Interview: Carlos Westendorp, the High Representative in BiH”Sanctions to Croatia”

SANCTIONS TO CROATIA
A big flag of Bosnia and Herzegovina from the right hand side of the desk, and a pile of neatly filed papers are first thing that you notice in the big office of the High Representative for BiH, Spanish diplomat and a convinced socialist, Carlos Westendorp. Every conversation with him is a new pleasure, for he is characterised by unconventionality and openness.

The man that often takes the role of the one who decides about this country seems extremely well intentioned.

“Disposition of the International Community is not very inclined to Croatia – It is clear that operation of destabilisation of the Banja Luka leading structure is in progress, in which President Milosevic also takes part – Actions against those who obstruct the peace agreement will keep to be taking – I do all that I can to pursue the International Community that Karadzic must face the Hague Tribunal – If Krajisnik wants to speak to me he has to come to Sarajevo – I think that idea about seven-member composition of the Presidency has its advantagesBy Sead Numanovic

PROBLEMS WITH CROATIA

Some Western news agencies brought stories that sanctions are getting dangerously close to Croatia. They also quoted your speech from Banja Luka. What is it all about? Does Croatia face the sanctions?

I did not mention sanctions only yesterday. I also spoke about it a month ago in Brussels at the conference of the Steering Board for the DPA implementation. Both, Croatia and Yugoslavia

have their responsibilities when it comes to BiH. Being co-signers of Dayton, each of them is responsible for certain areas. If they do not succeed in fulfilling these obligations, they will have to face the consequences. Of course, I am not the one who imposes sanctions. I can recommend them. But I can tell you that disposition of the International Community is not inclined to Croatia. Croatia has to co-operate in several aspects, and one of the most important is co-operation on return. I must say that the speech of Croatian Minister Granic in Banja Luka was disappointing. It was full of conditions and hypothesis when it comes to return. Therefore the Steering Board, here on Wednesday, April 29 decided to suspend its participation at the conference, which is supposed, do be organised by Croatian authorities. For now, there will be no Donors' conference until clear signals are shown that Croatia co-operates fulfils its obligations. This is the first step, although we have other possibilities. But this is not the only problem. This new idea about revision of Dayton through "persistent cantonisation" or about "three entities" is something that is opposite Dayton and it represents an attempt of its undermining. Unfortunately, there are more examples. I hope Croatia will co-operate with the IC, if not, we will have to take the necessary measures.

It seems this decisiveness is surprising. It is not anything new that the Croatian authorities do not want to co-operate, but what is new, it is this readiness for sanctions to start working.

It is nothing new. In some other circumstances Croatian authorities were helping us, like last year when the threat of election boycotts existed. But now, lot of things happened in such a short time, starting with the recent speech by Franjo Tudjman at the HDZ Congress in Zagreb. Let's take demilitarisation for example. Basically this is not a bad idea, but as a possibility of disarming the whole region. If opposite, who will guarantee the safety to demilitarised

Bosnia, if the same is not happening with Croatia and Yugoslavia.

What do you think about achievements of the Banja Luka conference?

It was a good conference in any case. Now it has to be implemented. This is obligation of Croatia, FR Yugoslavia and authorities of Republic of Srpska and the Federation. Everything here is a sort of a puzzle. You cannot solve one matter without starting another. My first assessment is that the conference was successful. We had clear promises of the Prime Minister Dodik.

EAST BOSNIA

Still, is there something missing in this puzzle? At the Banja Luka conference, there was no discussion about return to Eastern Bosnia. Why?

Return is in regard with all and every part of the RS. Anybody who wants it can return, not only Banja Luka or Prijedor, but also Bosanski Brod and Doboj… Of course, there are places where return is more difficult, where more trust is needed, but there are places in the RS where the people can return immediately.

It is not a surprise that Easter Bosnia was not mentioned as an area where people should return. At this point, it is the strongest stand of the hard-liners. They are severely attacking the authorities led by Plavsic and Dodik. Are you afraid for the fate of the current authorities in the Serb entity? Even more when President Milosevic is also taking part in it.

