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BiH State-related Issues

Presidency member describes Bosnia as “type of protectorate”

Chairman of the BiH Presidency Beriz Belkic said that Bosnia-Hercegovina is a sovereign and internationally recognized country, but that it is not fully independent due to the substantial influence of the international community. “The High Representative has the right to impose laws, SFOR commander can dismiss officers and the IPTF Commissioner can sack policemen without any explanation. This means that the country is not fully independent, but a type of protectorate,” Belkic said in an interview with the Sarajevo Oslobodjenje.

Constitutional Reform

Crisis in the debate about constitutional changes

Oslobodjenje reports that the talks on constitutional changes in the BIH entities are experiencing a major crisis, as positions of parties from the Federation and the RS seem to be irreconcilable and some political parties are withdrawing from further discussion. The president of the SDA, Sulejman Tihic, confirmed this to Oslobodjenje, saying that his party will no longer take part in the debate on the implementation of the CC

ruling on constituency of peoples. He added that further talks are unnecessary as the party representatives have not moved from standstill in the past year. "It is clear that we cannot agree about the language issue, the definition and mechanism of protection of the vital national interests, national representation in authority, structure of the Constitutional court...That is why we do not want to take any part in future debate...however, we will be willing to discuss it only if the High Representative initiates a new meeting," Tihic said.

New Croat Initiative (NHI), on the other hand, said it will not participate at the meeting with the High Representative scheduled for March 8 unless the SDP provides its position in the debate in a clear and written form.

Tihic believes that the only viable solution at this time would be the imposition of symmetrical constitutional changes by the High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch. Safet Halilovic of the Party for BiH and Sead Avdic of the SDP are of the same opinion. They stressed that it is becoming increasingly clear that RS parties are not willing to offer solutions which would be symmetrical to those found in the Federation.

Political parties from the RS strongly object to the possibility of imposition of constitutional changes. Rajko Vasic of the SDS (Independent Social Democrats) believes that the debate needs to be returned to the entity parliaments, because the imposition would not be a positive development for this country. "If we are unable to reach a consensus now, then perhaps, this discussion needs to be postponed until after the elections," he said.

OHR spokesman, Oleg Milisic, told Dnevni Avaz that the International Community too would like to see local politicians reaching a compromise on constitutional changes. "This is an opportunity for them to demonstrate that domestic institutions are responsible. This is of crucial importance for BiH which is on the doorstep of the Council of Europe,"

Milisic said, adding that time is running out. "Changes to the entity constitutions will necessitate changes of the Election Law, and elections are scheduled for October.

Sulejman Tihic: OHR representative trying to equate national minorities and constituent peoples

The president of the SDA, Sulejman Tihic, told Jutarnje Novine that his party will demand from the OHR to explain whether its representative at a meeting of the Venice Commission and representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly in Paris expressed his views on the position of the OHR. Tihic said that Chris Harland, the head of the OHR RRTF department, tried to offer a supplement to the proposed law on protection of national minorities which would also regulate issues pertaining to the protection of the constituent peoples in BiH. "If they are trying to offer constitutional solutions which have for an aim to equate national minorities and constituent peoples in BiH, this represents a very bad signal for BiH for the possible adoption of asymmetrical solutions in the entities, that is, the preservation of the status quo in the RS," Tihic said.

Speaker upset at suggestion that Serb Republic should change name

Responding to statements made by the chairman of the main council of the Party of Democratic Action [SDA], Adem Boric, in which he said that constitutional changes meant that RS should change its name, RS National Assembly Speaker Dragan Kalinic said that that was an "invitation to destabilise BiH" and warned that the same argument could call into question the name of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well. "This is an invitation to jeopardize peace and the process of building trust which we have been pursuing for the last six years despite great difficulties. If the name of the RS is going to be called into question, then we shell rightly call into question the name of Bosnia-Hercegovina", Kalinic told SRNA.

He said that "constitutional changes do not assume the change of the RS's name" adding that "any such thing would not be possible without the consent of Bosnian Serbs and the RS", as well as that there would be no Dayton's Bosnia without the existence of its two entities. "That would entail complete revision of the Dayton Peace Accord. People who live in this country are not some unidentified Bosnians and Hercegovinians, but Serbs, Bosniaks, Croats and others", Kalinic said.

During a break in a session of the SDA main council on Saturday, Boric said that, in accordance with the [forthcoming] constitutional changes, the name of the RS would be changed, too.

