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Constitutional reforms

Oslobodjenje: the same rights for all

At a press conference organized in Sarajevo on Wednesday by the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, the journalists were told that, following month of negotiations, the agreement on the implementation of the BiH Constitutional Court's ruling on the constituency of the peoples had been signed earlier in the day in the OHR building in Sarajevo. Zlatko Lagumdzija

(SDP, Kresimir Zubak (NHI) and Safet Halilovic (Party for BiH) signed the document in full. Presidents of PDP, Pladen Ivanic, SDS, Dragan Kalinic, SNSD, Milorad Dodik and SPRS, Petar Djokic, expressed two reservations regarding the agreement, and they signed the note to the agreement defining the reservations and saying that they accepted the rest of the document as a basis for the adoption of the amendments to the Entity Constitution. HDZ did not sign the agreement at all. On behalf of the international community, the document was signed by the High Representative, US Ambassador to BiH Clifford Bond, Spanish Ambassador to BiH Rafael Valle Garagorri (on behalf of the EU) and Ian Campbell, the Deputy High Representative for Legal Affairs. Petritsch told the press conference that the PIC Steering Board expected the entity's Parliaments to adopt the agreement under the urgent procedure. "The agreement will ensure non-discrimination of the citizen's rights in the entire BiH's territory, and under the highest European Standards," the High Representative said. Addressing the journalist at the same press conference, SDP leader, Zlatko Lagumdzija said the agreement would allow Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks to become a genuine poltical owners of the entire BiH. He called on the leaders of the nationalist political parties (SDA, HDZ and SDS), who wanted to avoid the political responsibility for the future of the country, to join the Alliance in the implementation of the agreement. (all media carried the contents of the agreement and prominently reported on the Petritsch and Lagumdzija's press conference press conference)

Fena: The High Representative congratulates party leaders on agreement reforming entity Constitutions

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, congratulates the leaders of the political parties on the agreement they signed early on Wednesday, a statement issued by the OHR says. The new entity constitutions will turn Bosnia and Herzegovina into

a truly multiethnic country , providing Bosniaks and Croats in the RS, and Serbs in the Federation with full representation and full protection of their rights. (The news agencies and Slobodna Dalmacija carried the press release)

PIC Steering Board welcomes the agreement, requests entity's Parliaments to adopt amendments by the first week of April

The PIC Steering Board at ambassadorial-level met on Wednesday and welcomed the agreement reached by the political leaders of Bosnia and Herzegovina on implementation of the Constituent Peoples' Decision. "This represents a decisive step forward in terms of Bosnia and Herzegovina's democratic development and commitment to the rule of law. The Steering Board notes that some of the leaders have signed the agreement with specific reservations and strongly urges them to accept it in full. The Steering Board expects the process of implementing the Constituent Peoples' Decision to be taken decisively forward by all parties through an urgent and fast track adoption of constitutional amendments by the entity parliamentary assemblies," the Board said in a Communique. "In order that sufficient time is available to bring the Election Law in line with the amendments to the entity constitutions, the entity parliaments are requested to adopt amendments by the first week of April 2002," the Communique. (Dnevni Avaz, Nezavsine Novine and news agencies carried the communiqué)

Fena: US Embassy welcomes signing of agreement on the constitutional reform

The US Embassy to BiH welcomes the agreement reached March 27 on implementation of the Constituent Peoples' Decision, a statement issued by the Embassy says. This agreement shows what local political leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina can achieve when they engage seriously and constructively on a question that is key to their country's future. It is pointed out in the statement that some leaders expressed specific

reservations to the agreement. The Embassy calls on them, as well as all those did not participate in the negotiations, to demonstrate their commitment to the people of Bosnia and Herzegovina by fully supporting this agreement. (All Sarajevo dailies carried the press release)

Contact Group Ambassadors meet with Kalinic over implementation of the agreement

Oslobodjenje reports that the Contact Group Ambassadors headed by French Ambassador to BiH Bernard Bajolet met in Banja Luka on Wednesday with the Republika Srpska National Assembly Speaker Dragan Kalinic to discuss the implementation of the agreement on the constitutional reforms signed earlier in the day in Sarajevo. According to a press release from the Kalinic's office, the ambassadors emphasized that the acceptance of the agreement at the RS Parliament's session on Thursday would significantly improve relations between the RS and the international community, while its rejection would produce serious consequences for the future status of the entity.

