

Dnevni list: Interview with HR Valentin Inzko

By D. Lukić

Dnevni list: Sunday is the Election Day. What is your message to BiH citizens?

Valentin Inzko: First I would like to call upon citizens to get out and vote. Staying home on Election Day is the worst option. If they are satisfied with the performance of representatives they voted for four years ago, they can entrust them their vote once more. If not, there are plenty of other parties and candidates to choose from.

Dnevni list: What was the election campaign like in your opinion? Dirty, "mean", bad, negative...? Why are nationalist topics still dominant?

Valentin Inzko: Nationalism and ethnic-based questions are used by political elites to divert attention from real issues that are really important for the citizens: jobs, salaries, roads and hospitals, a system free of corruption and organized crime. And they use nationalism to motivate voters to vote for their party and its individual candidates, on the argument that they will protect "their own". I sometimes wonder who the people needed to be protected from: other ethnic groups or their own politicians.

Another real issue that went completely unaddressed in the campaign is the large-scale emigration of young and talented people from Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is a clear failure of the political establishment that the country is emptying, that the best and the brightest are leaving. It happens because the elites aren't focused on making this is a functional society and economy where citizens can aspire to meet their full potential. The politicians care for themselves more than the

people, although they would never admit that, especially before the elections.

The people should really think about these issues in the election period.

Dnevni list: Various suspicions have been raised concerning the regularity of the election process. What can you say about that? Obviously, the institutions have not done their job well. Perhaps the issue of their own accountability could be raised?

Valentin Inzko: The International Community is very much aware of this information. We hear all sorts of things from all parts of the country and abroad, and we share it within the International Community and with competent International organizations. I think we are all aware there need to be some consequences for such a behavior.

It all starts with the integrity of each individual voter not to be bribed and manipulated by political parties and individuals, but to report the misconduct. They should not be afraid as there is nothing to be afraid of. The Elections are a day when the people can put politicians out of a job. Not vice versa.

Dnevni list: Is there room for concern that a political crisis might appear after the election? What will happen after October 7? The Election Law issue has not been resolved; how are the results going to be implemented? We have heard that the international community will impose a solution?

Valentin Inzko: At this point the priority is for the elections to take place in a free and fair manner, and for citizens to exercise their democratic right. Election results need to be implemented swiftly. No political party has the right to block the implementation of election results simply because they are not happy with the outcome.

Dnevni list: What will BiH's future look like considering the very negative rhetoric used by the key political actors in BiH, but also the situation in the region?

Valentin Inzko: The situation in BiH mostly, but not entirely, depends on the behavior of the politicians. Essentially, the choice is simple. Some politicians can continue with nationalism, blockades and everything else that goes on behind the scenes, which will result in continuous political instability, a poor economy, organized crime and corruption, and will force their people to leave the country. Or they can decide to try to change things for the better, to focus on issues that will bring people a better life and keep them in the country.

Dnevni list: Milorad Dodik is accusing you of interfering with the election? You say you have not intervened enough, and should have intervened more...

Valentin Inzko: I knew this part of my statement will make it into the headline. My full answer was the following: "Being somewhat ironic, I am afraid that the International Community has not intervened enough. We should have been more insistent when it comes to ballot scanning and other technical improvements that would help ensure a free and fair election."

Such ungrounded claims and constant conspiracy theories by some BiH politicians are a part of a long-term political strategy. Some politicians want to present themselves as defenders of their constituent people and their entity, and as victims of the International Community. They benefit from that at the elections and privately.

There are several reasons they are attacking the International Community without any cause. When it comes to the RS, the current President wants to cover up the fact that he was once a very constructive partner of the International Community. He once also admitted that genocide was committed. Now he claims

Srebrenica was fabricated by the Americans. That is repulsive.

Secondly, they use this kind of rhetoric to divert attention from issues that are really important to the citizens: jobs, healthcare, roads, fight against corruption. They would never admit that their entity is in poor condition because of their bad policies. And even if I am wrong, people still very clearly express their dissatisfaction by leaving the country.

The International Community wants to be a partner to this country. We want to help this country become a functioning, prosperous state. But, on the other hand, we cannot allow some irresponsible politicians to undermine all the positive things that were created after the war.

Dnevni list: Have you noticed that in this election campaign there has absolutely not been a single face-to-face debate between key rivals? What kind of democracy is this?

Valentin Inzko: You make an interesting observation. I had hoped that more face-to-face debates would have taken place in the last week before the elections. I also hoped that the campaign would focus on economy, fight against organized crime and corruption, welfare issues, emigration from BiH, but unfortunately – that was not the case.

Dnevni list: Do you have a message for BiH politicians? One they will take seriously?

Valentin Inzko: My message to the politicians is to start taking the people seriously. All the citizens of BiH are tired of divisive issues and hearing excuses for why problems that governments address in other countries are impossible to fix in Bosnia and Herzegovina. For every problem there is a solution. This is how people operate in organizing their own lives and it's how they want elected officials to operate in leading the country.

I would like to conclude with a message for the citizens: Use

your democratic right and vote. Use this right with pride and dignity. Do not allow your vote to be up for sale or manipulation. Do not be afraid to choose those who can provide you with a better life. Get out and vote. Otherwise, others will decide about your destiny.