

Interview: Christian Schwarz-Schilling, High Representative for BiH: “The Dayton Agreement Protects Borders”

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In the view of Schwartz-Schilling, the International Community's High Representative for BiH, the statement made by RS Prime Minister, Milorad Dodik, that everyone should be given the right of self-determination, including RS, does not cause even the slightest dilemma:

– Republika Srpska is neither Kosovo nor Montenegro. The referendum in Montenegro was a special case in accordance with the Constitution of former Yugoslavia. There is no historic Republika Srpska, which would be a basic precondition for its secession. Hence, both the outcome of the referendum in Montenegro and a final decision on the status of Kosovo cannot have any influence on the situation in BiH. This state was agreed, finally, in Dayton. Its borders are internationally recognized and there are no open-ended issues. Simply, this is not related to BiH in any way, said Christian Schwartz-Schilling in his interview for “Novosti”.

Vecernje novosti: Many foreign media report that the referendum in Montenegro may be used as a model for the independence of Basque country, Catalonia, Southern Osetia, etc. There is an element of fear, even in big and organized countries, and you are saying this will not have any influence in this quite unstable region...

– People have lived together in this region for centuries. In the past, divisions occurred and wars were waged as a result of the influence of foreign powers such as Russia , the Ottoman Empire, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while the late twentieth century saw an attempt at creating new ethnic order in the region. No one in the international community supported the policy of ethnic cleansing, there is no discussion about that. On the other hand, when we speak of old European states, for instance Spain , problems with provinces have been going on for centuries. It is very important for this region that we live in an era of democracy. The state and authorities are built bottom-up process rather than top-down, as was the case with the former Yugoslavia . Citizens have the opportunity to elect those who will govern them, but they cannot say: “I don’t want this man to live here!” Everyone has to coexist with one another.

Vecernje novosti: The Sarajevo press, for the first time, openly addressed the issue of crimes organized against Serbs in the capital of BiH. Families of victims are asking for the establishment of a Commission to investigate the suffering of Serbs missing from Sarajevo . Will you support the establishment of this commission?

– There are 16 decisions of the Human Rights Commission of Constitutional Court of BiH, which direct the responsible bodies of the Federation of BiH and Republika Srpska to deal with the problem of finding missing persons, but all of them have been ignored so far. All these decisions must be complied with and fully implemented regardless of the ethnic and religious background of victims or families. I will personally put pressure on those institutions that turn a deaf ear to requests of the Human Rights Commission.

Vecernje novosti: **Vecernje novosti:** Police reform is another great political problem in BiH. Is it possible to make a step forward and build a stable BiH by ignoring the will of Serb representatives and their expressed wish for the survival of

RS Police?

– It is not about ignoring the positions of Serb representatives, but the lack of constructive proposals. In general, the Serb side agrees with three EC principles that were agreed upon in October 2005, but they refuse this organization. Although there are still some inconsistencies in its position, the RS realises that it can not be an obstacle to SAA negotiations. I believe that a much needed compromise will be reached soon.

Vecernje novosti: Does this mean the survival of RS Police in the future organization?

– This is not a question of the survival of RS Police. This entity has to fulfil everything that is decided at the (higher) state level. Legislation and budget come from the state level, and this is clear to the RS Prime Minister, Milorad Dodik. With regard to the command and hierarchy, it is an issue to be negotiated. The Directorate for Police Reform is not limiting the units and regions, but is trying to do what is in the best interest of this country by using the experience of other countries.

Vecernje novosti: Why is it not possible then for RS Police to remain on the regional level in BiH?

– There is also the issue of the size of the regions. Simply put, the police are not an instrument for the abolishment of entities. This can not be done with the help of police reform. On the other hand, police reform is not meant to strengthen the entities either. This country is one country, and its regions have to be organized in a rational manner in order for the police to be efficient. Regrettably, there is a struggle between two sides behind the scenes. One of them wants to weaken the entities, and the other one wants to strengthen them. This has nothing to do with the creation of quality police force.

CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGES WILL TAKE PLACE

Vecernje novosti: You advocate the idea that domestic politicians should take on responsibility. How can this happen when the package of constitutional changes has been rejected by the BiH Parliament?

– Most delegates were in favour of constitutional reform, and the same goes for the majority of citizens. Unfortunately, two more votes were needed for the adoption of the package. However, activities on constitutional reform will continue after the elections. Those who voted against constitutional reform wasted one or two years – time which could have been used for the development of this country – because they failed to adopt a pragmatic and realistic political position. They have to bear consequences before the citizens for halting the progress due to their unrealistic requests.

SCHILLING MEETS WITH THE SERBIAN OFFICIALS

The Respect For Entities

Christian Schwartz-Schilling had separate meetings in Belgrade with the President and Prime Minister of Serbia, Boris Tadic and Vojislav Kostunica, and with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Serbia & Montenegro, Vuk Draskovic about relations between Serbia and BiH, and about the overall situation in the region.

– Good relations in the region, especially between Serbia and BiH, are one of the priorities of policy in Belgrade, said President Tadic to the High Representative. He also mentioned that all open and disputed issues had to be resolved through dialogue. Once again, it was reiterated that the principle of consensus of all three equal peoples in BiH was of crucial importance for the European future of BiH, as well as for stability in the region. The Serbian Prime Minister, Vojislav Kostunica reminded the High Representative for BiH about the importance of preserving and complying with the

Dayton Agreement, which guarantees stability in BiH. He also added that entities formed the basis of this agreement. The High Representative also met yesterday with the Serbian Patriarch Pavle.