

Interview Part One: Carlos Westendorp, High Representative in BiH"Federal Television Will Have Two Channels of the Western Type"

"I treat all the peoples in BiH equally, and that not because I like it or have some sadistic instincts, but because it is my job," claims the HR of the IC in BiH, Carlos Westendorp, in an exclusive interview for Slobodna BiH, explaining the reasons for which he has made some decisions, assessing the situation of the country in which he is – by the IC decision – the sole ruler.

During some 40 minute interview in his office in Sarajevo in which, among other things, he keeps the framed award by which the Bosniacs proclaimed him the Personality of the Year 1998, the 62 year old Spaniard answered all the questions in a perfectly calm way, without being nervous whatsoever. He even said there was no need for us to send him the interview for authorisation, as the interview was recorded on a tape.

"I trust you", he said, although we met for the first time.

Most attention has lately been drawn by the announcement of the FTV reconstruction. How has this process been conceived?

The HRT problem

As you know, our wish to have the RTV BiH restructured originates from the desire for the Croat people in BiH to have ensured all the rights in BiH. We want to introduce a Western type TV that would belong to the people, and not to the political parties. And naturally, we want the Croats to have ensured the rights of expressing their language, their culture

and tradition within that TV. That is why we have been thinking about and working on the RTV BiH restructuring, preparing a Law. There will be two channels. One will be predominantly Croat, the other one predominantly Bosniac so that these two peoples are equally represented and presented on the TV.

Do you think that this would cause the reasons for HRT programmes rebroadcast in the Federation disappear, i. e. problems related to this issue?

The HRT issue should be regarded separately from this problem. The problem about HRT is that they illegally use the installation structure for its own programmes broadcast. This is also an economic issue, as the HRT is entitled to broadcast programmes in the RC, but not outside of it, so that in this respect there is a disloyal competition. This harms, or can harm the programme broadcast within BiH. And, finally, there is a technical problem to it, as this country does not have that many channels available, i.e. the frequencies to be used for the programmes broadcast.

HRT, as far as I am aware, occupies three frequencies, and that is the total number of frequencies this country can have. The idea is to reduce the HRT terrestrial broadcasting from three to one channel, and the remaining two channels, i.e. frequencies, would be allocated to the Federation. That is our view of the TV situation in terms of the terrestrial network. As for the satellite, one can do whatever one wants to and emit whatever one wants to.

When is the Federation TV with the two channels you have mentioned due to start functioning?

We are just exerting pressure on the Federal authority bodies. The work on the creation of that law is in progress and we hope to be able to implement it soon. As far as the organisation of the two channels is concerned, it is not up to

us, but rather the agreement between the two sides – Croats and Bosniacs. It is a matter of their agreement whether one of the peoples will get 70% or 30% of one channel. For better understanding, I must say that those will be two different national, but not nationalist channels.

Does that mean that the Croat people will have a TV channel with a programme in their own language?

I am also very sensitive when it comes to national languages. I know how important it is because there are four or five of them in the country I come from. One of my primary preoccupations is how to give the BiH Croats all the rights in this way, because they are one of the fundamental peoples in BiH. The Croats have the right to their own language and tradition, to be enabled to be free to go to the church, to the school. Without that, BiH will not function.

Poplasen is making everyone's life difficult

What is your opinion of the cooperation between all the three entities – Croat, Serb and Bosniac – and The Hague Tribunal?

It is a well known fact that most of the ultra-radical forces in the RS have no co-operation with the Hague Tribunal at all. They refuse to provide information, accept extradition warrants, etc. Only last year did the RS Government, headed by Dodik, start showing some signs of co-operation.

The Bosniacs are the side which has given most names, information and data, and the Croats, who also co-operate with the Hague Tribunal, as one of the three constituent peoples, were the most successful of all in persuading the people to surrender voluntarily to the Hague Tribunal. I think there have been ten such cases and, from that point of view, I must say that the Croats do co-operate with the Hague Tribunal.

In addition to all this, I have to say that the more information and data about crimes is collected, the more

people will be sent to The Hague. If the authority bodies have some new data, it should be delivered, i.e. forwarded to the Tribunal.

Is there any way for the IC to make the Serb side co-operate with the Hague Tribunal as well? For instance, why have the Serb and Muslim crimes against Croats not been processed yet?

I have always said that information and evidence of war crimes have to be delivered to the Tribunal. It is only natural that the side which delivers most information has most benefit of it. So far it is the Bosniacs who have delivered the largest amount of information. The Serbs very clearly refuse to co-operate with the Hague, even though Dodik's Government displayed their willingness for co-operation, but it has difficulties functioning with the radical President Poplasen who is making everyone's life difficult.

Somehow, Serbs always get away with things, despite the fact that they ethnically cleansed many places inhabited by Bosniacs and they have not been punished for that. Now they would like to keep Brcko. What is the standpoint of the IC towards the issue which is currently being resolved by the Arbitration Commission?

Not even in Dayton did the IC resolve the problem of Brcko. The only solution they managed to reach at the time was the agreement to pass the issue on to the arbitrary body. This body has been collecting information from all, both the Serb and Federal sides for the past year.

Therefore, I believe that the decision to be made by the Arbitration Commission will be satisfactory for all the sides. I have no powers nor could I influence the arbitration in any way because it is an independent body and whatever decision they make, I will have to accept it and have it implemented.

A fair decision on Brcko

Still, Alija Izetbegovic announced a renewal of a war should Brcko go to the Serbs.

I have also heard that Izetbegovic announced something like that. However, the only thing that I have heard or read directly is his statement that he will resign if something like that happens, but I have heard similar things and statements from other sides as well. I believe it is an attempt to influence the arbitration body, but knowing the arbiters, I do not think that those statements will have an impact on them, so that a fair decision will be made.

Do you fear that the passing of the decision will be postponed indefinitely again?

I do not have any information which might indicate that the decision-passing will be postponed. As far as I know, it is more likely that the decision will be made sooner rather than later. The Arbitration Commission must collect and examine all the information to be able to make a decision which is what it was doing for the past twelve months and now they are holding hearings in Vienna. I believe that a final solution will be made after that.

Having mentioned Vienna, I must note that all the decisions about this country are made outside of it. For how much longer will this be the case?

Yes, unfortunately. I am working to see that the authority bodies of the country take over decision-making on themselves. However, as it is well known, I was forced to make some decisions by myself, which is not a normal situation. Still, I have also refused to pass many other decisions. Many people come to me asking why I should not do this or that, but I reject their suggestions because I think that the decision-making is up to the authorities of this country. Otherwise, they will never learn to make decisions on their own. Thus, they would develop a culture of dependence of the IC which

will, unfortunately, have to leave the country one day. Still, it will not happen as soon as some say it will. There have been such announcements in the IC itself, which is evident from some press articles, and those who would like to change the Dayton Agreement also say so. If we were not working on creation of conditions for a normal decision-making, we would stay here forever and that, as Milosevic says, is bullshit. That is a nonsense. We cannot lie. We cannot leave this country at this stage.

Why not?

The war in BiH left wounds behind and they cannot heal in three or five years. It takes time. We must have courage to say this openly for once. It takes one generation, at least one generation. I have told the BiH authorities that I will not make a single decision on my own if they start making their own decisions.

So, what did they say?

Very nice, they said. But they are not making decisions.

You have said that you have often refused to pass some decisions. Have you ever regretted that?

I never regret what I have not done, but what I have done. All the decisions I have made were necessary and I have no regrets about them, I only hope that they will be made without me in the future. Sometimes, those are not decisions against one of the constituent peoples, i.e. ethnic groups. Sometimes I make decisions against all.