Kalinic says the agreement on constitutional reforms good basis for the adoption of amendments to the RS Constitution

The BiH Federation TV quoted on Wednesday the Speaker of the RS National Assembly, Dragan Kalinic, as saying that, although the political parties from the RS had expressed two serious reservations regarding the agreement on the constitutional reform, the agreement itself (meaning the rest of it) represented a good basis for the adoption of the amendments to the RS Constitution. The RS Parliament is expected to discuss the issue at its session scheduled for Thursday in Banja Luka.

Tihic criticizes asymmetry in solutions

BiH Federation TV and the Sarajevo dailies quoted SDA President Sulejman Tihic as saying that the party was against agreement due to asymmetric solutions. “The BiH Federation House of Peoples functions in the hundred percent capacity, as the RS Council of Peoples function in 10-percent capacity. In addition, the RS President has all the authorities and superior role over the vice-president, as, in the Federation, the President and the Deputy President have the same authorities,” Tihic emphasized. He concluded that the SDA will continue its struggle by political means.

Komsic says for SDP the job has been completed

According to Oslobodjenje, the BiH SDP Vice-president Ivo Komsic told journalists in Sarajevo on Wednesday the party was satisfied with the agreement regardless of a fact some participants had expressed their reservations. “Leadrs of the political parties from the RS had no courage to sign the agreement (in full),” Komsic emphasized.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Interview with Kresimir Zubak, President of NHI and signatory of the Agreement

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

- Finished talks around 0630 hrs and reached a solution, as everyone says, for 90% on what we agree upon. Everyone had proposals, objections.
- When the time came to sign it myself, Lagudzija and Halilovic, on behalf of respective parties, signed it. Parties from RS and HDZ refused. RS representatives tried to change something in the Agreement before we signed it but we did not allow it. There was a ‘indecisive drawing out’ after the signing, RS reps wanted to sign a statement that they only accept 90% of the Agreement because they have reservations regarding

the vital interests and names of some institutions but it did not go through.

- Commenting on the outcome of the situation: “I am of opinion that we are where we wanted to be and that this was a maximum that we could extract.
- Commenting on why he signed: Perhaps it was a mistake to go into the talks but in the essence they were good because they showed a high level of political maturity of all parties. There is not an agreement that can satisfy all sides. Between two options: to have never-ending talks and leave the decision to the new HR and to have elections in accordance to old election rules, I went for this hoping that it opens a possibility for BiH to get normal.
- On HDZ refusing to sign the Agreement: Had a correct cooperation with them and agreed on joint stances together. HDZ missed on a great opportunity to separate from SDA and SDS.

Vecernji List: Interview with Ante Jelavic, unrecognized HDZ President on agreement

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Interview conducted by Zoran Kresic

With regard to the Agreement on constitutional changes Ante Jelavic stated:

- The HDZ negotiating team did not sign the proposed agreement because it is far from the implementation of the Constitutional Court decision on constituency and also many points of Agreement are unacceptable for HDZ and they drastically damage the Croat people in BiH;
- The composition of the Council of Peoples and the House of Peoples in the Federation, with 4 Caucuses practically, including the Caucus of the others, refers to manipulation and the last elections showed it, when

the category of the others was abused in the post-election process;

