

Interview: Wolfgang Petritsch, the High Representative for BiH: "I am surprised that Lagumdzija and Ivanic have never discussed the Decision on constituency of peoples"

The Republic of Srpska is still too Serb and too little res publica, a community of all three constituent peoples · Karlo Filipovic has to solve problems with RS politicians and not only with me

Although not "admitting", the High Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina, Wolfgang Petritsch, had at times frustrating and above all exhausting missions during his visit to Banja Luka. The fact that he arrived to Sarajevo yesterday at 4 a.m. is a confirmation of this statement. The visit to Banja Luka is positive to the extent that I have felt the realistic approach by political leaders who are aware of rather dramatic changes to follow. Changes, that are indispensable in order to enforce the Decision of the Constitutional Court of Bosnia and Herzegovina on the constituent peoples – said the High Representative at the beginning of his interview to "Dnevni avaz".

The Dayton anniversary

Dnevni avaz: The top leadership in RS is strongly opposing some solutions related to the enforcement of the Decision on the constituent peoples?

WP: Well, six years have elapsed since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement and the Republika Srpska is still too Serb and too little res publica. The meaning of this in Latin is: the matter of interest of general public, and in RS this also implies the non-Serb citizens. This has to be changed urgently.

Dnevni avaz: How you are going to ensure this? The lack of willingness of the RS top leadership to make such change is quite clear.

WP: Yes. If it were up to them, then nothing would happen. This will probably require, as it is already set forth in Dayton, a dose of more decisive engagement of the International Community. The Constitutional Commissions have done a pretty good job so far and it is a high time for the Parliaments to take the matter into their hands. This is the next step in the process.

Dnevni avaz: Do you feel that this will be implemented?

WP: There is a willingness to do this. Ivanic has publicly called upon the people from the Alliance to discuss the issue of enforcement of the Decision on the constituent peoples at the highest political level.

Dnevni avaz: Wasn't that a maneuver not to do the job? Let's sit and talk and sitting and talking here can last forever?

WP: No, I do not think so. In this specific case, I have to commend Ivanic for he has upheld what we have been advocating all the time – taking into his own hands the solution of hot issues. And since the signing the Dayton, the issue of the constituent peoples in the Entities has been the most difficult issue we have been confronted with.

Dnevni avaz: Then you must have been very frustrated with the unwillingness of the RS authorities to cooperate in the enforcement of this Decision?

WP: This frustration goes for the RS leaders as well as for leadership of the Alliance for Change. I cannot see the readiness of the Alliance to deal with this historic decision and undertake appropriate measures which are now required.

In a way, I am in conflict with two sides which, for different reasons, are not willing to get fully involved in the solution of this problem. However, I am an optimist.

Dnevni avaz: Judging by positions of the Alliance leaders, they are also frustrated with your behaviour. Karlo Filipovic, President of the Federation, says that the solutions of the Constitutional Commissions proposed to date are far away from symmetry. He expects your “considerable involvement”. And you expect him(them) to be considerably involved?

WP: I think it is essential to clarify the role of the International Community and the High Representative on the one hand, and domestic authorities on the other. If Filipovic wants more symmetry in the solutions proposed by the Constitutional Commissions, then he has to talk with the authorities in Banja Luka and not only with me. This has to take place finally. The Alliance was passionately advocating taking on the future of this country, and now it is time for that to happen.

This is your country

Dnevni avaz: So, you strike them back a blow using the same weapon?

WP: No. I simply think that it is very important for BiH to have that happen. This is your country and if your politicians manage to properly enforce such important decisions by themselves, that will be a great step for BiH. It will, inter alia, cement the coexistence of the three communities. And this is possible only through dialogue, compromise and consensus.

Bosnian politicians have to understand that they are the ones who have to do the hard part. Otherwise, this country will never be fully self-sustainable. They cannot rely on OHR all the time and moreover, this is not in accordance with proclamations of the Alliance on taking the future of this country into their hands.

Therefore, it is necessary to establish a dialogue, a round table. I was surprised to learn that Ivanic and Lagumdžija have never talked about the issue of the constituent peoples. This is not good. Politicians in every country, either ruling or opposition, are constantly talking to each other. This should be the practice here and the issue of the constituent peoples has to be the priority issue on the agenda of every meeting.

I told the RS authorities that they had to fulfill immediately their part of work and present it to the Parliament. They promised that they would do that and I believe that it will happen.

The Constitutional Commission in the BiH Federation did this already in July but it has not yet been discussed at the Federation Parliament. I am not the one who is preventing the item to be included in the agenda. I do not understand why so much time is needed to have such an important item on the agenda.

Misunderstandings with Klein

Dnevni avaz: We have witnessed misunderstandings between you and Ambassador Klein on the manner of the functioning of a streamlined international community?

WP: From a human point of view, it is normal for me that someone who has been engaged here in important tasks for so many years, like Klein, has certain personal positions and is not quite happy with the fact that he will have a specific role in a newly-defined structure.

According to decision of the PIC Steering Board, the High Representative is the one to pull the strings. Klein had a different work model for the International Community and now, expectedly, he has certain problems in accepting the newly proposed concept. However, he is a democrat and professional and supports my concept which had full support by the Steering Board.