It is clear that operation of destabilisation of the current leadership in Banja Luka is in progress. Milosevic takes part in it because he wants to show he is important and that he can help, but also to hinder in some processes. His actions are

aimed to return the former government to the authorities, because they feel they are losing power, which is true. Besides, the people understand that yesterday's leadership was not responsible towards them, and they can see that the situation is improving, slowly but surely. True, the ordinary people of eastern part of the RS are not feeling it yet, because it is under control of the SDS and Radicals. But let me conclude. I am not afraid for Dodik's fate, although he has lot of problems. Of course, I do not neglect this drama which unfolds as upon a scenario of Hitchkock films, in which there are dramatic attempts to ensure the majority in order to bring Dodik's Government down. Those Buha's ideas to frighten are something which is a typical style of work of radical elements. They only know how to endanger and threat. This has to stop!

How? The International Community works only as the fire department.

President of the Parliament, Dragan Kalinic must firstly act in accordance with regulations. If he is calling a session of the Parliament, he has to consult about it with all parties that this body consists, especially those who are in the pro-Government coalition. This also includes parties whose representatives are Bosniaks and Croats. In the recent discussion I have had with RS Parliament President, Kalinic I especially stressed this. I hope he will accept it.

THE ROLE OF VOTER

It is because of the future, that I have to ask you how do you comment the possibility to exclude whole parties from the election process, those who are known by radical standouts and actions?

I do not attend to disqualify all political parties in this country, although I should remove many. But actions will keep be taking against those who are obstructing the peace

agreement. I already showed in what way, only in rather limited number. My idea is that voters should make changes, and not that we impose them.

Do you intend to increase the number of those who you dismissed from duty for non co-operation with the IC?

We are not here to do everything necessary. We came here as an attempt to stop the war and we succeeded in it. Now it is up to the people here to call for responsibility of those who are trying to destabilise this country. It is all like in a family. Father or mother, it depends who is the head of the family, cannot be responsible for every move made by some of the family members.

“GODFATHER” – “EL PADRINO”

You recently stated that indicted war criminal Karadzic will be arrested within a month. The deadline seems to be expired and “pater familias” is still free and he has not so insignificant influence on the political situation.

I would not say Karadzic is “pater familias”. More like “Godfather” – “el Padrino”. I did not say Karadzic will be arrested, but should be arrested within this deadline. It was about some 15 days ago and I thought it might happen. Karadzic enjoys less and less protection, sources of his power are drying, he does not have the control over the police any longer, and I sincerely believe that there is no other way out for him except to go to the Hague. Imagine what would happen if he would show up before the Tribunal and had a trial. This would be the first world’s event. Every television would want to transmit it and he would have such big audience to present his defence. He would become popular just as any other movie star in the World. I do not doubt it would be a hit and that by selling the rights for broadcast he could become the richest man in the World. But, if he is not reasonable enough to surrender by himself, then it is the obligation of the IC

to apprehend him to justice.

Is there readiness for this in the IC?

I am doing all that I can to pursue the IC that Karadzic must face the Hague Tribunal. Without this, there will be no normal life in this country. With Karadzic free, collective guilt on the people will remain for quite a long time. Of course, Karadzic is not the only one, who should be apprehended, but he symbolises the collective guilt, and simultaneously, he destabilises situation in the RS. With him free, no government can be stabile. Also, with him free, the credibility of our actions here is also decreasing. With these, very good reasons, I am trying to pursued the people that are able to conduct his arrest, to do this.

And what do they say?

They say I'm right and they are very secretly considering this. I hope they will bring the decision soon. I hope. Though I don't know when this might happen. It is logical that a month is enough. It is necessary to prevent the planning the whole time, and elections are approaching.

