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Top story in this issue:

OLD AND NEW MINORITIES

Top story of the third issue of REGIONAL NEWSLETTER FOR CULTURE OF MINORITY RIGHTS AND INTER-ETHNIC TOLERANCE is "old" and "new" minorities. Unfortunately, although this division doesn't exist formally, in the letter of law, and all minorities are equal in principle, it is very present in true social and political domain.

After dissolution of former joint country, many people who found themselves in new states became not only members of a national minority but also had to undergo painful and difficult experience of various types of discrimination due to war circumstances and ethnic conflicts. Many of them are still fighting their way through a complex process of integration into society. Atmosphere of anti-minority policy and inter-ethnic tolerance hasn't spared even "old" minorities, but at some point of time the new became endangered.

Today, such situation from the past is slowly improving, with occasional difficulties. Especially important is that such improvement became one of key tests and indicators of democracy for new countries.

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IV Summary:

I BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA

1. The determination problems of minority communities in BiH: NEW AND OLD MINORITIES - CONSTITUTIVE NATIONS AND “OTHERS”

Namir Ibrahimović

Even though the war ended more than eight years ago, there are still, in terms of the treatment concerning the rights of national groups, references to threat against one of the three constitutive nations in the areas where this nation is in minority compared with any one of the remaining two, which have equal rights. These are the issues generally focused by media, so that almost no space remains for these “others”, where they could point to their needs. The largest part of BiH population remains unaware of the fact that as many as seventeen national minorities exist in their country: Under the category of “others”, they normally place only Jews, whose number is exactly 1,000, and Bosnians. On the other hand, a good number of people view the Roma, who are convincingly the largest community, as a second-rate group rather than as a minority.

2. Legal regulation of national minorities in BiH: GOOD LEGISLATION, HELD UP IMPLEMENTATION

Amer Pirić

Particular problem is related to the failure to implement the part of Electoral Law, which offers guarantees to each national minority in the municipalities where they live, to have at least one post in relevant municipal councils. This part of the Law will not be implemented in the forthcoming October local elections, due to the insufficient eagerness among certain authority levels to build it into the electoral system.

3. Neđo Miličević, Judge in the BiH Federation Constitutional Court: EDUCATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES IN BiH IS DISCRIMINATING

Namir Ibrahimović

“The Constitutional category of ‘others’ was determined in Washington and Dayton Constitution. It was much more obscure before the constitutional changes were made in entity constitutions, because the notion of ‘others’ included not only national minorities but also Bosniaks and Croats in RS and, on the same token, Serbs in BiH Federation. Now, that term is mainly reduced to those that really are national minorities. I certainly have no reason – and indeed, it would be hard – to praise that concept of ‘others’. In a way, it suggests the connotation of a human group of lesser importance, which is absolutely unacceptable. However, there is no need to attribute too much to a word, because words typically never reflect real situation; real situation is reflected in the contents of these words”, says Professor Miličević.

4. Srđan Dizdarević, the President of Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in BiH: BIH MINORITIES REMAIN ON MARGINS

Amer Pirić

“Real minorities are in a totally marginalised position in entire BiH. On one hand, the Dayton Constitution has reduced political sphere to three constitutive nations – Serbs, Croats and Bosniaks. On the other hand, the dominant position of nationalist parties has even brought about

the marginalisation of constitutive nations in the areas where they are in numerical minority and have no effective political power. Thus, the representatives of some twenty national minorities in BiH remain on the margins of both political developments, and the developments in the sphere of economy, i.e. employment, privatisation, education...”, stated the President of Helsinki Committee.

II CROATIA

1. OLD AND NEW MINORITIES

By **dr. sci. Sinisa Tatalovic**

There is a frequent distinction between old and new minorities in Croatia, placed there to emphasize that there are national minorities with longer tradition of their minority respect called old minorities and new minorities that have been exercising their rights since the establishment of Croatian independent state. Although it is usually said that old minorities exercise their rights in a better and more organized manner while new minorities are only now building up their minority institutions and preparing for wholesome exercise of their rights, Croatia treats them equally. Therefore, discussion about old and new minorities makes sense only if one talks about general position of national minorities.

European experience has shown that old minorities are more resistant to integration and, especially, assimilation while new minorities are much less so. Some countries make distinction between old and new minorities when granting rights which should enable old minorities to survive in long term, while refusal to acknowledge new minorities should enable their faster integration or assimilation.

2. PROCESS OF EQUALIZATION OF MINORITIES

By **Mladen Obrenovic**

Dissolution of former Yugoslavia, one a joint country, created new minorities. Due to war circumstances (as well as lack of state of law and adequate minority policy), some minorities ended up in especially difficult position. New minorities are facing many challenges, ranging from acknowledgment of their right and equalization with "old" minorities (formally equal status nonetheless) to better self-organization in order to exercise their rights in the first place. It is a complex and difficult process, but the only one that will confirm Croatia as a sovereign democratic country.

