Interview: Hanns H. Schumacher, Senior Deputy HR”Jelavic is like Dodik, a Man of Action”

Jelavic is like Dodik, a Man of Action

New passports from June 1 after all – Appeal to Sarajevo City Council to rename the square at Marijin Dvor, which cannot be called Trg Republike (the Republic Square) – Parliament and the Presidency at the Parliament building only after elections The HR deputy stated yesterday for Oslobodjenje that the issuing of new passports will begin from July 1 as announced, although the cover page of the Federation passport contains a “minor error” which had been noticed as early as last Thursday.

“The passport cover read “Federacija Bosna I Hercegovina” instead of “Federacija Bosne I Hercegovine,” but this matter has been resolved with the German Company Bundesdruckerei, so there will be no new expense,” said Ambassador Hanns Schumacher.

How did it happen?

Hanns Schumacher: It is ridiculous that in a country where the main sentence is “no problem”, problems appear at the every single step. Three ministers for civilian affairs, Spasoje Albijanic and his deputies Milan Krizanovic and Nudzeim Recica, approved the title “Federacija Bosna I Hercegovina” during the checking of printing. There are 20,000 passports (10,000 of each version for the Federation). These 20,000 will be destroyed. This could have happened due to the very complicated process of manufacturing. In our negotiations with Bundesdruckerei we have found a neutral solution, which will

not postpone the issuing of passports, after the computer station in Sarajevo is installed in Banja Luka and Sarajevo and after the staff for this work is trained. The German company will not demand payment of any additional expenses.

Having in mind the situation with registration plates (several postponements), can you be sure when claiming that the issuing of passports will begin as scheduled?

Hanns Schumacher: Firstly, I can certainly say that we will definitely not create chaos by issuing the new passports, as it was during the issuing of the registration plates. We would not even have started the presentation if we were not sure that BiH citizens would be able to obtain the new passport. We recommended Peace Implementation Council members to announce former passports invalid as of December 31, 1998. I think that the Law on Travelling Documents is being implemented properly so far, and I think ministers Albijanic, Krizanovic and Recica are doing their work right. I don’t see such a problem here as we have had with the registration plates.

Is there going to be the State Coat of Arms on the passport cover?

Hanns Schumacher: That is a matter that I will leave for the Council of Ministers. It is their responsibility and we have already written to them that they should bear in mind the new Law on Coat of Arms, imposed by Carlos Westendorp, and that we wish to meet them and Mladen Kolobaric as the designer of the Coat of Arms. The purpose of the meeting is to see if the Coat of Arms will be put in the background during the next passport delivery. There is no hurry now and this can be negotiated.

When will the joint institutions move to the former Parliament building at Marijin Dvor?

Hanns Schumacher: We have the general decision of Carlos Westendorp, which favours the majority decision of the BiH Presidency, but against the Serb member, that the Parliament

building at Marijin Dvor should be the place for all joint institutions. However, it will take two or three years in order to establish this process. We have decided to create special security in the administrative zone of Marijin Dvor complex where the joint institutions will be located.

Who is going to move in first?

Hanns Schumacher: The Council of Ministers is the first joint institution to move in, along with all joint services, and the first session of the Council is scheduled to take place in this building on June 17. The European Commission and the World Bank provided the revenues and five offices on the first floor are completely reconstructed. There are 46 offices and three conference rooms available currently. Out of this, five offices and one conference room will be fully operational by June 1. Chiefs of joint services departments will be able to move into these rooms, along with the International Administrator and Councillor of the CoM, Mr. Gualtieri, a Canadian. He will work with the Council in order to improve the services of this body. We hope to be able to open the building by June 15, which means that we will put the joint BiH flag above the entrance. I call on Sarajevo City Council to rename the square, which cannot be called “Republic Square”. The City Council has to find a new, appropriate name.

What about other offices?

Hanns Schumacher: Other offices and conference rooms will be fully equipped by the end of August. We expect the Parliament and the Presidency to move from the Museum to the building of the former RBiH Parliament.

During 1996, when Michael Steiner was visiting locations with the Presidency members, Momcilo Krajicnik had instructions not to even overview the BiH Parliament building. What is his standpoint now?