- Also, defining of the national interest is unacceptable for HDZ;
- The agreement is not in the line with the Memorandum of political parties with a Croat prefix, which was practically adopted at the last meeting with members of the BiH Bishops' Conference;
- I have no information as to why Zubak gave up the stands and those who signed the agreement in the name of the Croat people will bear historical responsibility for it;
- Croats in the RS do not get anything in a short or a long-run, while the result of this agreement in the Federation might be that Croats get a position of the national minority. If they adopt these solutions or if they were imposed by the HR, Croats will be absolute losers and it could be said that the division of BiH has been strengthened as well as discrimination of citizens;
- This agreement does not define the election process, which should be determined by the Election Law and in the line with the constitutional changes. If the Croats get some ministerial positions in the Governments of the two entities, practically, it will be the Ministers who suit Serb and Bosniak Parliamentary majority;
- HDZ will not give legitimacy to this agreement and to the possible constitutional changes in BiH, based on such agreement. If the constitutional amendments remain in the light of this agreement, HDZ will demand in the BiH Parliament, in an institutional way, an essential reorganization of BiH in the light of all HDZ and Croat People's Assembly documents on a consistent federalization. If Serbs have their ethnic unit, then the Croats have a right to have their own sovereign unit, as a constituent and sovereign people;

Lozancic says BiH Croat leadership to decide further steps

Dnevni List carries an interview with Niko Lozancic, the chief of the HDZ BiH negotiating team during the constitutional changes talks, in which he says that the constitutional changes agreement signed yesterday can leave the Serbs happy, that the Bosniaks could perhaps be happy and that the Croats are deprived of their rights envisioned by the DPA. When asked as to what would be the HDZ position like after the Agreement, Lozancic announced that he would inform the HDZ leadership (about the constitutional talks) after which the party would decide on future steps adding that he would suggest that the Bishops Conference of BiH be informed about the talks, which obliged parties with Croat prefix to observe principles adopted at the Sarajevo meeting and adopted the Memorandum at Cardinal Puljic's. Lozancic said that the HDZ would also inform Bishops, leaderships of Croat political parties, the Presidency of the HNS after which everyone will be involved in a decision as to what to do in the future.

Slobodna Dalmacija: Zdravko Tomac, Martin Raguz and Milan Kovac at forum in Zagreb – Equality of Croats in BiH not ensured even now

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Talking about the signing of the Agreement, which was in SD's words signed by SDP, NHI and Party for BiH and initialed by PDP and SDS, Vice President of the HDZ BiH Martin Raguz says that the Agreement "puts the survival of the Croat people under a question mark because of the domination of the Serb entity in legislative, executive and judicial authority. Representation of the Croats, as an equal factor in BiH, is not ensured with the Agreement, so the essence of a House of Peoples is disappearing and there is an unacceptable 'wine and mineral water' situation". Zdravko Tomac is carried as saying that he is satisfied with a fact that all sides sat at the

table and agreed that it was crucial moment to adopt common solutions. Tomac said that he did not expect much from the constitutional changes (talks) calling them a temporary solution which will buy time until there are changes in the world politics. “Now it’s time to find common solutions in realistic frameworks”, concluded Tomac.

RS press on the constitutional changes agreement

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Both Banja Luka dailies carry a report on the Agreement on constitutional changes. Glas srpski (GS) emphasizes that the Serbs have not signed the agreement, and that it was also unacceptable for two parties from the BiH Federation and these are SDA and HDZ. GS also reads that, apart from the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch, US and Spanish Ambassador, the Agreement was acceptable for three parties: SDP BiH (BiH Social – Democratic Party), NHI (New Croatian Initiative) and Party for BiH. Apart from these comments, Glas srpski also carries some excerpts from the Agreement. Assessing that the Petritsch’s Agreement confused public and arose political temperature in the RS, Glas srpski carries the statements of RS politicians. **SDS, Dragan Kalinic: “**We shall try, in direct contact with members of the National Assembly, to check certain solutions and we shall try, as much as possible, to get their support.” **PDP, Mladen Ivanic:** “The RS representatives could not sign the final document on constitutional changes due to the fact that it was not fully acceptable.” **SNSD, Milorad Dodik** assessed that the final round of talks turned into the “policy of *fait accompli*“. **SP, Petar Djokic:** “We have some reservations over the mechanism to initiate protection of the vital national interest and the issue if the Republic’s Government structure.” **DNS, Dragan Kostic:** “We believe that the National Assembly would not adopt something that would be damaging for the RS. If that happens, we would request a referendum to take place, about the constitutional changes in the RS.” **DS, Gavrilo Antonic**

expressed an opinion that introduction of the Council of Peoples into RS National Assembly must not be accepted as well as the 1991 Census as a ground for division of power. Nezavisne novine (NN) also carries an extensive report on the Agreement on constitutional changes and a picture of the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch and Zlatko Lagumdzija, on the cover page.

