

**FOREIGN POLITICAL REPRESENTATIVES IN ZAGREB WHO, IN A
DECISIVE MANNER, CREATE OUR IMAGE IN EUROPE AND IN THE
WORLD**

FIVE MOST POWERFUL DIPLOMATS IN CROATIA

Extended arm of Brussels

**1. VINCENT DEGERT, Head of the European Commission Delegation in
Croatia**

This French diplomat who, on behalf of the European Commission, monitors each and every Croatian step towards Brussels is the key person tailoring our EU destiny. Let us recall the recent sparks that occurred between him and Prime Minister Sanader when they gave opposite statements regarding the Protective Ecological and Fishing Area (ZERP). After that short circuit, when Degert and Sanader met the next time at a presentation in Westin Hotel, the whole of Croatia anxiously awaited whether the two of them would shake hands and communicate at all. The experienced diplomatic fox from the EU nevertheless approached the Croatian Prime Minister.

This all proves Degert's power in deciding on Croatia's EU destiny. He is the extended arm of Brussels in Zagreb, a man against whom Croatia's politicians should have no grudges, and particularly should not lie to because, without doubt, for each forged presentation, the bill will be ten times higher. Each war with Degert is lost in advance for Zagreb, because Brussels trusts him and not Sanader, Šeks or Mesic.

Measurer of democracy's pulse

**2. JORGE FUENTES MONZONIS VILALLONGA, Head of the OSCE Mission
to Croatia**

The leading OSCE figure monitors and measures on a daily basis the pulse of Croatian democracy and law-based state, on which he sends regular monthly reports to the seat of this international organisation in Vienna. The contents of his reports most directly influence Croatian success in approaching the European Union, particularly the decision whether and when the OSCE will withdraw from Croatia. For as long as Fuentes is in Croatia, this means that Europe still does not consider this country to be democratically mature, thus it could guarantee all rights and freedoms to all of its citizens by itself. And when Fuentes, that is, the OSCE, actually leaves Croatia, that naturally does not depend on Zagreb, but on Vienna.

The extent to which Fuentes' opinion is measured was evident by this week's reaction of the Association of Croatian Judges due to his statement that the OSCE expects that the main hearing will take place and a verdict will be passed in the Ademi-Norac Case this year. Judges accused him of making an impermissible attack on courts and striking against independence of judicial authorities. However, taking

into account the mandate and tasks of the OSCE in Croatia, signed by the Croatian Government as well, all judges and politicians of this country cannot put a stop to Fuentes.

Main NATO link

3. ROBERT BRADTKE, U.S. Ambassador to Croatia

U.S. President George W. Bush did not by accident appoint him as the U.S. Ambassador in Zagreb. After appointment to this duty was confirmed by the U.S. Senate as well, Bradtke succeeded Ralph Frank. Since he is a career diplomat with a high reputation, Bradtke represents a turn in Croatian-U.S. relations and a confirmation that Washington sees Croatia as its most important partner in South-East Europe.

Bradtke is the first US Ambassador to Croatia who, in addition to some other languages, speaks Croatian fluently due to the fact that he performed diplomatic tasks on behalf of the White House in the former Yugoslavia, precisely in Zagreb. He entered diplomacy in 1973. After his service in the U.S. Mission in London, the then U.S. President **Bill Clinton** appointed him Executive Secretary of the National Security Council. Robert Bradtke was particularly involved in NATO enlargement, and has therefore been inevitable for the realization of Croatian NATO aspirations. And not only that! The shadow of unsettled bills related to the signing of the agreement on non-extradition of U.S. citizens to the International Criminal Court is still hanging over Zagreb and Washington. A difficult task lies before Bradtke, but he will not give up on it.

Endless disputes with Rome

4. ALESSANDRO GRAFINI, Italian Ambassador to Croatia

Although it appeared that the Italian Ambassador will mark Croatian European aspirations only at the beginning of this mandate, taking into account that Italy chaired the EU back then, relations between Croatia and Italy are unfortunately still determining Croatia's path towards Brussels. Not because Rome has anything against our EU accession, on the contrary! We are the greatest masters of setting obstacles to our own Euro-aspirations. This became evident also in the case of Croatian stubbornness in the discrimination against Italian citizens in their access to the Croatian real estate market. Both, **Berlusconi** and **Prodi** have been warning us about that. It proved to be well-intended. However, we waited for the "verdict" of Brussels which refused to open negotiations in the Chapter of Free Movement of Capital because of that.

Precisely when the storm surrounding real estate calmed down, a new and hazardous move by our diplomacy occurred: as of 1 January 2008, the ZERP will come into force for EU members states as well. Some politicians will again accuse Italy, but it is quite positive that we will be charged for that by Brussels, and not by Rome. As in the case of real estate.

Human rights under examination

5. Sir JOHN RAMSDEN, British Ambassador to Croatia

Although the frosts period between Zagreb and London is over (Hague fugitive **Ante Gotovina** has been arrested, and criticism about the lack of cooperation with The Hague has disappeared), Ambassador Ramsden and his assessments of Croatia's progress in democratization remain extremely important in formulating the official standpoint of the Foreign Office on Croatia.

Annual reports on the state of human rights in the world, published by the UK's Foreign Office, in which they are specifically talking about Croatia, are one of the key sources used by numerous international organizations for the assessment of the human rights situation in our country.

The British Embassy in Zagreb is in any event an important counselling point influencing the formulation of assessments in those Foreign Office reports. Let us recall that in 2005, precisely on the basis of that British report, the Croatian judiciary was forced to repeat the Lora war crime trial since London assessed that the process was highly politicized.

Due to the traditionally strong role Great Britain plays within the EU, its Ambassador in Zagreb shall remain until further notice one of the most powerful opinion makers when it comes to the image of Croatia abroad.