Ante Jelavic says without bi-cameral parliaments, Croat entity certain

"If the RS remains ethnically pure Entity with Serbs accounting for over 95% of its population, and the BiH Federation remains the Entity with Bosniaks accounting for over 80% of its population, where Croats would have no rights at all, then the demand for the establishment of a Croat - dominated Entity in BiH would be absolutely legitimate," Ante Jelavic told a solemn session of the Presidency of the Croat National Assembly (HNS) held on Monday in Mostar, reports ONASA. "Full equality of Croats throughout BiH can only be achieved through the consistent implementation of the BiH Constitutional Court ruling on the constituency of peoples", Jelavic said, adding that the road leading to such implementation passes through the "establishment of the bicameral parliaments in both Entities". "Should the things take a different direction... then the HNS will demand a radical restructuring of the State, where the demand for the establishment of a Croat Entity would also be absolutely legitimate", Jelavic said.

POLL: Most Federation citizens believe that the RS National Assembly should have the House of Peoples

According to the poll conducted by Avaz Agency, most Federation residents support the introduction of the House of Peoples in the RS National Assembly. The results of the poll conducted in Sarajevo, Mostar, Zenica, Tuzla, and Capljina indicate that 89% of the citizens are in favor of this idea, only 3% are against it, while, 8% had no opinion on the matter. The telephone poll was conducted among 300 individuals using a method of random sampling.

Federation

Mostar Cantonal Court gives HDZ 30 days to elect a new president

The Cantonal Court in Mostar announced on February 26, reports Dnevni Avaz, that Ante Jelavic will no longer be registered as the president of the HDZ, as he was removed from this post on March 7, 2001 by the decision of the High Representative. The court issued a 30-day deadline to the HDZ within which the party needs to elect a new leader. The court also warned the party leadership that none of the other removed members, Zdravko Batinic, Ivo Andric Luzanski, and Marko Tokic can assume the post of the president.

Republika Srpska

Yugoslav foreign minister visiting Republika Srpska

Yugoslav Foreign Minister Goran Svilanovic is meeting leaders of the Republika Srpska (RS) during a one-day visit to the RS, the RS said Monday. Svilanovic arrived in Banja Luka, the

capital, on Tuesday to meet RS President Mirko Sarovic, Vice President Dragan Cavic, Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic and RS National Assembly speaker Dragan Kalinic, as well as Zivko Radisic, the Serb member of BiH Presidency.

Srebrenica to become a special status municipality

Oslobodjenje and Dnevni Avaz report that deputies in the Srebrenica Municipal Assembly adopted on Monday the resolution giving this town a special status, despite the explicit objection by the RS government. According to the press, the resolution will provide a special economic and financial incentive to returnees and foster development and reconstruction. However, Deputy RS Prime Minister, Petar Kunic, stressed that the RS government will not accept any discussion about the change of status of this municipality, nor will it allow the extraction of Srebrenica from the constitutional and legal system of the RS.

An editorial in today's Dnevni Avaz welcomes the decision by the Srebrenica Municipal Assembly, which was one of the first ones made jointly by Bosniaks and Serbs in this tragic town. "They are asking for a special status...because they want to return life into this town and build future in which very few people believed up to this moment," read the column.

RS President: Srebrenica resolution has no practical importance

The RS president, Mirko Sarovic, said on Tuesday that the Resolution on the special status of Srebrenica municipality does not have any practical importance because a decision on a special status cannot be made on a local level and by a local community.

"All issues, especially the economic ones, will be resolved by the government and the RS National Assembly," Sarovic said in Banja Luka.

RS Deputy Prime Minister Petar Kunic: No special status for Srebrenica

Glas srpski quotes the deputy Prime Minister of the RS, Petar Kunic as saying that the RS Government will never accept any discussion about special status of Srebrenica, nor would it allow exclusion of this municipality from the RS constitutional and legal system." Kunic made the statement after the meeting with the Head of OHR Banja Luka, Paul Martin. "Srebrenica is in the RS and laws and regulations valid for the RS, are also applicable to this municipality" – said Kunic. He added that the Government will keep giving all the necessary attention to Srebrenica, explaining that the government allocated 200,000 KM for Srebrenica municipality budget, from the Solidarity fund. Kunic stated that certain Ministries, such as the Ministry for refugees and Ministry for industry and technology, were tasked to analyze situation in Srebrenica and propose action in order to solve problems of this municipality. Kunic added that Martin made no final conclusions on the issue yet, due to the fact that he just recently took over the position of the Head of OHR Banja Luka and that he had to hear all sides involved.