RS Constitutional Commission discusses the agreement on constitutional changes

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

The RS Constitutional Commission discussed the Agreement on the implementation of the Constitutional Court decision, yesterday in Banja Luka. Also, the Heads of Caucuses of RS Parliamentary parties and representatives of other political parties met with the Contact Group Ambassadors. After the meeting with Contact Group Ambassadors, the President of the RS Party of Independent Social Democrats, Milorad Dodik stated that, if the Agreement on constitutional changes in not fully accepted in the RS, the international community would introduce political, economic and financial sanctions on RS, either publicly or secretly. Nezavisne novine also quote the Chairman of the RS Constitutional Commission, Miroslav Mikes as saying that the procedure on the adoption of constitutional changes would be completed today, at the special session of the RS National Assembly.

RS National Assembly session adjourned after only 10 minutes

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Fena news agency reports that the extraordinary session of the RS National Assembly, at which the RS NA deputies were supposed to discuss the Agreement on constitutional changes, adjourned after only 10 minutes on Thursday. The session will resume on 4th of April. RS NA Speaker, Dragan Kalinic told

Fena that this decision has been made by the RS NA Collegiate body and that the RS NA deputies unanimously adopted it. He also said it was agreed that the RS NA Constitutional Commission draft proposed amendments to the RS Constitution before April 4th and that the Agreement on constitutional changes, signed in the OHR, be a basis for the amendments.

RS Prime Minister says the Agreement is a political act, not a proposal of constitutional changes

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Fena news agency quotes RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic, as saying that the RS National Assembly will discuss the nature of the constitutional amendments and that any imposed solutions by the IC will not be accepted. “The agreement on constitutional changes has many good elements, but it also contains several very painful things for the RS, especially when it comes to practice that we have had so far in this entity”, said Ivanic. He said that the Agreement on constitutional changes is a political act and not a proposal of the constitutional changes. He said that each political party will have its own proposals to the constitutional amendments and stressed that the Agreement is a good basis for final harmonization of the amendments to the RS Constitution with the BiH Constitutional Court ruling on constituent status of all three peoples in BiH. Ivanic said that the RS Government would draft a separate project of the constitutional amendments.

Rabbi Atijas: How to protect national interests of national minorities?

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Commenting on the Agreement on constitutional changes, RS chief rabbi, Rabbi Josef Atijas said that it remains unclear what the vital national interests and the protection

mechanisms are especially when it comes to national minorities.

“National minorities did not have their representative and the negotiators did not mention them nor they showed some respect for the status of national minorities”, said Rabbi Atijas.

When asked what his expectations from today’s extraordinary session of the RS National Assembly are, Atijas said he hoped that tolerance and common sense would prevail, because any sort of outvoting or the idea that the High Representative imposes solutions would be unacceptable and pernicious.

Vecernji List: Interview with Jakob Finci, President of BiH Jewish Community and President of Constitutional Commission of Federation Parliament

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Finci stated that it seems to him that leaders of political parties in BiH are not sensitive enough or they do not have courage to pass political decisions, which will secure happier future for this country. Finci says: “My impression is that they would like that the HR imposes the constitutional changes and in this way each of them will be innocent before ‘their people’ and they are able to justify themselves by saying that ‘they’ imposed it to us”.

Finci added: “Imposing of the decision would be great slap in the face to all political leaders and a defeat for BiH because it would show that we are not mature to take our fate in our own hands. If the situation is like that, then it is better to introduce an absolute protectorate in BiH, and not to have the situation in which we work and decide a little bit and then, when we get in trouble, we demand that someone imposes something to us”. Asked about national minorities in BiH, Finci stated that it is about the thing that is called a group of ‘the others’ according to the DPA. He believes that in this country a place should be found for this group of people

because they are a root of a civic BiH.

