

Foreign Press Office - Mostar

NEWS BULLETIN

Ulica Kneza Domagoja bb, 88000 Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina
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July 11-July 17

Interview: Nikola Lovrinovic, removed education minister in Central Bosnia Canton

July 11, 2005 (Vecernji list)

The Central Bosnia Canton serves as a rare positive example where both Bosniaks and Croats enjoy their right to educate themselves in their mother tongues.

We spoke with Nikola Lovrinovic, Central Bosnia Cantonal minister for education, science, culture, and sport after he was removed from office by Paddy Ashdown.

VL: In light of the several warnings you received previously from the Office of the High Representative, was the High Representative's decision expected?

LOVRINOVIC: This removal was unexpected only in terms of how it was carried out. Namely, only a few days earlier I sent a letter to OHR requesting a more detailed interpretation of some parts of the Law on Primary and Secondary Education imposed upon us last year. As the minister who is responsible for implementing that law, I have a right to such a request. But, instead of an answer and clarification, I received a notice of removal.

VL: Which articles are you specifically concerned about and what is unclear in them?

LOVRINOVIC: I am talking about those articles that define the curricular language, cases of "two schools under one roof" and registration areas. Especially unclear is how this imposed law attempts to resolve cases of "two schools under one roof." I don't know if that also applies to cases where in one building you have a primary school and a secondary school, private and public school or schools that follow all European standards and can exist as independent legal entities.

VL: Can you give us an example?

LOVRINOVIC: The primary school in Vitez. There is one school that employs a Croatian plan and program and has 1000 students, and another Bosniak school with 700 students. European standards consider 600 to be an optimal number of students in a school. In this case, both schools have enough students and teachers to work as two independent schools. To combine them would mean violating European standards and rules not encompassed by last year's imposed Law on Primary and Secondary Education. Moreover, that would violate the wishes of parents who want a curriculum in their mother tongue.

VL: The High Representative specifically mentioned you as an obstacle to the rule of law in Central Bosnia. Will there be full rule of law in the Central Bosnia Canton following your removal?

LOVRINOVIC: I would like just that. However, I do not believe I was any sort of obstacle, on the contrary. I would be happy if someone could tell me where else constituent peoples exercised their rights to schooling in their mother tongue, as they did in the Central Bosnia Canton. What is with the rights of Croats in Sarajevo or Tuzla Cantons, or the rights of Bosniaks and Croats in Republika Srpska? (Excerpt)

Anniversary of world's disgrace

July 12, 2005 (Vecernji list)

Op-ed

Yesterday the world showed disgust because of the horrendous Srebrenica massacre. The judgment was more fierce than when it happened. As if only now, ten years later, the world has truly realized the extent of the worst catastrophe since World War Two. No one doubts anymore that this was a planned genocide. And those responsible are well-known to all. Guilt is personalized through Karadzic, Mladic and their co-conspirators. It is collectivized through an entire people – "Bosnian Serbs." But, are they the only ones at fault?

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Srebrenica was an enclave under UN international protection. The inhabitants of that small town became victims of the belief that they will save them. Karadzic's army believed the opposite. Their judgment resulted in a terrible crime. The world looked on with folded arms. As if they did not believe this was happening in the heart of Europe.

War zones in BiH were full of similar enclaves. For example, Bihac. Which awaited a fate similar to Srebrenica, were it not for the coordinated action with the Croatian Army. Unfortunately, instead of showing gratitude towards Croatia, the international community today accuses it of doing what they should have done themselves. Thus, it was inappropriate to hear American War Crimes Ambassador Richard Prosper reminding us yesterday that Karadzic and Mladic must be arrested and that Croatia must find Gotovina.

Such comparisons, in Srebrenica for that matter, equalize the guilt of the aggressor and the victim. And fogs the true picture. In which there is a large blob over the international community. Among the greatest is Srebrenica. That is why yesterday was the anniversary of their disgrace.

Bosniaks control finances, Croats in court

Tax Administration in Herzegovina-Neretva Canton ethnically exclusive
July 13, 2005 (Vecernji list)

Financial and taxation oversight in the Herzegovina-Neretva Canton is completely in the hands of Bosniak officials, who use their superior position to hold certain cantonal and city institutions hostage. At the same time, coincidence or not, most of the companies in court because of alleged tax evasion are those owned by Croats.

Currently more than 75 percent of the cases pending in court deal with Croat owners charged with tax evasion.

Considering all personnel employed in the cantonal administration, from the inspection to the investigation office, the picture clearly illustrates that Bosniaks completely dominate this sector in the Canton and city, where Croats contribute almost 70 percent of the budget, yet funds are earmarked almost equally to both sides. (Excerpt)

Bishops dissatisfied with non-implementation of law on freedom to worship

BiH Bishops appalled by approach of domestic and international leaders towards crime and its results
July 14 & 15, 2005 (FENA and Slobodna Dalmacija)

The Bishops' Conference of Bosnia and Herzegovina held their 34th regular meeting under the chairmanship of Cardinal Vinko Puljic in Banja Luka from July 12 to July 14.

