Blair over terrorist policy

British Prime Minister Tony Blair repeatedly had to defend Great Britain over charges that it safehouses terrorists, during his visit to Egypt on April 17-18. "British Prime Minister Tony Blair said Saturday, Britain would soon introduce stronger counter-terrorism laws in the U.K., and pledged to President Hosni Mubarak that Britain will stand with Egypt in fighting terrorism," the Egyptian state news agency, MENA, reported on April 18. In an address before the British-Egyptian Businessmen's Association, Blair said: "I told President Mubarak that Britain stands shoulder to shoulder with Egypt, in its determination to fight terrorism from wherever it comes. Britain will not be a safe haven for terrorists. We will bring forward proposals soon for stronger counter-terrorism laws in the U.K."

Shortly before Blair's meeting with Mubarak on April 17, controversy erupted in Cairo over Britain's policy, the London Press Association reported. It says the Egyptian government deliberately leaked to the press that "Mubarak was expected to raise with the Prime Minister claims that, of 14 alleged terrorists opposed to the Egyptian regime currently resident in European capitals, four or five are London-based. Ten of the 14, including some of those in London, have been convicted in their absence by Egyptian courts."

In another slap, the chairman of Egypt's State Information Service, Nabil Osman, denounced Britain in remarks to the Egyptian and British press waiting outside the Blair-Mubarak meeting. "There are so many [terrorists] who are actually enjoying your hospitality," Mubarak said. He flatly rejected the claim that the Egyptian convictions of

CHRIS PATTEN, the last colonial governor of Hong Kong, has been named by British Prime Minister Tony Blair to head a commission on policing Northern Ireland, which will be created if the electorate votes on May 22 to endorse the new peace agreement. Patten was a junior minister in the Northern Ireland office in the early 1980s. From 1992 to 1997, he was deployed to disrupt the return of Hong Kong to China.

AUSTRALIA'S police commissioners have agreed to consider drug strategies that focus more on rehabilitation than on the criminal justice system, with an emphasis on "harm minimization." *The Australian* reported on April 25-26. Victorian Police Commissioner Neil Comrie, one of the leaders in the drug legalization effort, gloated that the commissioners had decided to "almost wipe the slate clean."

VATICAN Swiss Guard head Alois Estermann was assassinated on May 4, one day after his appointment to lead the Vatican's military police corps, after a seven-month period in which there was no director. Prior to the murder, on May 2, a bomb threat was delivered to the Vatican Museum.

THE IMPRISONED leader of Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), Ali Belhadj, has reportedly called on three armed groups to establish a truce among themselves. One faction of the GIA (the most vicious terrorist operation, headquartered in London) said it would not acknowledge any FIS leadership, and would continue the killings.

KYRGYZ authorities arrested 20 Uyghur separatists who were allegedly involved in terrorist activities, according to Kyrgyz press reports monitored by the Russian agency Itar-Tass. Those arrested belong to the "For Free Eastern Turkestan" organization, and were in possession of weapons and training videos.

the British-based terrorists do not warrant their extradition, since they were tried *in absentia*. "They were tried in their absence, because they are on the run," he said.

Egyptian State Television also peppered Blair with questions on the matter, during his joint press conference with Mubarak.

Saudis offer to mediate between U.S. and Iran

Saudi Arabian officials made an offer for mediation with Iran to U.S. Vice President Gore, while he was in Saudi Arabia on April 1-2, according to a report published in the Saudi-backed Arabic daily *Al Hayat*, and amplified in *As Sharq al Awsat*, during the first week of May. "Diplomatic sources said Saudi Arabia renewed its mediation offer to America to help narrow differences between Washington and Tehran, by conveying the United States' views on the subject during an upcoming visit by the Saudi Foreign Minister to Iran," according to *Al Hayat*.

Saudi officials reportedly urged Gore to alter U.S. policy toward Iran, considering the positive evolution in the country, especially since President Khatami's election.

Saudi Arabia and Iran have restored good relations, with several exchanges of high-level delegations over the last year. Saudi Prince Saud al-Faisal is expected to visit Tehran soon.

Colombia's FARC targets U.S. embassy official

The Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) issued a communiqué on April 20, declaring U.S. embassy official Joseph McBryan to be a "military target," according to the daily *El Espectador*. This is the first time a specific American official has been named in this way, and marks an escalation of the FARC's March 16 declaration that all Americans who aid the government are now targets.

The communiqué calls U.S. anti-drug efforts a cover for an "extermination cam-

paign" against human rights and popular leaders, citing the recent assassination of the country's leading lawyer for the terrorists, Eduardo Umana, as "evidence."

An embassy official confirmed to *El Espectador* that McBryan works at the embassy, but said that they would make no official statement for the moment, as the threat creates a "delicate situation which is being studied."

U.S. officials reportedly met with Colombian officials, seeking information on the FARC's 53rd Front, which seized four Americans in March, and held them as hostages for weeks. Colombian newspapers report that the United States is planning to ask Colombia to arrest, and then extradite, the head of the 53rd Front, "Commander Romaña," to be tried in the United States.

Kosova Liberation Army called a Serbian creation

The Kosova Liberation Army (UCK) may well be a Serbian creation, the Vienna daily *Die Presse* reported on May 2, based on hints coming from Ibrahim Rugova's Democratic League of Kosova. The daily is known as a mouthpiece for Austrian military intelligence.

The report stressed that the real leaders of that front are not known, nor are there serious efforts by the Serbian military to crush it, although the Serbs know exactly where the "rebels" of the UCK are. The Serbian military is well-positioned along 100 kilometers across Kosova, and could eliminate the UCK in "just two minutes," because the UCK is no serious threat, a former Serbian officer, who is now a journalist, told the newspaper.

But the Serbs use the UCK myth as a pretext to increase their military presence and, during the first week in May, to seal off the Kosova capital, Pristina. As early as two years ago, when the first UCK executions of Albanian "collaborators" in Kosova began, strong suspicion was voiced that the front was really a "creation of the Serbs," the Vienna daily reported.