



Politika: Interview with HR Valentin Inzko

By Duška Stanišić

Politika: You often stress that 15 February was a decisive day for BiH, since that is when it handed in its application for accession into the EU. Is that application the result of work of local politicians or a sign of the official Brussels giving in?

Valentin Inzko: I believe that it was a good decision and whether BiH deserves it or not, that is another question. As I can see, the life of BiH citizens has not changed since that date, they still live the same. However, it is a decision on the direction BiH should take in the future, and that direction is towards Brussels. I said on several occasions that there was no turning back anymore; there is no ticket backwards, only forward.

Politika: Some politicians are very optimistic and announce that by the end of next year BiH will get the status of a candidate for EU membership...

Valentin Inzko: I have always been an advocate for a faster granting of a candidate status, and a slower granting of a member status. What is most important in-between is transition, reforms... In that sense it would be good if BiH got the status of a candidate and started serious reforms; it will become a member, as estimated by the Head of EU Delegation in BiH, in ten years maybe.

Politika: Is the mood within the EU in favour of BiH's accession?

Valentin Inzko: Some countries are skeptical, but regardless, I believe that the European perspective is the common policy of all European countries. Nobody, not even the countries that have expressed certain skepticism, wants the Balkans or BiH to be a black hole.

Politika: Will the local elections take place in Mostar in October, and does a part of the responsibility for the problems in that city lie on your Office?

Valentin Inzko: Some say that we have imposed the situation in Mostar, which is not true. There is a decision of the BiH Constitutional Court about amendments to the Election Law rules related to that city, and it must be complied with. However, there is no political will for that, and it is lacking because some what a solution for all, whereas others only want a minimalist solution that would follow the court decision. The most responsible for finding a common solution are two parties, the SDA and HDZ.

Politika: How do you view the attempts to divide Mostar?

Valentin Inzko: The international community is against that. Mostar has always been a multiethnic city that can function only as a single city. Those that advocate division and talk about the left and right bank would have to say where is the Serb bank, because Serbs are a very important factor in that city.

Politika: It has been almost one year since the attack on Prime Minister Aleksandar Vucic in Srebrenica and the BiH Prosecutor's Office has not presented any investigation results yet. How do you comment?

Valentin Inzko: I was there and I was appalled with what happened and what should not have happened. In this case, the Prosecutor's Office of BiH is acting unprofessionally. Those stones did not come from the sky; somebody threw them at Vucic and there is TV footage of the event that shows it. I think that the Prosecutor's Office should have identified and prosecuted the perpetrators. After all that happened, Vucic has made an excellent move by extending his hand and offering reconciliation to Bosniaks. Afterwards, he visited Srebrenica again and promised that the Serbian Government would allocate 2.5 million Euro for the local community and he delivered on that promise.

Politika: There were some fierce reactions in the RS with regard to your statement in which you compared Radovan Karadzic with Nazi criminal Heinrich Himmler. Which similarities do you see

between the two of them?

Valentin Inzko: I am against glorification and celebration of war criminals, regardless of their country of origin. Glorification of war crimes, Nazism and fascism is unacceptable. I have said that already and it is my position that is not going to change.

Politika: Following the presidential election results in your country, you stated that you are “relieved” by the fact that Norbert Hofer did not win because he advocated, as you said, “the 100% right of Serbs to separate from BiH”. Why were you so bothered by his statement? It is his opinion.

Valentin Inzko: He is entitled to his opinion but his endorsement of the right of the RS to self-determination and independence would seriously destabilize BiH and the entire region. Had he won, he would have continued with such policy. That is why I supported Van der Bellen because he is an experienced, fair and warmhearted man who will unite all Austrians.

Politika: You heavily criticized the RS and its President Milorad Dodik before the UN Security Council this year too. However, this year too, just as it happened last year, you went to Banja Luka afterwards and we saw you sitting next to Dodik at two different events. What is your relation with the RS President and which Inzko is the one the public should believe: the one that criticizes Dodik or the one who is “very happy to be photographed” with Dodik?

Valentin Inzko: It was arranged that way by the Protocol. We did not hug each other.

Politika: Did you talk to him?

Valentin Inzko: He criticized me over the Report and I told him that I presented the facts. This year I did not attend his Patron Saint Day’s celebration because he glorified war criminal Radovan Karadzic. I will always have good official relations with Dodik but I do not have good private relations with him any longer because I do not accept what he has done.