BiH State-related Issues

Memorandum signed on fresh IMF financial support to BiH

A memorandum on economic and fiscal policy of the state of BiH, entities, and the BiH Central Bank (CBBH) was signed on Wednesday night in Sarajevo, ONASA and Sarajevo dailies reported. The memorandum was signed by Chairman of the BiH Council of Ministers Dragan Mikerevic, Treasury Minister Anto Domazet, Federation Prime Minister Alija Behmen, Deputy Federation Prime Minister and Finance Minister Nikola Grabovac, RS Finance Minister Milenko Vracar, and Governor of the CBBH Peter Nicholl in the presence of Head of the Mission of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for BiH Peter Doyle. RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic will sign it later. “The central part of the agreement, which I consider to be good, is related to the entity 2002 budgets. After the IMF Executive Board discusses the memorandum in June in Washington, its realization will start in next 15 months,” Doyle said. He said the IMF program of assistance encompasses 40% of the quote for BiH and amounted to 112 million KM.

Federation

The BiH Federation House of Representative adopts the law on forests

The BiH Federation Parliamentary House of Representatives adopted at the session on Wednesday a draft law on the forests, which solves the issue of ownership over the forests in the Federation and by which the two companies “Sume Herceg-Bosne” and “BH Sume” will cease their operations. The

ownership right is transferred from BiH to the Federation, which now transfers the ownership over the forests to the cantons. The forestry-economic areas will function in the cantons. A competent Federation administration also will be formed.

Vecernji List: OHR does not allow HDZ to re-register with its current leadership

(Provided by OHR Mostar)

Vecernji List carries that a source from OHR, who wanted to stay anonymous, stated that OHR Sarajevo has prepared another decision by which the HR will demand indirectly from HDZ to elect its new leadership instead of Ante Jelavic, Marko Tokic, Ivo Andric Luzanski and Zdravko Batinic, who will be banned to perform any function in HDZ or to participate in any of HDZ bodies. According to the source, the HR will do the same as in case of Nikola Poplasen, who was removed from the position of the President of the RS. By this document, the guidelines will be given to the Cantonal Court Mostar and the BiH Election Commission that HDZ, led by Jelavic, cannot be re-registered at the Court and that it cannot participate at the elections.

Castimir Mandaric, the President of the Mostar Cantonal Court, stated at the press conference, that although it was announced that Josip Merdzo, the HDZ Secretary General, will hand over requested documents by Tuesday, Merdzo demanded from the Cantonal Court in Mostar to postpone for 15 days the passing of the decision on the HDZ re-registration, which also includes the HR's demands. According to the senior OHR source, most probably, the HR will publish changes of the Election Law by which it will be made possible for the persons sanctioned by the HR's decisions to return to politics after some time. According to HDZ officials, in the next 15 days a new session of the HDZ Central Board will take place and most probably a new leadership will be elected.

Republika Srpska

President of the RS Supreme Court says proposed selection of judges is at variance with the European Charter on the Statute for the Judges

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

Glas srpski reports that a part of the Agreement, proposed by the High Representative for BiH, is at variance with the European Charter on Statute for Judges which was passed by the Council of Europe in 1998. The part of the Agreement, that the paper is referring to, states that judges will be selected in accordance with ethnic principle. According to the Agreement, the leading positions in the Constitutional Court, the Supreme Court as well as position of the Public Prosecutor are reserved for only two representatives of one constituent people or representatives of Others. On the other hand, the European Charter dismisses the possibility of taking into consideration any other characteristic of selected judges except those that pertain to professional skills of the selected judges. The paper quotes president of the RS Supreme Court, Jovo Rosic, as saying that, according to the law, when selecting judges, the selection of judges on the basis of gender and ethnic or religious or social background cannot be taken into consideration. Rosic said that the paragraph 2 of general principles of the European Charter on the Statute for Judges states that “independent body or a collegiate body selects and hires judges strictly on the basis of competence of candidates to freely and impartially deal with legal matters they are entrusted with and to apply the law respecting the dignity of an individual. “The European Charter on the Statute for Judges includes provisions from the article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR), which states that every individual is entitled to fair trial. The RS Law on court service is harmonized with the provisions

included in the European Charter", said Rosic. The question is whether BiH can became a member of the Council of Europe if it passes laws that violate the CoE rules and regulations.

