

Interview: Valentin Inzko, EU Special Representative and High Representative in BiH

New High Representative of the International Community in BiH Valentin Inzko gave his first interview to a Serb newspaper «Novosti» only ten days after taking the office. The Austrian diplomat says, in fluent Serbian language, that he had only three hours to prepare for the post in BiH:

Valentin Inzko: Paddy Ashdown's preparation took a year, and Christian Swartz -Schilling's six months. Resignation of Miroslav Lajčák was completely unexpected and that is why we came into this situation.

Večernje novosti: Did you manage already to look into the situation in BiH and have you decided what your priorities are?

Valentin Inzko: The Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council in BiH made the plan for me. There is the Dayton Agreement, which had to be fully implemented, and my task is also approximation to the European Union.

Večernje novosti: To end the protectorate in BiH is necessary to meet five objectives and two conditions of which one seems to be completely unfeasible and that is – to achieve normal political situation...

Valentin Inzko: It is the matter of definition. There is no ideal country, myAustria is not ideal nor is Bosnia. The Peace Implementation Council comprises countries that are of the opinion that situation here is normal but also others which say that BiH is imperfect state. We will see what decision will be made in the end of June.

Večernje novosti: Is there a possibility to close the OHR then?

Valentin Inzko: Such decision may be passed in June and the OHR should be closed in next 12 months.

Večernje novosti: The biggest concern of local politician is –are you going to use the draconic “Bonn Powers”, are you going to dismiss?

Valentin Inzko: Talk is always about politicians. I would like to talk about accountability: if professor lectures poorly or a doctor performs wrong surgery, he is accountable. I will not hesitate to use “the Bonn Powers” but I would first use six steps to decision-making. The first is to listen, the second to have a talk, the third- to negotiate. The fourth is warning, that is “yellow card”, and the fifth to try to convince in four eyes. Only at the end I would reach for “the Bonn Powers” and remove a person.

Večernje novosti: Dismissal of RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik is desired in Sarajevo...

Valentin Inzko: When it comes to Mr. Dodik one should make distinction between what he talks and what he does. When he talks about the referendum that is rhetoric.

Večernje novosti: What does Dodik do?

Valentin Inzko: I am not a judge but he has done a lot in RS, economic-wise. But I will be able to give final appraisal no earlier than next week when I go to Banjaluka and see it for myself.

Večernje novosti: Economic situation in the Federation is worrisome, there is talk about bankruptcy...

Valentin Inzko: So I heard. I am sure that they would need to make some savings on salaries and projects. When you compare RS and the BiH Federation there are more financial reserves in RS and the situation is easier.

Večernje novosti: Dodik would say “Srpska is a better part of BiH”?

Valentin Inzko: Be my guest. I will agree if he has solid budget, if he has surplus in budget and no recession, I do not see a problem to congratulate him.

Večernje novosti: You announced that one of your tasks would be constitutional changes. Are they possible?

Valentin Inzko: BiH must bid goodbye to logic that there is a loser in every game. Make win-win a logical situation. If the state

is functional and cheaper, everyone wins. Let it be constitutional reforms which local politicians would implement on their own. That would be the best proof that political situation is stable.

Večernje novosti: Your predecessors claimed that there would be no abolition of the Entities, no creation of the new ones but no secession as well. Are these your guidelines, too?

Valentin Inzko: No one speaks about secession. Moscow supports integral RS in integral BiH. BiH as the state will get support to become a non-standing member of the UN SC as of 2010.

Večernje novosti: German Chancellor Angela Merkel stated that Western Balkan countries should wait on their accession to the EU. Does the region have the European perspective?

Valentin Inzko: There is the EU enlargement fatigue but it does not reflect mood of the majority. After the Czech Republic, Germany and Ireland endorse the Lisbon Treaty and the decision-making method is defined, it will become easier to enlarge the EU from 27 to 34 member states.

Večernje novosti: And at the end is it true that your salary is 23,000 Euros?

Valentin Inzko: I have not received my salary (laughs). If it is true that is great. I guess my salary is in line with some standards, same as Lajčak, Schwartz-Schilling and others. But I wish all Bosnians have this salary.

GREETINGS TO LJUBO TADIĆ

Valentin Inzko: I am supposed to visit Serbia in two-three weeks but, apart from formal meetings, I wish to visit father of Serbian President Boris Tadić. I know Ljubomir since 80s when I served in Belgrade. I visited him even when he was a dissident. I hear his health is not so good so I would like to ask you to give him my warm greetings.

BOSNIAN TALENTS

Večernje novosti: How long will foreign prosecutors continue to work in BiH?

Valentin Inzko: BiH has lot of talents and I believe it would be easy to find people to succeed foreign professionals. BiH has a football player Sead Ibišević. There are Nobel Prize winners

Ivo Andrić and Milan Prelog, then Nemanja Kusturica.

Večernje novosti: You mean- Emir?

Valentin Inzko: Yes, he is excellent filmmaker. Then Boris Tadić is from Sarajevo as well as Boris Nemešić who was Manager of "Austrian Telecom".

WROTE FOR ALIJA BUT ALSO SERB BENEFACTOR

Večernje novosti: You wrote the foreword for Alija Izetbegović's biography "Close Look at Alija" Is justified the fear in RS, but also among the Croats, that you will be biased towards the Bosniaks?

Valentin Inzko: Nonsense. I come from a family with six Catholic priests. I am a benefactor of the Belgrade Theological Faculty since 1986. Even more, I am the third person who, after late Serb Patriarch German, paid a half of million then dinars for construction of the Theological Faculty. The choice was either to pay for construction of the Temple of St. Sava or the Orthodox Faculty and I opted for the latter. The stronger theology of the Serb Orthodox Church, the stronger the dialogue will be. Yes, I will be biased in my work. My support will be given to things that are good for people and will not be given to those that are not.