

Interview: Christian Schwarz-Schilling, High Representative for BiH: “I’ll draw on my powers over ICTY issues”

From our permanent correspondent – SARAJEVO

WITH THE ARRIVAL of Christian Schwarz-Schilling as the High Representative of the International Community to Bosnia and Herzegovina, the assumption was that the draconian “Bonn powers” will become a part of BiHs history. However, after the German political veteran visited Brussels the threat of the powers, which allow for the imposition of laws, removals of politicians, and imposition of bans on engagement in public offices, has re-emerged.

In an interview for “Novosti”, Christian Schwarz-Schilling says that there will be a let-up, or that local politicians can relax:

If the BiH institutions do not work in a proper way there are [two] instances where I’d use these powers to the full extent. First, if someone threatens peace in the state, and secondly, if the BiH institutions do not co-operate with the Hague tribunal. Most probably I will not use them when it comes to legislation, administration and tasks in the fight against corruption and the bureaucracy. I will surely not issue decrees to make the State function better while local politicians sit idle.

Vecernje Novosti: What are your most important tasks in BiH?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: BiH must become a normal state, which means that it must take full responsibility for the success of the Stabilization and Association negotiations. My task at this juncture is one of mediator and an advisor, if possible, to both sides. Both to the local [BiH] government, but also to the European Commission.

Vecernje Novosti: And internally?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: Partners from the domestic political scene must reach a consensus on what they have to do. If they use the constitution to obstruct in such a way that it becomes an obstacle to reform, then BiH will be a long way from a normal state.

All the three peoples must identify what their common goals are, where the possibilities lie and what the solutions are – and they must work together. Perhaps it would be easier with a new constitution; but the constitution is not the main issue. A lot can be achieved with a change of mentality and with good will.

Vecernje Novosti: Initiatives come on an almost daily basis from the Federation of BiH to rearrange the Republika Srpska according to wishes of officials in Sarajevo, but none of these initiatives mentions or takes into account the will of official Banja Luka, or RS citizens.

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: I think that both entities should have very close communication and contacts, they should communicate and discuss their common goals daily. Take for example the certification of products.

There is a need to adjust to one another during the Stabilization and Association negotiations.

It is necessary for the same conditions for work to exist throughout the country. If someone wishes to develop in a particular way, based on a specific situation, and if the

citizens wish that as well, well then that is not a problem for me. Problems or conflict exist only when you look backwards. Look towards the future and you'll see that there are many things that connect.

Vecernje Novosti: How do you comment on the possibility that, should Kosovo and Metohija become independent, the same right should be granted to Republika Srpska as well?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: That is a foolishness! It is nonsense. The history, the situation in Dayton, and after Dayton, is totally different. There is no common ground for such perceptions.

MUJAHEDINS

Vecernje Novosti: In a recent INTERVIEW for Munich's "Die Deutsche Zeitung" you negated the role of ten thousand mujahedins who fought in BiH.

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: I do not think that we should make such general assessments, or condemn groups of people. I cannot say that all foreign soldiers who fought in BiH are Al Quaida members. Now there are very few foreign citizens in BiH. But the actions of each of these individuals should be established; for those who fought on other sides to see if they have acted in a criminal way. Personally, I do not see that the danger of terrorism in BiH is any greater than in other parts of the world – terrorists were discovered in Berlin and Hamburg, yet there is no suggestion that Germany supports terrorism.