

Main Stories

24 February

- **First stage of Vienna consultations ends (*Dailies*)**
- **Haradinaj: Let's make Kosovo a state to take pride in (*Dailies*)**
- **Ahtisaari does not want to wait for new Serbian Government (*Koha Ditore*)**
- **Çeku and Rücker to travel to the UN in March (*Dailies*)**
- **Schaefer: Russia to line up behind other Contact Group countries (*Dailies*)**
- **"Violence" again divides police and Vetëvendosja (*Dailies*)**
- **Xhaferi: Independence of Kosovo defines Serbia's status (*Dailies*)**
- **Haxhiu: I would today give up the north (*Koha Ditore*)**

Kosovo Media Highlights

First stage of Vienna consultations ends (*Dailies*)

On the last day of the first stage of consultations in Vienna, disagreements between Kosovo and Serbian delegations deepened, *Koha Ditore* reports. The third day focused on Annex VII of Ahtisaari's proposal which deals with the economy and property.

The first part of the discussion related to international debts. It is reported that Kosovo has agreed to take over its part of the debt resulting from the disintegration of the former Yugoslavia. "Kosovo has agreed to claim its part of international debt which would be set, after status, in bilateral talks with Serbia according to the agreement of 2001 for the succession of states," said the chairman of the Kosovo delegation Skender Hyseni. Hyseni said that while the Kosovo delegation agrees with the majority of proposals in the status package, the Serbian delegation has rejected the proposal and has asked for the inclusion of a new annex regarding economic and property issues.

The mere notion of "succession" was unacceptable to the Serbian side. "It is absolutely unacceptable for us," said co-chairman of the Serbian delegation Leon Kojen. According to the Belgrade side, Kosovo cannot be part of the succession agreement because it pertains to the former republics of Yugoslavia and Kosovo did not enjoy the status of a republic.

Zëri quotes international sources as saying that despite everything, consultations in Vienna are expected to be very useful in at least on one respect: they will confirm

Ahtisaari's and UNOSEK's view that all possibilities in an effort to reach an agreement between Pristina and Belgrade have been exhausted.

Haradinaj: Let's make Kosovo a state to take pride in (Dailies)

Ahead of his return to The Hague, AAK leader Ramush Haradinaj met with President Fatmir Sejdiu, Prime Minister Agim Çeku and UNMIK head Joachim Rucker, papers report.

After his meeting with Sejdiu and Çeku, Haradinaj said he had hoped that the decision on independence of Kosovo would have been taken before his return to The Hague, where he is to face charges of war crimes. He added, however, that a decision on independence will come very soon and that Ahtisaari's proposal paves the way for this to happen.

Haradinaj called on the people of Kosovo to be cautious in this stage and not to contribute to the destruction of what has been achieved so far. "It is difficult to build something, but it is easy to destroy it. People can destroy things very easily, but it is unjust to do so," Haradinaj said.

Zëri publishes a message Haradinaj issued before his departure for The Hague. In it, Haradinaj thanks the people of Kosovo for "treating my problems as theirs and for the help shown when I needed it the most." He said he will do his utmost to repay the people of Kosovo for the support they showed him by "working with all of you in creating a modern and democratic state that you deserve." Haradinaj said the joint duty is to make Kosovo a state to take pride in.

President Sejdiu said he thanked Haradinaj for his assistance. "We appreciate his commitment and contribution to the process," said Sejdiu, adding that he believed Haradinaj will return soon.

PM Çeku said Haradinaj was a strong voice for the government and the coalition. Çeku said he was convinced Haradinaj's absence from Kosovo will not be long and that Haradinaj and his friends will win this battle and prove their innocence. "We will stand by him," Çeku said.

Following his meeting with the UNMIK leadership, Haradinaj said they discussed transfer of competencies to Kosovo institutions.

Ahtisaari does not want to wait for the new Serbian Government (Koha Ditore)

On the front page, *Koha Ditore* writes that discussions are underway in international circles on the resolution of Kosovo status and the dynamics that should be maintained. The paper quotes an EU diplomat as saying that there are two schools of thought on the issue: the first favours reaching a solution on Kosovo as soon as possible because any delay can raise tensions in Kosovo, while the other view is that resolution of the Kosovo issue should wait for the creation of the new reform-oriented Serbian Government, which would play a more constructive role on Kosovo.

