Interview: Christian Schwarz-Schilling, High Representative for BiH: “The Last Bosnian Viceroy”

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German Discipline in the Country of Chaos

CHRISTIAN SCHWARZ-SCHILLING (76), the new and the last High Representative of the International Community for BiH, who succeed the controversial Lord Paddy Ashdown on 31 January 2006 , explains his ambitious plan for political and economical reforms in the country

Christian Schwarz-Schilling took over the function of High Representative for BiH on 31 January this year. He is the fifth international governor of BiH since the Dayton Agreement was signed, and he succeeded Lord Paddy Ashdown, the controversial British politician, who will be remembered by the napkin, on which Franjo Tudjman sketched him a division of Bosnia , rather than by a successful mandate in this country.

The new High Representative, older than all the previous ones (he was preceded by Carl Bildt, Carlos Westendorp, Wolfgang Petritsch, and Paddy Ashdown), was born in Innsbruck in 1930. He studied in Munich and after that he led a small private company for 25 years, which was specialized in battery production and electronic equipment. In his thirties, he joined the German conservatives, the CDU party. In 1976 he was elected to the Parliament. For 10 years he held the office of Minister for Post and Telecommunications in the conservative German Government (between 1982-1992), and was a member of

Parliament up to 2002. He resigned from his Ministerial office because of the war in ex-Yugoslavia, expressing his bitterness and protest against the inability of the German and other governments in Europe to stop the war. After leaving the government, he immediately became involved in sending and delivering humanitarian aid and became the international mediator in Bosnia and Herzegovina . He held that office becoming High Representative. He often points out that his own life story influenced his affection for Bosnia and Herzegovina . His mother, of Polish origin herself, survived Nazi Germany just because she had her birth certificate faked on time.

"I know the crimes the Nazis committed, and then in 1992, I heard and saw how children had been killed in front of their parents, women raped, people were suffering in BiH, and no one was reacting. Despite the commitment that was made after the Second World War, that something like that would never happen again. That made me resign from the Government at that time, and devote myself to assisting Bosnia and Herzegovina ," emphasizes the new High Representative. Contrary to the practice so far, Schwarz-Schilling frankly admits that he lobbied to be nominated by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel as the German candidate to go to Sarajevo .

Hunting for Karadzic and Mladic

We Will Stop Those Who Are Supporting War Criminals

Globus: How do you think the death of Slobodan Milosevic will affect political processes in BiH, the reconciliation process itself?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: This will certainly accelerate it. The most important thing now is to catch those who should already have been in The Hague , but they are not.

Globus: When will Karadzic and Mladic be arrested? You set the deadline for 2007. Is it realistic since they have been at large for 10 years now?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: We will deal with that issue more than ever. Our focus on Karadzic and Mladic is strong, stronger than before, because they have to be arrested finally. If they did not have a network of supporters, they would already be in The Hague .

Globus: Are you ready to use all of your powers to destroy the support network in BiH?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: Of course, certain actions have already been taken, and I will not hesitate, if necessary, to take even more concrete steps to stop funds flowing. The space for their arrest is open now, and we have to act very fast and efficiently.

Jelavic and Covic

Globus: Recently, the Croatian media published a photo of the former HDZ president Ante Jelavic, who was convicted in Sarajevo but who fled to Croatia and is now hiding there. In your opinion, what should Croatia do? Although they cannot extradite him to BiH, because he has Croatian citizenship, should they at least instigate an investigation into his allegedly fraudulent financial dealings?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: I do not want to comment on photographs in the papers or what Croatia can do in that case. It is a very specific case and for that reason I do not want to say anything about it.

Globus: Having in mind that you allowed some persons who were removed from their positions for various reasons to go back into political life in BiH, is there a chance that the

president of the BiH HDZ Dragan Covic could be amnestied in the same way?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: That too is a very specific problem and until some things have changed I do not want to comment on the Covic case.

