



Dnevni list: Interview with HR Valentin Inzko

By D. Lukić

Dnevni list: Where is BiH going and who indeed decides what road BiH will take? We still have a number of different views on the „scene“ as to how to untie the knot that was created after the recent elections. Do you see how the situation of permanent confrontation and blockage is going to resolve itself?

The course for BiH is set. There is a consensus among the BiH politicians that the country should move towards the EU. The politicians need to sit together and figure out how to untie all the knots in BiH, so that the country can move faster. This is not as difficult as it appears. It takes political will to reach a compromise on concrete issues. Their responsibility is to navigate the boat, not to sink it.

Dnevni list: One of my colleague journalists said recently that the situation in BiH would normalize when Serbia and Croatia become „normal “states. Do you think the neighbors have a negative influence on BiH? Or „bigger“ geostrategic games between the West and East are at play?

I will refrain from commenting in detail on the situation in Croatia and Serbia. That does not fall under my mandate. My primary mandate is Bosnia and Herzegovina, although we do observe the public statements and actions of regional leaders. As you know, BiH's neighbors are obliged by the Dayton Peace Agreement to respect and promote its implementation. That being said, good neighborly relations are essential for moving Bosnia and Herzegovina and the entire region forward. All the countries in the region will benefit from this. It is a clear win-win situation!

Dnevni list: We keep on having the talk about vulnerability and protectors on the political scene. On the other hand, the people are bitter and leave mostly on account of poverty, nepotism and omnipresent corruption generated by the system. And yet, people elect „protectors“ in elections. How can we explain this?

I have no real answer to that. Even after 10 years. I have the impression that people believe they cannot change anything and, consequently, they have no ambition to change anything. So nothing changes in the end. In other words, if people would start believing that they have the power to change things, the situation would improve. Collective, their strength is greatest on the election day. That is the day when they have their own Bonn Powers, which are potentially far more powerful than mine.

Dnevni list: In recent months you have not been in the media very much, and nearly all political parties have begun calling, attacking and criticizing you. Some call you to help, some call you to leave, some to be stricter, and some attack you over excessive income. Does it seem to you that all of them just want to use you for the realization of their political goals?

I appreciate the opinion of every single citizen of this country. I understand their criticism as an expression of deep frustration with the situation in the country. Frankly, they are right in being frustrated. At the same time, they need to understand that times have changed and Bosnia and Herzegovina needs to try walking on its own. The International Community is still ready to assist BiH, very sincerely, but it is not ready to do all the work for it. Indeed, some attack me for doing too much, I was even called a criminal, an autocrat, others criticize me for doing, in their mind, too little. But you remember, you cannot please everyone.

Dnevni list: You have brought attention many times to the problems of real discrimination in BiH, such as the people who have no right to be elected. Can you remind the public of this because we have the impression that these groups of people are totally forgotten?

We shall have a shameful anniversary in December. For a whole decade, BiH has failed to eliminate the discrimination of its citizens and provide equal rights to all. A significant number of BiH citizens, that do not declare as belonging to one of the constituent peoples, are still not able to exercise the fundamental right to stand for election to the BiH Presidency and the BiH House of Peoples. But also Serbs in the Federation or Croats and Bosniacs in Republika Srpska cannot run for the State Presidency. This discrimination has to end. Since the French Revolution, this is, for over 200 years we have the principle of egalite, equality! If BiH leaders really have such high regard for European values and standards as they claim, this is the way to prove it. There are no excuses.

Dnevni list: Where do you see BiH within 5 years?

I would like to see it as a country whose leaders have finally placed the interests of the people above their own, and a country that does not push its best and brightest away but offers equal opportunities for all, where justice is available to all, and where nepotism and corruption are sporadic and dealt with, not applauded. Bosnia Herzegovina will be an EU candidate country and on its firm way from Dayton to Brussels.

Dnevni list: Dnevni list marks its 18th anniversary on Tuesday. Accordingly, can you comment on the condition of journalists' rights in BiH and the media scene?

First of all, I would like to take this opportunity to sincerely congratulate not only the leadership of your newspaper but every other employee of Dnevni list. This is a significant anniversary. It takes a lot of courage, energy, and resilience to last this long. Your newspaper is on my desk every morning.

I believe that freedom of speech and freedom of the media are essential in any democracy. Also, the media must report in an objective and professional manner. The citizens need to be able to trust that the media is providing them with accurate, impartial, even investigative information. The media must strive to maintain the highest standards and constantly be aware of their role in society. This would be a very concrete contribution to a better Bosnia Herzegovina.

Bosnia Herzegovina has all the potential, to be a Balkan Switzerland and the Herzegovina, to be a small California!