

Interview with Miroslav Lajčák in DER SPIEGEL: “Red Line”

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SPIEGEL: Nationalist parties have again claimed victory at the municipal elections in Bosnia. Has the concept of a multiethnic state of Croats, Muslims and Serbs definitely failed?

Lajčák: The Dayton Peace Agreement has ended the war, but its philosophy of a multiethnic society is hard to achieve. The elections were won by those who say: first my people, then BiH. RS Prime Minister Milorad Dodik says openly: when I speak about economic development, nobody listens, but when I shout „We won’t give up Republika Srpska“, they all applaud.

SPIEGEL: You have the power simply to remove the main troublemaker Dodik. What prevents you from doing so?

Lajčák: It would not help the country. Instead of calling for dismissals, the people must understand that nationalist politicians block their path to the EU.

SPIEGEL: For years Serb leader Dodik has been threatening an independence referendum for his entity. Can you realistically prevent such a vote?

Lajčák: We would not allow it, as it would cross the international community’s red line. Besides, Republika Srpska would not be able to survive economically as an independent state. But Dodik is threatening to destroy Bosnia in an easier and legal way, by withdrawing his ministers and MPs from the central state institutions and going into opposition. As a

result, Parliament would be paralysed, there would be no Government, and no Bosnia and Herzegovina. There is no Bosnia without the Serbs.

SPIEGEL: The European Union is considering an end to its military mission in Bosnia before long. Is this step premature?

Lajčák: I am against an untimely withdrawal. Such a narrow view of the matter rests solely upon a military evaluation of the situation and leaves aside political arguments.

SPIEGEL: What can you do to break the rule of the nationalists?

Lajčák: Bosnia must be cultivated the European way. No politician will dare to speak out against the EU. But the people have to understand that nationalist politicians are an obstacle to EU membership. The population must withdraw the support that it gives them. When I speak to people across the country, they tell me: we are sick and tired of our politicians, send them all to the desert! This change of heart has not yet prevailed at the ballot box.