Human Rights Chamber decision on Kotorsko case: Construction of Serb houses allowed

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

The RS Government representative to the Human Rights Chamber, Stevan Savic stated on Wednesday for Glas srpski that Serb refugees in Kotorsko would be allowed to continue with construction of family houses on land plots, allocated to them by Doboj municipal assembly. Savic added that he received the decision made by the Human Rights Chamber on 8th March, at its plenary session over the case of "Asim Djuheric and 26 others from Kotorsko against RS."

Public debate on draft RTRS Law

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

The RS Minister of Transport and Communication, Branko Dokic stated yesterday that the debates over the Draft RTRS Law held so far, have justified the efforts to pass the law and to provide stable financing and independent editorial policy in the biggest RS media by adoption of it, Glas srpski reports. At the 6th public debate on the Law, held in Prijedor, the financing of the RTRS was the most discussed issue. Also, the existence and role of the advisory board and composition of the Board of Governors, received a lot of attention. It was assessed at the debate that: "Some members of the Board of Governors are unskilled, some are not interested in solving the problems of this media. As the time goes by, the situation is more and more difficult." A more efficient way to collect subscription was proposed – through bill collectors. It is also suggested that the mandate of the Director should last for four years, as in other companies and not five as anticipated by the Draft. An objection was addressed to the

provision of the Law which says that bankruptcy proceedings over RTRS cannot be started due to the fact that the National Assembly stands behind it and, in such cases, it should stand behind all budget users. An explanation to this objection is that those who do not know how to work, should not work at all. “The public debate confirmed that the most important thing is to decide on the RTRS founder and the Government proposal to make the National Assembly founder of the RTRS, was accepted at all debates.” – said Dokic. According to Minister Dokic, based on the suggestions given at the Prijedor debate and other debates held, a proposal of the RTRS law would be made and forwarded to the agenda of the RS Government.

International Community

UN spokesman: SFOR not involved in evictions in Drvar

(Provided by OHR Banja Luka)

The IPTF spokesman, Alun Roberts, denied yesterday at a press conference in Banja Luka that SFOR has been involved in the evictions of Croats in Drvar. Roberts confirmed that evictions in the town will continue with the same dynamic, namely 20-25 evictions will be carried out per week, Nezavisne novine report. Roberts rejected the allegations of the Zagreb weekly “Globus” that “SFOR is involved in the brutal evictions of Croats in Drvar” , pointing out that evictions of those occupying other people’s property are being carried out by competent bodies, adding that in that way the property laws are being consistently implemented. “SFOR has not been involved anywhere in BiH in evictions, neither has in Drvar”, Roberts said, noting that a number of the evicted Croatian families is not willing to return to their reconstructed houses in Central Bosnia. Roberts also said that about 200

Croatian families from Drvar, Kupres and Tomislavgrad had left the region and emigrated to Sweden.

AFP: Serbian government adopts new decree on war crimes

The Serbian government adopted on Wednesday a new decree on cooperation with the UN war crimes tribunal that paves the way for the extradition of war crime suspects, Serbian Justice Minister Vladan Batic told AFP. The decision came ahead of a March 31 deadline set by the US Congress for Belgrade to meet conditions for receiving 40 million dollars in aid. “We adopted a decree that is the same as the previous one” passed in June

to enable the immediate extradition to the court in The Hague of former Yugoslav president Slobodan Milosevic, Batic said. Batic said the government decree was necessary after the Yugoslav constitutional court on Tuesday abolished all previous decrees. The United States conditioned the aid on full cooperation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (ICTY), namely extraditions of those indicted by the tribunal for war crimes.

Editorials

Oslobodjenje: The Night of Petritsch

By Zija Dizdarevic

Wolfgang Petritsch labeled the last phase of negotiations on constitutional changes the most important day for BiH after Dayton. However, this was, in essence, Petritsch’s night, the night which was in the morning marked by the OHR as a triumph. The character of negotiations and their outcome determined Petritsch’s position about the *a priori* asymmetry in the implementation of the Constitutional Court’s decision with

political bargaining outside of the institutions of the system.

