

Dayton can only be changed by a new conference

Gerald Knaus, President of the European Stability Initiative

Nezavisne novine

By V. Popovic

July 18, 2005

Gerald Knaus, President of the European Stability Initiative (ESI) does not think that RS will be abolished, because it would require consensus among all parties in BiH

“The Dayton Peace Agreement is an historical document and cannot be changed, except by holding another international conference, which no one wants and which will not be held,” says Knaus.

He considers BiH more internationally isolated than a few years ago, but it is not too late to make up for lost time.

NN: The European Parliament in Strasbourg has called for changing the Dayton agreement, which open BiH’s path towards Europe. What do you think of this initiative?

KNAUS: It is very clear what is necessary for BiH to join the EU. It needs to sign a Stabilization and Association Agreement, submit a membership application, achieve candidate status, begin negotiations and complete them successfully. The European Parliament and EU expect BiH institutions to become completely functional, because BiH cannot otherwise expect to fulfill membership conditions. This will necessarily require many changes, strengthening central institutions, as well as adopting certain constitutional amendments. All of this, however, does not threaten the future of BiH federalism or its federal units, including RS.

NN: Nonetheless, there are more and more initiatives to change the Dayton agreement. Is constitutional reform necessary, considering that in RS there is opposition to any change, because of fear it will be abolished?

KNAUS: I have to admit I am somewhat confused when someone says “let’s change the Dayton agreement,” but really means “let’s change the BiH constitutions.” Today BiH is a sovereign country, a member of the Council of Europe, a state which has in its recent past held a series of free and fair elections. The Dayton agreement is an historical document and cannot be changed, except by holding another international conference, which no one wants and which will not be held. On the other hand, the constitution can be changed, but it requires the consent of RS. Thus, RS cannot be abolished. This fear or hope of some politicians in the Federation is completely irrational. It is founded on the fact that OHR and Peace Implementation Council still exist and that one day they can impose a new constitutional proposal. I believe that, once OHR’s Bonn powers and the Peace Implementation Council authorities are revoked, it will become clear that constitutional changes cannot be achieved without a general agreement. BiH must change if it wishes to follow other countries and become an EU member in the next 10 to 15 years.

NN: IS BiH more internationally isolated today than it was a few years ago and is it further from full EU membership?

KNAUS: BiH has already lost much time and today is considerably isolated, but it is still not too late to make up for lost time. And because of this we need to question the results of the policies being implemented. I hope that BiH will conclude a Stabilization and Association Agreement by the end of 2006, and that January 1, 2007 it will be considered by EU institutions as a candidate. I also hope that the Bonn powers will be abolished by the end of this year. Today, when Uzbekistan is a member of the Partnership for Peace, BiH does not have a single agreement with the EU or NATO. However, there have also been mistakes made by international institutions, which are not prepared to admit that there is true progress in BiH. All this leads to serious economic consequences.

NN: Do you still support the constitutional reform proposal to abolish the Federation entity and organize BiH into 12 federal units, made up of RS, District Brcko and the existing 10 Federation cantons? Would this change lead to the abolishment of RS and its authorities?

KNAUS: I think we would all benefit from that and we believe that, when irrational hopes and fears of imposed reforms dissipate, the constitutional debate should go in that direction. RS should not be afraid, because it will be in the same position as federal units in other countries, such as Bavaria in Germany or Catalonia in Spain. If time proves that there are too many federal units some of them can initiate to join two or more, in order to decrease the number. Naturally, this is something the inhabitants of the units would have to agree to. The most important issue is that BiH finally looks like a “normal” European federation, without a federation within a federation, without a district under an international supervisor and without OHR, which would hold all that together.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, unresolved puzzle

Vecernji list
By Zdenko Cosic
Op-ed

July 18, 2005

Bosnia and Herzegovina will remain an unresolved puzzle for some time yet. Also unresolved is the issue of inequality of Croats, which is evident to all objective observers regardless of their political or ethnic affiliation.

One of the few issues that on which a majority of Croat politicians and the public agree is the right to a TV channel in the Croatian language. Croats have quietly been publicizing their position on the existing PBS law by refusing to pay the PBS license fee.

The Federal TV recently sent out thousands of bills threatening to seek payment through courts, thereby pitting the force of the law with the will of the people. True, it is a legal process founded on the Law on PBS. Likewise, it is a fact that such laws do not promote the principle of equality and that its implementation is contrary to the will of one of the peoples.

It can thus be considered illegitimate. Spontaneous civil disobedience may soon receive judicial sanctions.

Politicians are publicly keeping quiet because fear of permanent indictments for subverting the order has overpowered the awareness of a people's representative. Croats, as the least numerous people, unfortunately, do not have the support of majority Bosniaks in their legitimate requests. The unprincipled partnership between the Muslim SDA party and Croat HDZ is a weak guarantee for justice and equality in a new BiH.

If the frightened HDZ cannot, will not or considers it unnecessary to take up a firm position on these matters, they could at least give consent to their Muslim colleagues and agree with their positions.