According to the paper, UN Envoy Martti Ahtisaari supports the first view and he is against the idea of waiting for the creation of a new Serbian Government. In fact,

Ahtisaari is reportedly quoted in some media as saying that it seems Serbia does not want to create the new government until Kosovo status is settled.

Ceku and Rucker to travel to the UN in March (Dailies)

Papers report that Prime Minister Agim Çeku is to travel together with SRSJ Joachim Rucker to New York in March when the UN Security Council is to debate on the implementation of standards.

After the regular weekly meeting with Çeku, Rucker stressed the importance of standards implementation. "I think it is very important to remain focused in this process especially ahead of the SC meeting where the implementation of standards will be reported on," Rucker said.

Schaefer: Russia to line up behind other Contact Group countries (Dailies)

During a visit to Pristina, German Foreign Ministry Political Director Michael Schaefer said that Russia was a constructive member of the Contact Group. "We have cooperated so far with Russia and it is part of all our joint statements. Therefore, I expect Russia to continue playing a constructive role. It is clear that during our presidency over the EU and G8 we will continue to cooperate closely with Moscow and I am certain that at the end we will be able to reach an agreement," Schaefer said.

Schaefer called on the Kosovo leadership to be ready to take responsibility over Kosovo. "We condemn violence that occurred during the demonstrations and we have expressed our concern about this. Demonstrations are democratic for as long as they don't escalate into violence," the German official said.

"Violence" again divides police and Vetëvendosja (Dailies)

The papers say that despite the fact that all the people present at the meeting between KPS and Vetëvendosja speak Albanian, they could not agree on what the word "violence" means. Vetëvendosja insisted that if buildings are hit with bottles of red paint it is not an act of violence while KPS claimed that damage to property does indeed mean violence.

Vetëvendosja activist Glauk Konjufca, said after the meeting with KPS that they confirmed that the upcoming protest planned for 3 March will be peaceful. "The Movement reconfirmed its determination for a peaceful protest like the ones on 28 November and 10 February," Konjufca said. The activists said they informed the head of KPS operations Reshat Maliqi that the protesters on 3 March will aim at entering institutional premises.

Maliqi for his part said that as long as the protest is peaceful, there will be no need for police intervention.

Express writes that the full plan for the upcoming protest was not revealed to KPS officials. "The internal plan is not revealed, not even to the police. Where we will stop, whether we will hold a speech or what we will do. We don't tell that, it is our scenario," said Liburn Aliu from Vetëvendosja.

Xhaferi: Independence of Kosovo defines Serbia's status (Dailies)

Papers cover a visit of the leaders of Albanian Democratic Party (PDSH) which is part of the coalition government in Macedonia.

PDSH leader Arbër Xhaferi reconfirmed the view of the Macedonian government in support of Kosovo's independence. "Independence of Kosovo automatically defines status of Serbia," Xhaferi said after meeting Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu. Xhaferi expressed full support for the work of the Kosovo Team of Unity.

Macedonian delegation also met PM Agim Çeku and opposition leaders Hashim Thaçi and Veton Surroi.

Haxhiu: I would today give up the north (Koha Ditore)

Koha Ditore quotes Kosovo analyst Baton Haxhiu as telling a weekly Serbian magazine *Evropa* that if he were to have his say, Kosovo leaders would give up the north of Kosovo. "I would today give up north of Kosovo," he said.

Haxhiu further said that the Kosovo delegation members in Vienna should make no further compromises and that independence of Kosovo has no alternative. "Politicians in Serbia should know Serbia doesn't need Kosovo," Haxhiu said.

Belgrade Media Highlights

- **Third day of Vienna negotiations ends (RTS)**
- **Haradinaj meets with Rücker (RTS/Reuters)**
- **SRS discusses Kosovo with Russian Duma delegation (B92)**
- **Kosovo Serb representatives with Meller (RTS)**
- **Jaksic does not expect solution to Kosovo status in 2007 (RTS)**
- **Schaeffer: Status of Kosovo during Germany's chairmanship of the EU (RTS)**
- **Jatras: Bolton's statement signaling change of US policy (RTS/Tanjug)**
- **Remains of five identified Serbs handed over (RTS)**

Third day of Vienna negotiations ends (RTS)

Official Belgrade and Pristina delegations have ended the third day of negotiations in Vienna where they discussed annexes on the economy and property from UN Envoy Martti Ahtisaari's proposal. The Serbian delegation has rejected the implementation of the principle of succession of the former SFRY, pointing out that it was solved through the arbitration of the Badenter Commission, as well as that Kosovo did not have the status of a republic in former Yugoslavia. The Serbian delegation has pointed that the total debt of Kosovo is \$1.182 billion, as well as that Serbia has to give daily more than \$100,000 for paying off those debts.