The greatest Petritsch's achievement is the establishment of the Council of Peoples in the RS as a legislative organ of authority, albeit not in the full capacity of the House of Peoples in the Federation. In other words, this was a great progress given the insistence of the RS to have an Assembly commission taking care about the protection of the vital national interests.

The equality of constituent peoples is not secured on the basis of full parity, but by the entity-ethnic proportional criterion and the distribution of power on the basis of the 1991 population census. It is good that they adopted the principle by which the key position in the legislative, executive and judicial authority must be occupied by professionals of different nationality. However, in the distribution of executive power, they obeyed the principle of majority in both entities. In such a distribution of power, the Croats have lost their parity position in the Federation. Serbs will remain dominant in the RS government, while Bosniaks will retain somewhat weaker dominance in the Federation.

HDZ rejected the agreement, and the SDA walked away from the talks earlier. Parties from the RS initialed the agreement with two reservations. Serb block promptly reacted, claiming that they never even signed the Agreement. SDP, Party for BiH and NHI made capital concessions, thereby staying partners to international authorities.

Naturally, the agreement does not represent the optimal implementation of the BiH Constitution; it caters to the concept of asymmetry and it has the elements of recognizing the discriminating status quo. Still, this agreement makes the RS little less Serb, and the Federation Serb, as well. The application of the census was detrimental to Croats. Now, the

decision is up to the Entity Parliaments. In the framework of protection of national interests, HDZ and SDA will block the realization of this agreement. Parties in the RS are against this, for them radical, correction of the present state. However, this also secured certain chance for international pressure to impose the solution, relying on the willingness of parties guaranteed by signatures and initials on the agreement.

Oslobodjenje, Dnevni Avaz and Jutarnje Novine

In another Oslobodjenje editorial also dedicated to the constitutional reform talks, Gojko Beric wrote that there was something suspicious in the 'entire game." "HDZ used to ignore the idea on the constituency of all three peoples, as SDS even did not want to hear about it. Suddenly, both parties, with a ten-year lateness, have started to express false symptoms of democracy, claiming that the equality of the peoples is not something questionable at all. However, the HDZ has never bee interested in a small number of Croats in the RS, as SDS has never been interested in the position of rest of the Serbs in the Federation. This "change' of the position is probably caused by a conclusion that it cannot make any damage to them, since nothing actually is changing on the ground controlled by these two parties, simply because the war-created demographic picture is not being changed," Beric emphasized. Sead Numanovic wrote in the Dnevni Avaz Commentary of the Day that the agreement on the implementation of the BiH Constitutional Court's decision reached on Wednesday in the Office of the High Representative represented just opening of the process of big changes leading BiH towards joining the family of the European countries.

Headlines

Oslobodjenje

- Agreement signed on the implementation of the BiH Constitutional Court’s decision on the constituency of the peoples: same rights for all

Dnevni Avaz

- Agreement on the constitutional changes: courage of the Alliance leaders

Jutarnje Novine

- Agreement on the implementation of the BiH Constitutional Court’s decision: the Alliance signed; Petritsch: European future is BiH’s destiny
- Following traffic accident near Zavidovici: whole Vozuca mourning

Nezavisne Novine

- Political parties signed the Agreement on Constitutional changes: An Agreement for a new BiH; RS facing sanctions
- Slobodan Bilic, RS Defense Minister: 381 officer of the RS Army soon to be retired
- Privatization in RS; 234 companies sold, 85 million KM collected

Glas Srpski

- Over the Agreement on Constitutional changes: We caught a great Democracy!
- Serbs have not signed

Vecernji List

- After marathon-like negotiations NHI, SDP and Party for BiH signed HR’s proposal: National parties reject Petritsch’s changes
- Shameful look of Herzegovinian center: Mostar is choking in garbage

Dnevni List

- Interview with Niko Lozancic, leader of HDZ negotiating team in negotiations on constitutional changes: My consciousness did not allow me to sign such agreement
- Castimir Mandaric, President of the Mostar Cantonal Court: Cantonal Court in Mostar went bankrupt