Hanns Schumacher: I work together with a working group,

consisting of three presidents' representatives. Several days ago we carried out an inspection, in the presence of Mr. Ninkovic, representative of Momcilo Krajisnik, and so far I have received positive answers.

Does the Serb side agree with moving into this building?

Hanns Schumacher: I do not have a formal answer yet, but we are continuing to work within this working group. In any case, we passed the decision that this will be the former Parliament building. The huge investment of the European Union and the World Bank must also be taken into consideration, which is about 5 million DEM.

Krajisnik and Serb representatives in the Parliament also disagree with the Coat of Arms design?

Hanns Schumacher: We do not care for that at all. The High Representative took the decision to apply the Law on Coat of Arms, and the flag is already in use. I have to say it is not a very mature standpoint, especially of the SDS members in the BiH Parliament, that they do not adopt these symbols. But we decided to go with this process to the end. I trust it will be finished by the end of the year, when we will also have the new BiH anthem.

How does the refugee return process progress?

Hanns Schumacher: This process is not going so well. We have still not achieved the target number of returns that we established in the Sarajevo Declaration and at the Banja Luka conference. Political pressure is necessary. I see that the Commission for Apartments in Sarajevo has begun to work seriously, and pressure of the International Community is present in both entities. At the next session of the Peace Implementation Council to be held on June 9, I expect the passing of new measures for speeding up the return.

Dodik said he would allow refugee return, but we do not see

much of it?

Hanns Schumacher: I agree with you that we have not seen concrete action so far. But a number of municipalities in the RS have taken steps which you would not have believed possible several months ago. For example, Dodik has made the Plan of Return, and there is also a readiness of Modrica to co-operate with Gradacac in the two-way return. An important conference of mayors of 20 municipalities from eastern RS was held in Banja Luka recently. They are aware that reconstruction revenues will be allocated only in the case of progress in refugee return. We will have a little test during these summer months and we will see how many refugees return to the RS.

Could you explain a recent comparison you made in "Jutarnji List" regarding similarities between Milorad Dodik and the new HDZ President Ante Jelavic?

Hanns Schumacher: I did not say he was the new Croat Dodik. I met him once and I cannot make judgements about him. However, I left this meeting with very positive impressions, because Jelavic expressed assurance that he will be implementing the Dayton Agreement on behalf of the Croat side. The sentence that he used "I am a man of action, not of words," reminded me of a quite similar approach by Prime Minister Dodik. Those are really types of politicians that are in deficit here, politicians who are trying not to use many words, but to solve at least some of the problems, to act. We desperately need such politicians here.

Will the German Government allow 80,000 Bosnian refugees to return to Croatia, which bars the return of Croatian Serbs currently in the RS?

Hanns Schumacher: This is clearly opposite Dayton. It is not up to the German Government to decide whether and where the refugees will return. Dayton leaves the decision to the refugees themselves and they have to decide, not the

Government. The German Government will not take part in any dirty tricks taken by the Croatian Government. The refugees themselves will decide and I can surely state that no one in Germany will influence refugees to make such a decision. They have to decide where they will go by themselves. I have the impression that most of the refugees in Germany wish to return to their pre-war homes.

How do you comment on this whole fuss about registration plates?

Hanns Schumacher: The most important thing is that the issuing of registration plates is going on with no problems and this matter has been solved. I clearly challenge the incredible statement given by the BiH Federation Ministry of Internal Affairs representatives, in which they insinuated that OHR was responsible for postponing and that OHR decided which factory would produce the plates. This technical problem is solved and I am very grateful to the Prime Minister, Edhem Bicakcic, who is a man you can trust. The FERBA Company is the only one that fulfils the technical conditions, it was again given the order for producing the registration plates, and it will be paid for that. It is with great pleasure I received news that Prime Minister Bicakcic has started an investigation amongst Federal MUP officials. It is difficult to understand that someone from MUP had signed the contract with MMR Company from Gracanica, which was incapable of producing registration plates in accordance with certain technical standards within the scheduled term. There are at least seven witnesses to this claim, who inspected this company twice. This is the case, if necessary, for a criminal investigation which should prove who tried to bring in the company and make a profit even if it was not capable of fulfilling the technical standards.