3. Cedomir Visnjic, president of Serbian cultural society Prosvjeta and councillor to Croatian minister of culture: OLD MINORITIES HAD INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK PROVIDED

Interviewed by **Sanja Vukcevic**

Our task today is to provide real content for status of national minority which is more restricting and more modest sounding than former status of a nation. We need to see how much we are able to fill it with creative works, how much we are able to organize ourselves and protect our identity, how much our cultural autonomy has creative and any other sense; what are writers can write and historians interpret, in order to confirm that events that caused us to become national minority in Croatia instead of a nation in former socialist republic are not negative, said Visnjic, stressing that "old" minorities, like Italian, have an advantage over "new" because they had institutional framework which helped birth new ideas and new people.

Serbian minority was organized in accordance to Constitutional Law on Rights of National Minorities, but at this moment Visnjic thinks that current level in implementation of minority rights is not as as trend and goodwill to progress further in resolving the issues like assimilation, segregation and employment.

4. Maurizio Tremul, president of Italian Union: IT IS HEALTHY TO COMPETE, NOT BE COMPETITION

Interviewed by **Goran Vezic**

President of Italian Union Maurizio Tremul says that native minorities still need their specific role because they have helped build up identity of the territory itself of generations and centuries. "Therefore I think that distinction between old and new minorities should be there, but all of them need to have recognized their rights - ranging from education and language use to financing their activities", said Tremul who is head of the Union that is active both in Croatia and Slovenia.

5. Prof. dr. Semso Tankovic, parliamentary representative from Bosniak minority, who is also representing Albanian, Slovenian, Macedonian and Montenegrin national minority: CORRECTION OF MISTAKES FROM PAST IS BENEFICIAL BOTH FOR BOSNIAKS AND CROATIA

Interviewed by **Stojan Obradovic**

Priority of Bosniak national minority at this moment is to confirm and establish their national identity at all levels, from constitution to administration. It is also the best way for their complete, but also equal integration into the whole of Croatia, says prof. Semso Tankovic who emphasizes that cooperation among minorities has to be based on their concrete interests without "higher politics".

III SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

1. "OLD" AND "NEW" MINORITIES

Mr. Goran Basic, Institute for Philosophy and Theory of Society, Belgrade

The division of ethnic minorities into «old» and «new» is senseless as any other attempt of classifying citizens on «us» and «others» is.

For many people 20th century was the century of ethnicity. Nations developed, entire nations disappeared and languages were extinguished, ethnic passions came to life and ethnic communities awakened for which it was believed to have lost identity under the veil of huge imperies and ideologies. In such context «new» minorities appeared.

Every division into old and new, us and them confirms the thesis that a man did not determine borders only in a physical sense. They are real and they are also kept in cultures, ideas, religions, languages of people and smaller social groups. Crossing the limits of one's own system of values or a group system of values is an obstacle modern civilization still trips over.

However, limits should not be treated as something that unreservedly has to be brought down. On the contrary we must have limits since our civilizations are based on forms and borders.

2. NEW MINORITIES IN SEARCH FOR IDENTITY AND STATUS

Dr. Dušan Janjić

The problem of the so-called new minorities has imposed with the desintegration of ex-Yugoslavia and the creation of new nations-countries on its territory. Term «new minority» is meant for the ethnic community which in ex-Yugoslavia had the status of «constitutive peoples», and whose members found themselves under the rule of newly formed countries after the destruction of Yugoslavia.

Depending on growth of stability of certain countries and broadening of cooperation in the region, the way to manipulate with minorities will narrow, above all in the function of destabilization of neighbour countries.

New pro-democratic government in Serbia, which came into power by the end of 2000, has shown declarative and principal willingness for carrying out a democratic minority policy.

However, it is necessary to make further moves in order to regulate the status of «new» but also other minorities appropriate to structure and needs, as well as ideals of democracy.

3. Katica Bengin, assistant secretary for local self-government at Voivodina Executive Council:

INTEGRATION OF REFUGEES IN SERBIA AND MONTENEGRO

Interviewed by **Nevena Vrtulek**

In May 2001. the first document was passed in Serbia and Montenegro called «Strategy for solving problems of refugees and internally displaced persons ». It provides integration of approximately 60 % of this population: Building of houses and apartments is being planned, in cooperation with donors, local authorities and people to whom they have been intended for, as well as providing jobs in order to adequately solve their existence. Strategy has also provided closing of collective centres for accommodation of refugees and IDPs. Only the last has been carried out until now, while the rest parts of the plan have proved to be unrealistic, thus not realizable.

The defeating conclusion is that Serbia and Montenegro which is still the most numerous country by the number of refugees, doesn't have either a concept or the money for quality solutions of problems of refugees.