The Serbian team rejected the succession principle as a method of resolving economic issues in the framework of the definition of the status of the province, member of the team Dejan Popovic said. He said that in the case of Kosovo there can be no talk of succession, which was mentioned in Martti Ahtisaari's proposal as a method for

resolving most economic issues. Kosovo did not have the status of a republic in the former SFRY either, but was only a province within Serbia, and therefore that principle cannot be applied, Popovic specified. The talks also touched upon the issues of debts and public companies in Kosovo, on which issues the two sides considerably disagree. The Serbian team insisted that the debt should be borne by the authorities that collect tax and on whose territory the final user is situated, Popovic said.

The Serbian side has offered many amendments for the improvement of UN Envoy Martti Ahtisaari's plan, but the Albanian side is refusing any compromise, stated the Coordinator of the Serbian team Slobodan Samardzic. He pointed that Albanians are insisting only on the independence of the province, and that international mediators have not shown readiness to commence a discussion on a majority of the offered amendments. Samardzic said that some Serbian amendments were accepted for a later debate, but that no agreement had been reached on fundamental suggestions. That refers primarily to Belgrade's plan for the widest autonomy in accordance with the highest international standards, which Albanians are resolutely rejecting, quoting the provisions of Ahtisaari's plan, which give them de facto independence, stated Samardzic.

The Coordinator of the Belgrade negotiating team Leon Kojen has told the press that the property of firms from central Serbia in Kosovo was significant in some cases. Telekom Serbia paid in 1997 the license 120 German Marks, which are significant funds that had been simply seized. "We didn't deny the right to implement to the end the privatization of public companies, but we denied that the investments of firms outside Kosovo be abolished," said Kojen and stressed that the basis of Belgrade's proposal was the request to compensate from investments in the privatization process those who had invested in the past.

Member of the Serbian team Boris Begovic has stated that Belgrade rejected the redistribution of the Serbian foreign debt in the part around Kosovo, according to the principle of succession of the former SFRY. "We rejected this because there is no succession here. We proposed two economically healthy principles. One principle is towards the location of the final user and we presented how it is identified. The second element of the debt is the non-located debt, so we proposed that it be divided according to some key. The IMF key that was used cannot be used as the necessary data is lacking," said Begovic. "The second principle refers to the obligations of Kosovo that it has towards the budget of Serbia. Serbia is servicing the entire foreign debt but it cannot collect taxes in Kosovo," said Begovic. According to him, Belgrade requests that the entire debt that had been serviced until now and that will be serviced until the implementation of the agreement receives an interest rate that is received on our funds in foreign banks. Belgrade also requested that part of the solution be the agreement that will define that Kosovo authorities pay their debt into the budget of Serbia.

Pristina negotiating team member in charge of economic issues Skender Hyseni said that the talks on the economic aspects of Ahtisaari's plan hardly led to any compromise. "Serbia bluntly rejected the succession principle from Ahtisaari's document. The Albanian side mostly agrees with the economic portion of the status plan, and will only try to make it more precise and functional," Hyseni said. He added

that the Pristina delegation agreed that Kosovo should take over a portion of the international debt in a manner yet to be defined in collaboration with Belgrade following the status settlement. Pristina's position thus resembles the elements of UN Envoy's plan. "We will certainly engage into the succession process following the status settlement. The process will surely be in line with the Agreement on Succession of SFRY assets signed in 2001," Hyseni said.

Haradinaj meets with Rücker (RTS/Reuters)

Former Kosovo premier, Hague indictee Ramush Haradinaj said in Pristina that he expects justice to prevail. Haradinaj talked with UNMIK head Joachim Rücker, Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu, Premier Agim Cheku and Assembly Speaker Kolji Berisha, *Reuters* reports. The ICTY Trial Chamber previously rejected the proposal of Chief Prosecutor Carla del Ponte to revoke the right of UNMIK to decide about Haradinaj's request to meet with Ruecker.

Serbian President Boris Tadic has severely condemned the unprincipled behavior of UNMIK Head Joachim Ruecker, who accepted to meet with Hague indictee and former commander of KLA Ramush Haradinaj, in spite of protests from the ICTY Prosecution. Tadic pointed that such actions did not contribute to processes of the Tribunal against war criminals. He announced that he would notify UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon of Rücker's actions and ask for stopping with such practice, stated the press service of the Serbian President.