RS Prime Minister Ivanic says RS authorities ready to arrest Karadzic and Mladic

RS Prime Minister, Mladen Ivanic said his government was ready to arrest Karadzic and Mladic, France Press reported. "I am convinced that vast majority of police officers, the most important ministries and most important members of the RS Government have decided to do it", said Ivanic. When asked to comment on the High Representative's statement in which he accused Ivanic of being passive in dealing with war criminals. Ivanic said: "I think that the RS really does its job. It is not fair to say that the RS does not do anything, which is an assessment one can hear very often from the ICTY and other international institutions. I cannot accept it. We do the best we can", said Ivanic.

Belgrade will extradite Karadzic and Mladic

Belgrade-based newspaper "Blic" quotes FRY Interior Minister, Zoran Zivkovic, as saying that Radovan Karadzic and Ratko Mladic will be extradited to the ICTY if confirmed that they live on the FRY territory. "We are absolutely sure that Karadzic is not in the FRY. If Mladic is here then he is not safe", said Zivkovic. He also said that according to the information he has, Mladic is not in Belgrade.

SNS accuses RS Interior Ministry

Srna news agency quotes the high official of the SNS (Serb National Alliance), Jezdimir Spasojevic as saying that there were many indications that special units of the RS Interior Ministry (MUP) took part in the SFOR attempt to arrest Radovan Karadzic. At a press conference held in Bijeljina, he said that SNS had no evidence to support this, but had many indications from the field. According to Spasojevic, it was not an accident that the attempted arrest of Radovan Karadzic followed ICTY Chief Prosecutors', Carla Del Ponte visit to Banja Luka. Spasojevic concluded that RS MUP assisted SFOR action, due to the fact that the operation was carried out in a very difficult terrain, where SFOR could not manage without the assistance of local population.

Serb refugees to block border crossings in protest against evictions

Serb refugees threatened Monday to block main border crossings and roads in northeastern BiH to protest against evictions. A representative of Ostanak refugee association, Lazar Ristic, told SRNA and RTRS that the group would on Tuesday block four main border crossings between BiH and Yugoslavia, as well as main roads in northeastern part leading to Croatia. He said the blockades would continue until the RS Prime Minister Mladen Ivanic agrees to their demands, notably to stop the evictions of refugees who are occupying other people's homes but whose own property is devastated.

International Community

High Representative to address the UN Security Council in New York

The High Representative, Wolfgang Petritsch is visiting New York on Tuesday, where he will address the UN Security Council. "The High Representative has already had a bilateral meeting on Monday with UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and will have a meeting today with the European Union's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy Javier Solana," OHR spokesman Kevin Sullivan told reporters in Sarajevo. Sullivan said that, in his speech to the Security Council, the High Representative will report on the progress that has been made in Bosnia and Herzegovina since he took up duties here in August 1999 and point to positive developments in the core areas of economic reform, refugee return and institution building, all of which have been promoted in the context of fostering the rule of law.

US denies report accusing French officer of foiling arrest

The US State Department on Monday denied a report that a US diplomat had accused a French officer of foiling attempts to capture BiH's most wanted war crimes suspect, Radovan Karadzic, last week. "This report is incorrect. It is not true that the American diplomat said that," a US official told AFP on condition of anonymity. The Monday edition of Germany's Hamburger Abendblatt newspaper quoted Shaun Byrnes, head of the US diplomatic observer mission in Kosovo, as saying that "a French officer revealed the (imminent) operation." In Paris, French foreign ministry spokesman Francois Rivasseau stressed that "Anything that throws into doubt the willingness and determination of France (to apprehend Karadzic) is inadmissible and intolerable."

He reiterated French President Jacques Chirac's statement last week that "all war criminals must be arrested and handed over to the international tribunal." Allegations of pro-Serb leanings in the French armed forces have surfaced periodically in the past few years, however, this time, even NATO headquarters denied "having any evidence" to substantiate the controversial German press report. (All Sarajevo media carry this news item)

Editorials

(provided by OHR Mostar)

Vecernji List: Asymmetry

By Zdenko Cosic

The Authority in Sarajevo believes that any sort of consensus, reached among Croat political parties, is dangerous. Each gathering around the flag of Croathood is being experienced as a new form of the old, devilish Tudjman's policy. This time a devil lies in Racan, because he dared to receive the Croat political representatives from BiH. Recently, HTV organized a TV referendum. The TV referendum question was whether the RS should be abolished. Since the referendum did not deal with the position of the Croats and their national rights, but with the reduction of Serb rights, to the Authorities in Sarajevo it did not seem as interfering in internal affairs. In the state within which it is not being decided on any issue (Army, Police, Courts, Judiciary, finances, and everything else is under an outside patronage) – only the Croat national issue should be an internal issue of that country!?