Karadzic is not the only one who is poisoning the atmosphere in BiH. The whole clique is around him -Krajisnik, Buha, Kalinic…

I do not co-operate with Krajisnik any longer. I don't go to Pale. If Krajisnik wants to speak to me he has to come to Sarajevo. Since he would not accept this, we do not communicate. But he is a BiH Presidency member, and in this position he is the legitimate authority, though I don't trust him. I think the people should not elect him when the time comes. If he is going to block the processes in the Presidency, I will consider the possibility to replace him. We don't need Krajisnik ever and I don't count him in the building of this state. Buha is the SDS President, and fortunately, I don't have to co-operate with him. There are

some other people, who must talk to him, although they don't like him, but they keep doing this until his position and his party is legal. It is my pleasure that I don't have to meet with him. When it comes to Kalinic, he is the President of the RS Parliament and a man you can talk to. Let me tell you something, I am very interested to assure stability of the RS Government. I think it is good for the entity, but also for us. Therefore I will do everything to prevent destabilisation of this Government. And I assure you; I can do a lot.

THE SWISS SYSTEM

Bosnian media are speculating about the possibility of election of seven instead of three Presidency members. What do you think about this?

I discussed this for the first time on Wednesday with Haris Silajdzic who is a very good man, very hard working person and I am sure he wishes the best for this country. Always when we talk about it, I say to him that I will do all that I can in this sense, within the Dayton framework. Such idea reminds me a little of the Swiss system, though I did not consider it more detailed. I think that idea about seven-member composition of the BiH Presidency has its advantages. It brings some new categories into the political life of Bosnia and degrades the original idea about ethnic basis of this country, which is very wrong establishment, it is another nationalists' invention. It is clear that "constitutive nations" can have representatives who are less hard-liners and more moderators, but "others" would also be represented. If I say that seven-member model of the Presidency has advantages, this does not mean I have said it is the solution for this country. It would automatically bring the question who is the president of this presidency, the right of veto of different members… These matters must be solved within the system, which in this moment, I would describe only as "very interesting" and I would not be afraid if mechanisms of changes would move, to change the current procedure regulated by the BiH

Constitution. It has to be clearly said, the current system is not good and a better solution is necessary. I don't think such changes can occur before the forthcoming elections> But in the Permanent Law on Elections, this new system should be applied. I expect passing of this law by the end of the year.

PLURALISM IN THE RS

In figures, there is more pluralism in the RS than in the Federation. Simply, mathematically, there are more parties back there than in this area. This is a good sign for democracy, though it does not automatically means there is more democracy back there than here. Composition of the RS is such that it is dominated by a single nation. Still, one thing is clear, the monopoly of one party – the SDS is finished. It is different in the Federation, because Croats must co-operate with Bosniaks and vice versa, and I am encouraging the opposition to influence on reduction of power of dominant parties. Power of the opposition is limited here because of many factors. The SDA is not only a political party, but also a movement, regime, the people who are its members are privileged compared to others and it can be seen on the example of judges, finding a job, apartment… The leading parties are in control of media. Look at the BiH TV. It is not true this house is free. It is much, much better than SRT three moths ago, but BiH TV is not following the international standards and hence it has to be restructured in order to give the same possibilities for all political options. Therefore I will still be criticised by sides who have monopoly. I would like if the leading parties were more democratic in their internal relations. But they are not. I think democratisation would help them a lot, as well as better competition.

UNIFICATION OF SOCIAL-DEMOCRATS

What is your opinion why there was no unification of social democrats?

I tried very hard to unite social democratic parties in BiH,

as well as liberal ones, regardless to the cases when there was only one man that creates the whole party, and I am also ready to assist improvement and closeness of parties with demo-religious orientation, the SDA and the HDZ, for example. Problems with social democrats unification are complicated and certain persons and their relations have very strong place there. I like both Beslagic and Lagumdzija very much. This first one has rather limited power that spreads to one area, while the other one has shattered power. I think it would be very good to create an alliance without losing identities of parties and I have not quit this idea.

FERHADIJA

I do not want to give another advertisement to the Banja Luka mayor and to bring him votes for the next elections. I did not quit the building of Ferhadija, and currently, I am considering all possible legal ways that would bring to this not only to reconstruct this one, but also all other demolished religious facilities demolished during the war. This is a reconstruction of not only the religious facilities, but also the reconciliation between the people.