The bishops of the BiH Bishops' Conference have expressed their dissatisfaction with the fact that one and a half years after passing the Law on the freedom to worship and legal status of churches and religious communities in BiH, the State Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees and the Ministry of Justice have not yet issued the bylaws without which it is impossible to implement this law.

At the session of the BiH Bishops' Conference (BK BiH), held over the past two days in Banja Luka under presiding of the Archbishop of Vrhbosna, Cardinal Puljic, the bishops ascertained with protest that the agreement between BiH and the Holy See has not yet been signed due to behind-the-coullisse games, the Secretary General of BK BiH, monsignor Ivo Tomasevic on Thursday told a press conference.

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Regarding the commemoration in Srebrenica on Monday, he said that the bishops have once again with this occasion prayed to God for the victims and expressed their human and religious compassion to the families of the victims in this place as well as to all other victims in the entire BiH.

At the same time, the bishops were appalled by the approach of numerous domestic and international officials, who, allegedly, condemn the crime and demand immediate apprehending of criminals, as a condition for democratization in BiH, but still confirm the main reason why BiH over the past ten years, apart from the specious but unfair peace, has not realized expected progress.

Furthermore, the bishops note that, unfortunately, many of the statements the BiH Bishops' Conference published in their December 8, 1995 statement have proven to be correct: "The Peace Agreement contains several very dubious contradictions, fatal insecurities and difficult questions: 1. The proclaimed whole of BiH is divided into two entities by this agreement; 2. How can there be one state with three armies? 3. What kind of justice gives half the country to a third of its population? 4. Who is authorized to sign an agreement putting the majority population in Bosanska Posavina under the rule of the minority population? 5. This agreement confirms and authorizes ethnic cleansing and rule of the stronger and places the aggressor and victim at the same level."

After the ceremony, the bishops will remain in Banja Luka to attend the ceremonial celebration of St Bonaventura, the protector of the Banja Luka Bishopric and Cathedral on Friday, July 15.

NGOs in BiH wealthier than the whole country

4629 NGOs have 500 million marks

July 14, 2005 (Vecernji list)

Besides the international administration and BiH Federation, the largest budget in the country belongs to non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that have achieved great progress in democratizing BiH society. However, many often only serve themselves or engage in questionable activities, as is the case with several forbidden organizations with ties to Islamist terrorist organizations.

There are 4,629 registered NGOs whose annual budget is estimated at more than half a billion [convertible] marks, which is more than the state budget and close to the Sarajevo Canton and Republika Srpska's budgets. The largest budgets belong to NGOs involved in demining.

According to the register, most non-governmental organizations are engaged in humanitarian work and providing assistance to war-traumatized individuals. Associations promoting women's and children's rights are especially active. These organizations supplement the state's incapacity and non-existence of true social protections. (Excerpt)

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Presidency Chairman Jovic defends removed education minister Lovrinovic

Ashdown is discarding our European standards
July 15, 2005 (Slobodna Dalmacija)

The removal of Central Bosnia cantonal education minister Nikola Lovrinovic by Paddy Ashdown's decree caused confusion among Croats in BiH, especially because of Lovrinovic's statement that some high HDZ officials "helped" him get removed. Lovrinovic is a member of HDZ and defended its political positions.

We spoke about this issue with BiH Presidency Member and current chairman of the highest state institution Ivo Miro Jovic.

A few years ago, you held the position of Central Bosnia cantonal education minister. How would you have acted if you were in Nikola Lovrinovic's position?

Minister Lovrinovic's removal is certainly not a civilized act because BiH's Dayton constitution has an annex that stipulates all human rights conventions are a part of the constitution. The right to language, school and media are fundamental human rights, and the person responsible for implementing the Dayton Agreement must have the knowledge and sense that each ethnic group in a multi-level state such as BiH must enjoy these rights.

In the case of Minister Lovrinovic, we are not dealing with any legal regulations he proposed. The High Representative imposed a law, and if he did that, then he is responsible and not the minister.

According to OHR, the minister should have implemented the law, but he "obstructed" it?

I think it is a thing of the past to implement laws which deny fundamental human rights. However, since we are where we are, I fully support the right of the Croat people to preserve and exercise all their rights in education, language, culture and media. That is the principle and standard in Europe. We seek to implement such legal decisions that are, practically, at the level of national minorities in Europe. As you can see, we are even being denied those rights. However, I wish to point out, they cannot be as strong as we can be persistent.

What do you think about Minister Lovrinovic's statement that someone from the HDZ leadership "helped" in his removal?

I regret that some media, including you, are creating confusion among Croats by publishing such information. I do not understand why Minister Lovrinovic did not take the opportunity say something at the cantonal meeting a few days ago, but he did not even attend that meeting.

