

Interview: Carlos Westendorp, the High Representative "Klein and I are leaving BiH this summer"

After two years in this country, I would not like to become a part of the problem, but a solution to them. This is one of motives in my intention to leave this country and this position. There are, of course, personal reasons for this. I do not think it is good to be separated from the family for so long. Although I manage to be with them every weekend, this is not enough. I will also participate in elections for the European Parliament, which are to be held on June 13. My whole career is related to the European institutions, and the European Parliament becomes a very interesting institution and becomes a real parliament. Further on, I also have obligations toward Social-democrats party of my country. I will stay for some time after this date in order to assist my successor in receiving the duty of the High Representative, Carlos Westendorp said for Dnevni Avaz.

Readers' Award

His cabinet is dominated by the "Avaz's" readers' award, that Westendorp received as the Person of the Year in early this year. Westendorp sits relaxed and in a very good mood.

He instantly added laugh and jokes to our quite serious and long conversation.

Is it yet known who is going to replace you?

No, not yet. But there are a lot of good people in Europe who could conduct this work very successfully. I have the feeling that all countries are hiding their "ace cards" until June 5, when the Council meeting will be held in Cologne. This is a meeting of presidents of states or governments where allocation of positions is going to be discussed. There will be a lot of them, and this is a meeting where Germany will have its last role of the Chairman, in this mandate. This will be the fair for the positions allocation. However, a lot of new good people will come after June 5.

From which country?

It is not known yet, but there is an unwritten rule which says that the High Representative must come from the country which is not a member of the Contact Group. This was respected in the practice so far. But it is not important which country the person is coming from, the important thing is what kind of person he is. It is important that he or she likes this country and this region and wants to help in order to make it a better place.

You are not the only one leaving the Office. Who else leaves?

Jacques Klein will be replaced too. I cannot tell you who is going to replace him. Ask the Americans. But, I can tell you this is a very good man and I believe he is going to do a lot of work. I do not know exactly when is Klein leaving. He is here and he works. Probably the biggest part of my Spanish team will depart with me, so Huelio Iglesias will be probably less played in Sarajevo restaurants. Many other people will also leave this office. Of course, not everybody and not in the same time.

Is there a relation between the regional way of resolving the Balkan crisis and the Dayton, or perhaps, with its possible changes?

Dayton can be changed. There is procedure for this signed in the BiH Constitution. There is no need to call up for a conference to do this. Dayton is a good solution for this. I see no other. The story about the Republic of BiH is finished. Dayton changed this. Now we have a state with entities. Entities have strong authority, and the state has its own authority as well. If I was to define it, I would say this is a type of a federal state with very strong autonomous entities. However, this state is not possible without Serbs and Croats who live together with Bosniaks and others.

Union of the OSCE and the OHR is not a good idea

Ambassador Barry has proposed union of the OSCE and the OHR. What do you think about this idea?

I said to Barry at first that it seems logical that there is only one organisation, that it seems logical that this should be the OSCE – for the reasons of co-operation and security. But when I talked to people who are familiar with OSCE way of work, and the experience we have in this country, I decided this was not a good idea. I think we must not lose flexibility of the OHR. We do not need deciding by consensus, as it is the case with the OSCE, that has almost 50 member countries. People I talked to told me that OSCE has no ability for a problem like this one. They are very good in organising elections or disarming, but to do a work like this, you need to be very practical. You know that the Security Council supports election of the High Representative. The OHR has the support from many world organisations, countries represented here, such as Japan or Islamic countries which help BiH a lot... Therefore, there are many reasons why the OHR has to exist independently from other agencies in BiH. They may be specialised for certain areas and not every one of them would have their political departments and similar services. Simply, there are too many chiefs now, and too few of Indians. I believe that the time is to have only one chief and many Indians.

Recognition of borders

What kind of information do you have about announced regional approach to the Balkans problem?

This is the German proposal on the pact of stability on the level of Southeast Europe. The idea was for the first time brought by Felipe Gonzales to the German Presidency with the postulate that a country cannot be stabilised without stabilising the region. There are three main “orientations” of the regional approach: the first one is economic reconstruction and this region needs Marshall’s plan. For, without the development, other areas cannot succeed. The other direction is the real democracy, democratisation, whatever that may mean. You cannot solve the Kosovo problem as autonomy...

Within?

Within Serbia.

Serbia?

Well, Serbia, FR Yugoslavia. We are open for discussions on this issue, but we do not support Kosovo independence. This would mean revision of borders, which is a recipe for new wars in the Balkans. So, we were speaking about democratisation. You cannot say you are going to respect the rights of minorities without taking into account interests of individuals. That is why we need the actual democracy in FRY, Croatia, in BiH, Albania, Macedonia, and the whole region. The third direction is stability, safety. I think that drawing of lines on territories where ethnic groups are living is not only disastrous, but also immoral. One cannot conduct ethnic cleansing in Europe, because this is a recipe for war as well. Can you imagine what would happen with greater Serbia, greater Albania, Greece, Turkey or Bosnia where the RS would go to the FRY and “Herceg Bosna” to Croatia. What about Bosniaks then? That is why absolutely support recognition of borders. I think that the only solution for Kosovo is establishment of actual protectorate. There is no other solution. You see, the International Community does not want the independent Kosovo and Milosevic should have realised that by now: we are defending Milosevic and FRY from Kosovo independence. I repeat, we do not want independence of Kosovo. And Milosevic should feel better too with this standpoint of ours. But, he is not interested in that. Therefore, if we do not the independence, the only solution is Kosovo autonomy. But, it may be too late for this because of ethnic cleansing. How the Serbs and the Albanians are going to live together after this? One problem more is that there is no democracy in the whole region. So the only solution is full, provisional protectorate.

For how long?

I do not know, for some five years, but this is my assumption.

Is it true that you oppose NATO strikes?

No. I was never opposing that, I was always saying and I believe it is necessary. The only thing I am against is that BiH territory is used for the conflict.

Does that happen?

No, but I was afraid it might have happened that BiH airports are used for infantry... that would be a big mistake.

Defeated hard-liners in the RS

You are very engaged about events in the RS. What is your opinion about the situation in this part of BiH?

The events in Kosovo reflect the RS situation. I think the ordinary people from this entity showed us their maturity and that they behaved well in the light of these events. I am talking about the ordinary people, not the authorities.

If this is so, who was then throwing stones at your vehicles and your men, your offices, and why did you have to evacuate your staff from the RS?

Not all the people were doing that, only few of them...

One madman is enough to start the fire!

Yes, but these people did not start the fire. This showed that ordinary people are aware, that they do not war, they want to work. They live in very poor conditions and they know Milosevic is not going to employ them. The only solution for them is to co-operate with the International Community. The hard-liners were defeated in demonstrations that took place in the RS. They tried to use these gatherings against the Government, but they failed. The new government was not elected and I hope it is not going to be until the problem in the region is solved. Therefore, taking into account the situation as a whole, I would say the situation in the RS is calm. We have to understand that there are many people in the RS who have their relatives in Belgrade. They have to call them every morning to see if they are alive.