

Dnevni avaz: Interview with High Representative Valentin Inzko



By: Erol Avdović

Dnevni avaz: You are in a hurry, going straight from the UN to Banja Luka to the Ferhadija opening ceremony. How would you comment on that important event? Is that event merely some sort of a symbolical political parade in the smaller BiH entity, or can it be seen as a sign of a new inclusiveness in the RS?

Valentin Inzko: You are right, I am in a hurry on my way from New York to Banja Luka. It just so happened that on Tuesday I visited the burnt-down Serb Orthodox Church in New York, close to Broadway, and on Saturday, 7 May, I will attend the reopening of the famous Ferhadija. I am also emotionally attached to this mosque, because I visited it nearly 50 years ago. I visited it in 1967 when I was on a graduation trip with my high school, and when we visited Banja Luka after Mostar and Sarajevo.

Maybe some will want to use the opening of this renewed mosque for parading. But I think that all normal people would condemn something like that, in particular the modest, humane and wise mufti Osman Kozlić. Maybe the international community has not been putting enough stress on coexistence, because after the war there was a lot of talk about military security, which is

understandable. Maybe we should have had programmes for coexistence and reconciliation, like, for example, the French and the Germans.

Of course I hope that this noble act of opening this miraculous mosque will be the beginning of a new wave of tolerance in Bosnia-Herzegovina.

I am pleased that more and more Serbs from Banja Luka accept Ferhadija as their own. So I am counting on positive messages from the opening ceremony to be of widest importance for BiH and the whole region. Also, there is the message that the time of destruction in BiH is over, and that the time of construction has long since begun.

Dnevni avaz: Apart from the positive messages about BiH that you presented in the UN, you were once again sharply criticised by the Russians: of being partial, of blaming Bosnian Serbs for all problems, of not promoting a dialogue within BiH itself, but instead of promoting BiH's road to Euro-Atlantic integration; they even held it against you that you commented on the Karadžić ruling. What do you say on all that?

Valentin Inzko: The Russians usually criticize me; they have their own interests and are entitled to their own views. That is normal. I do not understand, however, that they criticize me for something that the government and peoples of Bosnia and Herzegovina want: Euro-Atlantic integration. As far as the people are concerned, these processes are moving too slowly. So, an EU application has been submitted, and the Defence Law stipulates cooperation with NATO. Nothing was imposed there. As you have seen, I received rather strong support from the remaining 14 members of the Security Council, here at the UN.

Dnevni avaz: Is the next BiH report, in six months, as you said, going to be better than this one now? Is BiH going to finally speak in one voice?

Valentin Inzko: I hope the next report will be better. But, it's not all up to me. I am only a mirror, a seismometer. If someone talks about a referendum, I only report on it. I am not the father of the referendum, but a reporter. It wasn't me who sent a wave rolling, I only write about it. When it comes to one voice, I want to say that I was positively surprised by the BiH Ambassador to the UN, Miloš Vukašinić, with his realistic and meaningful speech in the Security Council, and I think that he spoke on behalf of BiH, in one voice for all. I wish to congratulate him.

Dnevni avaz: Here at the UN, you said that „there is no parity in mass graves“. What exactly did you have in mind, along with all those remarks concerning the student dormitory at Pale, named after Karadžić, as being a wrong act and message, particularly to the young generations?

Valentin Inzko: Some RS representatives addressed the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon – saying that, in some sense, war crimes should be processed in a better, fairer way, somehow with more balance. That's why I said that there is no parity in mass graves or war crimes. I also said, and I want to repeat this, that every innocent victim deserves respect, investigation of the perpetrators and a dignified funeral. Ethnicity here is unimportant. A mother who lost her son wishes to bury him, wishes to know where his grave is, so that she can cry there and find consolation for her soul and pain. That's why we need to do more for the memorial culture. Surely, naming a student dormitory after a war criminal is a wrong understanding of the memorial culture. Politicians glorifying war criminals are, therefore, placed outside any civilized circle.