I doubt he said something like that because HDZ headquarters for a while already has a clear purpose when it comes to Croat rights to education, culture, language and media.

To your knowledge, did Minister Lovrinovic break any laws?

The High Representative imposed the law on schools for that canton. It is not the responsibility of the minister to implement that law, but of the High Representative. The law was not adopted by the cantonal council. The law was imposed and Minister Lovrinovic conducted himself in accordance to protecting Croat national rights.

That is the only canton where students and their parents had the right to choose the language of their schooling. Croats, unfortunately, do not have that right in Sarajevo, Tuzla, Bihac, Banja Luka, etc.

Instead of the High Representative caring that everyone has equal access to their language, education, culture and media, he removes the person who established the highest standards, in accordance with European standards. I consider it a great absurdity. (Excerpt)

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Americans organize day camp for kids in Ripci

July 15, 2005 (Vecernji list)

RAMA - The primary school, Fr. Jeronim Vlastic, in Ripci held their annual friendly day camp which has been organized for the past four years, by the American association, Training Workshops International for the Children. According to the schools headmaster, Ilija Faletar, the camp consisted of sporting activities, dance and other workshops, that accommodated 50 children and 15 teachers - including the director from the US. The director of the camp is Bobby Hauser from Washington.

(For more information on TWI for the Children, write P.O. Box 8158, Springfield, VA., 22151, or call (703) 569-5920. Information on the organization can also be obtained by accessing its Web Site at: www.twi4kids.org)

Employment structure in public companies within Energy Ministry

July 16, 2005 (Slobodna Dalmacija)

Today, talk of national discrimination or domination by one ethnic group within a certain territory is true. However, this well-known fact is not even news for the population of BiH and those who follow events in this country.

The truth can only be established by conducting a census, which has not been done for fifteen years. There are those against the census because it would confirm the fact of territorial segmentation along the lines of national and ethnic membership. There is the general theory that Bosniaks are against the census, because they are practically the only ones working on returning their displaced to pre-war homes, while Croats and Serbs have somewhat come to terms with losing certain previously inhabited areas. However, Serbs have Republika Srpska, while Croats, according to Church officials, have seen their pre-war population of 800,000 reduced to half that. For example, the Diocese of Banja Luka used to have 220,000 inhabitants; today, that number is just above 10,000.

Keeping this in mind, it is interesting to look at statistics from the Federal Ministry of energy, mining and industry, headed by Minister Izet Zigic, which illustrates the national structure of employees in public companies within this ministries competence. Namely, at the request of the Federation Parliament, statistics show that in the eleven largest public companies under this ministry, the employment structure includes: 28,771 Bosniaks, 2,962, 504 Serbs and 477 others, respectively.

In other words, Bosniaks dominate with 88 percent, with 9 percent Croats, 1.6 percent Serbs and 1.4 percent others.

Were we to take out statistics gathered from Elektroprivreda HZ HB, which generally operates in territories with a Croat majority population, the numbers are even more devastating, showing the employment structure to be 95 percent Bosniak. (Excerpt)

Plan to commemorate tenth anniversary of Dayton

July 16, 2005 (Slobodna Dalmacija)

The Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted a decision on commemorating the tenth anniversary of the Dayton-Paris Peace Agreement.

“Since this matter needs to be agreed upon by other countries, we agreed to a framework plan for the commemoration which should be held in Washington November 21, Paris December 14 and Sarajevo December 21,” stated Presidency Member Sulejman Tihic following a Presidency session Friday. (Excerpt)

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UNESCO: Mostar's Old Bridge Old City on UNESCO World Heritage List

July 17, 2005 (FENA)

Mostar's Old Bridge and Old City were put on the UNESCO World Heritage List at the session of the Board of Experts in Durban on Friday.

"Durban will remain written in golden letters in BiH history in memory of Mostar and BiH's people. I cannot hide my excitement that we have succeeded in our efforts to be a part of the world heritage. This is BiH's first admission. The road to admission has been long and very demanding", said Beslic.

He commended all people who participated in the project, from BiH Presidency, the parliaments, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, other ministries, who supported the project, the national Commission for Preservation of Monuments, political parties, PCU, contractors, and especially the citizens of Mostar.

Beslic also thanked the numerous experts that worked on the project, saying that they have great merits for success of the project.

"I especially wish to underline the great work and effort of our ambassador to UNESCO in France, Zeljana Zovko, who had done a great job for us in the world.

I also wish to mention the friendly countries that supported the project such as Italy, Turkey and Croatia, as well as two banks, the CoE Development Bank, and especially the World Bank", said Beslic among other things.

Finally, Beslic congratulated all members of the team in Durban, as follows Zeljana Zovko, Dusan Racic, Rusmir Cacic, Tihomir Rozic, Amir Pasic, Ferhat Mulabegovic and Anita Vlastic, and all citizens of BiH, and especially Mostar.