We can only suppose what kind of reaction we would have had if someone from Zagreb had dared to talk about the establishment of another entity in BiH. For the Sarajevo advocates of the constitutional symmetry it would be a first-class scandal and

ill-omened gathering around the flag of Croathood! When the abolishment of one of existing entities is being suggested, interfering from outside is always welcome. This hypocritical attitude of the current Authority speaks enough about the goals of the constitutional reforms that are underway. The goal of the alleged harmonization of Constitutions of the two entities is not equality of peoples but the abolishment of all forms of national diversity and introducing of a new nation of citizens: Bosnians! Claims that some sort of the constitutional symmetry will resolve enigma of the Dayton asymmetry is an ordinary scholastic dream.

Vecernji List: Karadzic is not Tarzan

Written by Visnja Staresina

In order to make a story about the most wanted defendant in the world, who hides himself successfully from the best American, British and French special forces in the hills of Eastern Bosnia, convincing, Radovan Kraadzic should have a completely different figure. He should unify a physical characteristics of Tarzan, Batman, Superman and Bata Zivojinovic (a Yugoslav actor, who was acting partizans in former Yugoslavia movies) in his best roles.

In a small Bosnia, with 18 000 NATO soldiers on the land, satellites in the sky and agents of Western Intelligence Services deep in the territory, a story about untouchable Karadzic is simply a lie and until the last week there had been excuses for non-acting, because it was not the right moment. The right moment has come: The trial in The Hague should be completed by 2008, and his help in finding Milosevic guilty would be useful. Also, the American Congress has set a deadline for the extradition of defendants and it is the end of March, otherwise there will be no assistance. The USA and NATO need one arrest as a proof of credibility.

Vecernji List: Lagumdžija- politics before techno-management

During his mandate, Lagumdžija characterized all attacks directed against him and the Alliance, as undermining of the constitutional establishment. He tensed the situation unnecessarily regarding a recent, harmless meeting of the leaders of the Croat parties with Croatian Prime Minister Račan, and he stated that it was interfering in internal affairs of BiH. In Sarajevo on Friday, he sent message to the protesters that they are pulling down the state and he has a similar opinion about Aluminij that makes 50% of BiH export. Also his picnics abroad were not clear very often, they did not give right results, and they did not have a clearly defined goal, but they 'swallowed' a lot of money. However, it will remain written down that during his mandate BiH started to join European Integration, it has made an initial step toward the Council of Europe. Together with the extradition of Algerian Group, these are his greatest assets.

Commenting on Lagumdžija's work, Marko Markovic, an Editor-in-Chief of Dnevni List, stated that Lagumdžija has run the Council of Ministers in a petty-political way. A daily political impression was more important to him than realization of pre-election promises. 'The High Representative and Embassies of Western countries were restricting him and they will be restricting any person, who comes to his position. The extradition of Algerian Group is his most significant move, by which he made many enemies in BiH. However, it is possible that he also did this under pressure.'

Headlines

Oslobodjenje

- Crisis in debate on constitutional changes
- Religious discrimination must be removed

Dnevni Avaz

- Cases “Ugljen”, “Seve”, and Pogorelica before Prosecutors

Jutarnje Novine

- French captain saved Karadzic

Dnevni List

- At The Hague’s request Cantonal Prosecution in Mostar launches investigation against war crimes suspects: 12 Croats from Capljina charged with war crimes
- More than 3000 members of victims’ association protest: Blockade of borders to Croatia
- Capljina bridge to be opened by Ankica Tudjman

Vecernji List

- Processing of war crimes: The Hague indictments in Mostar already
- Protests of victims of war: Blockade of roads and border crossings lasted for two hours: We will not let our children be hungry
- Ante Jelavic: If reforms fail, we will request an entity

Glas srpski

- Refugees and displaced persons to protest today in RS: Blockage of the roads and border crossings
- Struggle against terrorism: Egyptian groups remained in BiH?
- French connection or boulevard press

Nezavisne novine

- Members of HVIDRA blocked border crossings to Croatia: Former Soldiers in offensive against BiH Federation Government
- French “snitch” prevented the arrest of Karadzic: SFOR carries an investigation, NATO rejects accusations