Trade Zone

Globus: Were you the initiator of the idea of a West Balkans trade zone that would include the countries of former Yugoslavia, without Slovenia but with Albania?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: No, not at all, that has generally been misrepresented. I have never spoken about a single market of the West Balkans or any close ties among the states. There was only talk about the way the European market could function in this region. It was about strengthening communication among these countries and there is nothing bad in that. Earlier there were good trade relations since these countries lived in the same union, but it is a pity not to use those potentials. Trade between the countries should be strengthened not because some international dictator would want that but because that is good for business and for the subsequent integration of these countries in the EU.

Globus: Croatia sees such proposals as an attack on individual accession to the EU. Do you agree with the proposal of the Croatian Prime Minister that any such trade communication be carried out through the existing CEFTA, and not in any new economic associations?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: Yes, that is a good idea, because CEFTA has existed for many years. As countries access the EU, they leave CEFTA, and countries that have just started joining CEFTA can develop their economic capacities. That is a good way forward and it means that there is a preliminary phase

that will make – to be honest – a very difficult adjustment to the European market easier. Croatia 's reaction, that this is about building strong ties among the countries of former Yugoslavia , is irrational, because nobody wanted that. That is not a political but an exclusively economic issue. And the question of economy and its strengthening is my strongest priority in this mandate.

Impossible Comparisons

Globus: As it becomes more and more probable that Kosovo will become independent, there is more and more talk in Serbia that Republika Srpska should then join Serbia. These statements come from radicals who have the voters' strong support. Are you worried by such statements?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: That is nonsense. No accession to Serbia is possible nor has that ever been an option. What goes on in Kosovo has nothing to do with Republika Srpska. The International Community will by no means allow that, and no comparisons can be made there. What happens to Kosovo will in no way affect BiH, the Dayton Agreement or the RS. According to what I know, not even the people in Banja Luka , a large majority of them, are of the opinion that they should join Serbia . If Serbia itself does not speed up its reforms and European integration, it could easily happen that there develops a large gap, huge differences in comparison to the other countries of the region, and here I mean BiH too. For many it will then be better to live in BiH than in Serbia . That is the real danger, and by no means accession or anything like that.

Globus: Is it possible at all to create a single, functional BiH, which is one of your tasks, as long as Republika Srpska exists?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: Some decisions in the Dayton

Agreement, including the one on the creation of Republika Srpska, may not have been wise or best, but their intention was to stop the war. At that time it was not possible to think much about the future and the processes to follow, because the priority was clear – stop the bloodshed. We have succeeded in that, but some decisions could not be wise in the long run. We have made some wrong estimates, but that's that now. The dice was cast, things were decided, and we cannot go back to the past. No, it is not good to be a slave to the prejudice that because of the existence of two Entities BiH cannot live as a state. It is up to the people, the institutions, and the whole political system, to strengthen that process. Once political and economic reforms are implemented and people see it as something positive in their own lives, the issue of the Entities will become a side issue. It is not good to be a slave to the Entities' issue, we should only think about whether local authorities function and whether they serve the people or not. Everything else is a matter of ideology.

Little Time for Big Plans:

One-Year Mandate

Globus: What are the main challenges of your mandate, which problems will be the hardest to solve in BiH?

Christian Schwarz-Schilling: I am a very ambitious person, but I am aware of the fact that I do not have a lot of time. Next year the position of the High Representative will cease to exist and it will be replaced by the position of the EU representative. So I am aware that I only have a year and in that period I have to implement all my ambitious ideas. And as you know, all such plans in Bosnia are often very complicated to implement, in particular since this is an election year in this country. That will be the biggest democracy test in BiH. Then there is constitutional change,

and also the start of negotiations with the EU on the first steps towards contractual relations that would bring BiH closer to European integration processes. That is in the interest of this country. Of course, I will remain here after the position of the High Representative ceases to exist and I will be the European envoy, but my powers will be quite different from the ones I have now. The strong Bonn Powers that the High Representative has had so far will become a matter of the past, and that means that it will not be possible to impose some positive reforms.