The decision to allow Hague indictee Ramush Haradinaj to talk with UNMIK Head Joachim Rücker represents another precedent, made under political influence of certain factors of the international community, said the President of the National Council for Cooperation with the ICTY Rasim Ljajic. Such a decision was made in spite of the opposition of the Prosecution, and probably under the influence of UNMIK, and all aimed at calming the situation in Kosovo, assessed Ljajic and added that this decision is not supported by justice and law.

SRS discusses Kosovo with Russian Duma delegation (B92)

"If the EU grabs Kosovo from Serbia, we are saying publicly that Serbia must never enter that integration," SRS deputy president Tomislav Nikolic said, *AP* reports. Speaking after meeting with a delegation from Russian Duma, Nikolic said Serbia "must quit its UN membership" if the SC accepts Ahtisaari's plan. Nikolic also said that his party hoped Russia would veto the Kosovo status plan at the UNSC. "If Russia does not do it, we will fight (for Kosovo) ourselves," Nikolic said.

Kosovo Serb representatives with Meller (RTS)

SLKM representatives have conveyed in Pristina to Danish Foreign Minister Per Stig Meller that they are not satisfied with how UN Envoy Martti Ahtisaari is leading the negotiations on the status of the province. SLKM head Oliver Ivanovic told Meller that Serbs did not agree with Ahtisaari's plan, and that they believed the imposing of strict deadlines for the completion of negotiations was counter-productive. Ivanovic added that especially unacceptable for Serbs was the proposal on the forming of an army in Kosovo, as well as solutions that are enabling de facto independence of provincial institutions from Belgrade. Serb representatives emphasized that for their

survival in Kosovo all encompassing decentralization was necessary, i.e. the forming of more municipalities with wider competencies, than in Ahtisaari's plan.

Jaksic does not expect solution to Kosovo status in 2007 (RTS)

The President of the Association of Kosovo Serb Municipalities and Settlements Marko Jaksic has said he believes the status of the province will not be resolved this year. He told a press conference in Belgrade that it is most important that the Serbian team should do its best to explain to the international community in talks in Vienna with arguments that Kosovo is part of Serbia, that it belongs to Serbia according to all international norms, principles and documents and that Albanians do not have the right to obtain another state, as that would represent a reward for ethnic cleansing.

Schaeffer: Status of Kosovo during Germany's chairmanship of the EU (RTS)

The political director of the German Foreign Ministry Michael Schaeffer said in Pristina he hopes the status of Kosovo will be established during Germany's presidency in the EU. After talks with Kosovo President Fatmir Sejdiu, Schaeffer said that the results of consultations between Belgrade and Pristina in Vienna will be included in the final proposition of UN Envoy Martti Ahtisaari, which is to be submitted to the UNSC. Schaeffer emphasized it is necessary that the Council should adopt a special resolution on the status of Kosovo. Assessing that so far Russia has played a constructive role in the Contact Group, he added he would not prejudge the attitude of Moscow in the UNSC.

Jatrass: Bolton's statement signaling change of US policy (RTS/Tanjug)

The statement of former US Ambassador with the UN John Bolton, who loudly opposed the imposing of the solution for Kosmet and illegal fragmenting of Serbian territory, represents very important signal of changes in the foreign policy of USA, said official of the US Council for Kosmet James Jatrass. While pointing that Bolton is very influential in Washington, especially among republicans, Jatrass assessed that the former Ambassador in the UN had openly said what many in the administration were thinking, but were still not ready to say. Jatrass believes that Bolton's statement testifies that the pro-Albanian lobby in Washington is not strong enough any more to push for the adoption of UN Envoy Martti Ahtisaari's plan. The distinguished analyst emphasized that Serbs should continue firmly holding to the arguments on the guaranteed borders and territorial integrity, as that will yield good results.

Remains of five identified Serbs handed over (RTS)

Remains of five Serbs, kidnapped and murdered in 1999 and 2000 in Kosovo, have been handed over to their families at the Merdare boundary line, confirmed the Chairperson of the Committee for Missing Persons Veljko Odalovic. Also present were representatives of the Association of families of kidnapped and murdered persons in Kosovo. Odalovic reminded that so far 243 corpses of Serbs and other non-Albanians have been handed over, as well as that 629 are still listed as missing.

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