Namely, in one of SDA's "historical" declarations, it states: "No one can call upon a law whose implementation is against the will of one of the peoples, because the will of the people is a law above all others."

Now, when we have a law evidently against the will of a people, a Bosniak lack of understanding represents a departure from their principles.

The declaration on laws "against the will of the people" obviously has Orwellian ending: No one can insist upon a law whose implementation is against the will of the people – unless we are talking about another group of people!

Interview: Aluminij General Manager Mijo Brajkovic

Aluminij currently employs more non-Croats than there are Croats living on Mostar's east side

Slobodna Dalmacija
By Zoran Zekic

July 18, 2005

Aluminij Mostar General Manager Mijo Brajkovic is set to retire soon. Nevertheless, the charismatic manager and recipient of Southeast Europe's Best Manger Award still thinks about implementing new projects and increasing employment in his company.

It seems you can be satisfied with your results thus far. However, you are planning new projects?

Aluminij will set a new record this year in terms of aluminum and aluminum alloy production. That is why, along with Daimler-Chrysler and other companies and with loans from Hermes, we decided to build another facility for aluminum refinement. This is an investment worth 25 million Euros.

More precisely, in a couple of days, on July 26, together with FEAL from Siroki Brijeg, we will be placing the initial foundation for a new plant which will work with aluminum and employ 100 new employees. That is what we have been discussing for several years; besides Aluminij, we need new, small firms that will work on aluminum refinement.

Let me mention that there are about 150 people currently employed with Aluminij from Croatian companies such as Enikom, Montig, Vig, Koncar, Samoborka, etc. We follow the principle that the future BiH needs small and medium enterprises and we support that. However, we also realize that those companies need a giant like Aluminij.

For example, around 40,000 people currently live off of Aluminij and that is the force and engine of development in the whole region and country.

What about your new electrolysis project?

Two years ago Aluminij requested a feasibility study for a new electrolysis. However, that has been slowed and is simply sitting still due to certain conditions that we can control. Namely, the privatization process needs to be completed and electricity secured. This 300 million Euro investment should already have been implemented. However, we can expect that our partners will go elsewhere because they will not wait for BiH to wake up. We are asking if anyone will take responsibility for this.

Information has been released that you might take over TLM Sibenik?

I love Aluminij Mostar and I am at the end of my career. Although I have an excellent relationship and many friends at TLM Sibenik, nothing will become of that. Personally, I think there are plenty of competent people at TLM.

The state has not investment a single mark in Aluminij. Did you receive anything from the international community?

BiH has received six billion dollars in investments and we wonder where the money went. Aluminij did not receive anything.

You have been accused for employing people from only one ethnic group?

We finally have published statistics that 95 percent Bosniaks and only 5 percent others work in public and state-owned companies in the Federation. However, one needed to suffer through ten years of attacks, knowing you are right and yet being stigmatized. Following the war, those in the majority worked in companies in that area. However, that has changed with time and for Aluminij today it is important whether or not you know the job, not what nationality you are.

I have said it before and let me repeat it again. Aluminij currently employs more non-Croats than there are Croats living on the east side of Mostar.

Many say that there is an anti-investment climate present in BiH? People look at capital's "nationality," especially if it comes from Croatia?

If we examine in detail some of the problems Croatia Osiguranje faces in purchasing Sarajevo Osiguranje, or INA when purchasing Energopetrol, the issue of political obstruction arises. In all this, certain forces, especially the Party for BiH, play a negative role and I really do not know the reasons for such policies. They certainly are not good for BiH.

Entity ministries of defence to be abolished by the end of the year

FENA

July 18, 2005

Members of the Defence Reform Commission signed in Sarajevo on Monday a statement on accepting the Draft Defence Law and the Draft Law on Service in the Armed Forces.

Defence Reform Commission Co-chair and BiH Defence Minister Nikola Radovanovic told a press conference afterwards that the BiH Ministry of Defence would complete all necessary technical preparations for forwarding these draft law to the BiH Council of Ministers next week.

Radovanovic said that the simultaneous abolishment of the conscription system and the entity ministries of defence are some of the most important elements of these draft laws.

Individuals currently employed by the entity defence structures will become a party of BiH defence structures by January 1 next year.

Through an internal selection process these individuals will be appointed to positions in the BiH defence system, while a number of positions will be terminated as a result of the termination of the conscription system and consolidation aimed at increasing efficiency.

Radovanovic said the single defence budget is planned to go into force as of January 1 2006. He also said that the "Command for Support" will also be established and that it will be responsible for personnel, logistics, individual training and doctrine development.

The passive reserve will be abolished and those who have already completed military training will have no further obligations.

The Commission also proposed that entities take necessary steps towards introducing amnesty for all those who have not fulfilled their military service since 1992.

The record on conscripts will be transferred from municipal offices of the ministries of defence to municipal structures responsible for other records, such as birth certificates, death certificates and wedding certificates.

The new active reserve forces will be made up of former professionals and their size will be 50 percent of the active force, which is between 9.000 and 10.000 members.

Radovanovic said that the active forces will be organised into three multiethnic brigades that will consist of battalions and infantry regiments.

High Representative Paddy Ashdown described today's event as one of the largest turning points in BiH since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreement.

With no other change has BiH moved away from its past as it did with this carried out under

the auspices of the Defence Reform Commission, Ashdown said.

Now that all technical conditions have been met cooperation with the ICTY remains the only obstacle for BiH membership in the Partnership for Peace, he said.

Above all, when these laws are adopted, BiH will have a united military force, under a single command, and in accordance with NATO standards.

Unlike “the enemies” of reforms Ashdown does not think that there will be a security vacuum in BiH because the international forces will not leave the country soon, while membership in the Partnership for Peace will give BiH the protection of the most powerful military alliance in the world.

Defence Reform Commission Co-chair Raffi Gregorian said that this set of measures provides a permanent solution for the BiH Armed Forces and will help the accession of BiH to the Partnership for Peace and NATO.

According to him these measures will allow the people in BiH to “demilitarise their minds and turn towards the future”.

Representative of the NATO Secretary General John Colston stressed that the agreement on united armed forces represents a step towards the Partnership for Peace and congratulated on behalf of the NATO Secretary General to all those that have contributed to these draft laws.

This has shown that BiH has developed a feeling that defence reform is its task, which is key for accession to the Partnership for Peace.

The proposed concept is the best solution for BiH and Generals are fully committed to implement it if it is enacted, BiH Armed Forces Chief of Joint Staff General Sifet Podzic said.

He said that a single chain of command has been established starting from the BiH Presidency. Three brigades (in Tuzla, Mostar and Banja Luka) will be under the operational command. All members of the BiH Armed Forces will bear the BiH flag on their right shoulder and the symbol of their regiment on their left shoulder, General Podzic said.

NATO Headquarters in Sarajevo Commander Steven Schook said that as an expert he thinks that the proposed solution is excellent because it was carefully put together in order to meet NATO standards, but also satisfy special demands of BiH.

He too warned BiH politicians that certain issues are more important than politics and urged them to adopt these laws as soon as possible so that BiH can join the Partnership for Peace as soon as possible.

Radovanovic said that some 2,400 men could end up being surplus.

Special commissions for selecting staff will be established and several models for resolving the issue of surplus men will also be proposed.

About the issue of debt of entity ministries of defence, Radovanovic said that they have proposes a number of mechanisms for the transfer of authority and property, including claims.

The plan is to keep commitments with entities in order to enter the new system with as little burden as possible, Radovanovic said.

Scheffer: Ratko Mladic obstacle to Serbia and Montenegro's admission into PFP

FENA

July 18, 2005

BELGRADE – Indicted general Ratko Mladic must answer before the Hague Tribunal and the fact that he is at large represents the main obstacle to admission of Serbia and Montenegro (SCG) into the Partnership for Peace, NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer said on Monday.

“My message to the authorities in SCG is: arrest Mladic as soon as possible, today or tomorrow, but do this”, Scheffer told the press after talks with SCG President Svetozar Marovic and Foreign Minister Vuk Draskovic, was reported by agencies.

“I cannot explain that it is possible that even ten years after the massacre in Srebrenica the final conclusion is: ‘We cannot find Ratko Mladic.’ I cannot explain this to anybody, said Scheffer.

“We have fulfilled all conditions for the Partnership for Peace, except the apprehension of Mladic, and I hope that there will be a great public campaign in Serbia because we are fighting for the future of the country and for fulfilling the commitment that is not only legal, but also moral”, said Draskovic.

Malloch Brown: BiH can help UN reform

FENA

July 18, 2005

BiH can be a voice of moral that will stimulate the UN to carry out reforms in order for tragedies like that one in Srebrenica from ten years ago to be prevented, Head of the UN Secretary General's Cabinet and Head of the UN Development Program (UNDP) Mark Malloch Brown told BH Television.

“We must show that something like that will never repeat again and for this the UN need to have better peacekeeping forces and military assets”, Malloch Brown said and added that member states needs to show greater unity in the political will to support the UN.

According to him the recent past of BiH, which is so closely connected to the UN, gives this country a strong voice in the debate on the future of the UN. Countries with special importance and influence in the UN are exactly the ones whose history is connected to this organisation, he said.

Brown stressed that the UN will continue to support BiH and that the engagement of UNDP, which he has led for the last five years, is constantly increasing in BiH. The emphasis is being placed on local development with projects such as the Recovery of the Srebrenica Region Program, as well as development at the state level where projects are directed towards the establishment of better, more efficient and responsible state institutions and services.

He stressed that BiH needs to focus on integration into Europe, which represents its economic future, as well as membership in the EU.

By doing so we can help this country successfully complete the period of receiving aid and the development phase, UNDP stated.