

Interview: Carlos Westendorp, High Representative in BiH “Our Efforts Will be Worthwhile”

There was no corruption in BiH, when we talk about spending IC money, because there are organisations which take care of that money to ensure it is properly spent. Corruption is carried out at customs and while tax collecting.

These are words of HR Westendorp whose report on corruption has been discussed at the latest Steering Board Conference for Implementation of the Peace Agreement.

Since you came to the post of HR many things have been solved, first those were ambassadors, and now even SRT. It seems that the IC is more decisive to implement what was written in Dayton and Sintra?

I think that my predecessor Carl Bildt did a brilliant job. Actually, it was only a coincidence that, since I came here in June, the IC became aware that the process is going too slowly and that something must be done. I usually say that I was lucky because of such a change of mood of the IC, and the Steering Board of the Peace Implementation Council.

They gave us support in implementation of economic reform, development of the media, and reorganisation of the police.

Nothing Without Free Media

As for media I have always said that without free media nothing would happen. We signed the agreement in Pale which was recently violated, and NATO gave me the authority to ask for intervention if they don't comply. And I asked for that. In Sintra I was given the right, but not the instrument. NATO gave me the instrument. Therefore we are at the very start of the beginning. As for the DPA implementation, in Sintra, I was given the authority to propose sanctions, which I did regarding ambassadors. Then I proposed the sanctions for Serb representatives in the Presidency and CoM, who were banned from travelling outside the country, until they agreed on the Law on Citizenship and Passports.

Are they already banned from entering certain countries?

Yes, they are, Serb members of the CoM, and the Presidency.

How was it that Dragan Bozanic could travel to New York to the UN General Assembly?

He had the visa before. And New York usually gives visas if the reason is attendance to the above conference.

How will you solve the situation with Serb TV considering the fact that you have authority given by the Sintra declaration, that you have already started realising.

My idea is that this country has an open, modern and free media. And we are ready to help with that because it will produce positive aspects. We are ready to help in creating better programmes, the training of journalists, and not only for SRT, but Sarajevo, as well as Mostar. Because my major concern is that the large political parties in this country control the public media, they send messages to one nation only, and the population has the right to hear other opinions too, and therefore we are trying to establish a principle of pluralism in public life through the opening of the media. What we are doing now in the RS and Pale, we will also do in the Federation. But at the moment the situation in the RS is much more serious and urgent. We want professionals who will work in accordance with the rules of independent journalism, TV that would be led by journalists and not by politicians. We have to get rid of the politicians in public TV.

Do you intend to replace the Editorial Board of SRT and do you have an idea who the President of that board would be ?

Not yet. They have very good professionals, especially in Banja Luka. Professionals don't have any reason to be

afraid. Only the politically appointed leadership must be replaced, such as General Manager Miroslav Toholj, the President of the Editorial Board Momcilo Krajisnik, as well as others. They cannot run the TV.

Many people think that the seizure of four SRT transmitters was only an introduction for the arrest of war criminals?

No, this was an independent action. Those two issues are different and there is no connection between them. Each time, we undertake some action which is a matter of media and doesn't have anything with the arrest of war criminals, people always think that arrests will follow. That doesn't mean that arrests won't occur, but such an action is not connected to this one.

The degree of the heightened readiness of SFOR is actually the reason for such speculations. When will the arrest occur?

All SFOR troops are in an increased degree of readiness. People who work at the transmitters can do their job, and with Pale TV approval they transmit Banja Luka TV programming. It is a different issue that I don't control. I always say that war criminals must be in the Hague, they must leave voluntarily. If not that way, then they must be arrested and sent to the Hague. I don't know when that is going to happen. But I'm sure that this will happen some day.

No Corruption With Donations

At the latest session of the Steering Board Peace Implementation Council (PIC) your secret report on corruption in BiH was discussed. Can you tell us what the results were ?

PIC asked from me to make such report and to propose possible solutions for the fight against corruption. I proposed some ideas which don't have to be definite. I can only mention a few to you: Firstly, the impression that money which was coming from the IC has been misused, is false. We have proof that there was no corruption with money which was coming from the International donors; neither with that sent through bilateral nor multilateral agreements. There are already bodies established by the World Bank that prevent such things from happening. Therefore we didn't think that Izetbegovic's idea (to establish a body for missing money investigation) was necessary. Because in the first place limiting to the international aid is not the only problem. Secondly, that investigation was limited to the Federation, and it should be carried out in the whole of BiH and the RS territory.

Where are the main sources of corruption?

We discover problems in two fields, that is in customs and internal tax incomes. I don't say that these deviations were found in Federation or RS alone, but we trust that the problem exists. There is an international organisation for investigating such cases, it's called CAFAO, and which does its job discretely. I think that CAFAO should do the same here. At the same time, I consider an idea, which I'm about to present to the PIC in December, and it is about the establishment of an inter-agency consisting of local and foreign representatives, and which will be some kind of board for creating conditions for open and public behaviour in public matters. The other idea is an old one, brought in by the UN Security Council, and it is to follow the activities of war criminals in all countries. That is not easy, because war criminals may have different names. It could be very interesting if the Security Council were to bring such a decision. It is connected, because the most corrupted people are war criminals themselves. But I'd rather use the term "criminals against humanity during the war."

Why did you make all those compromises with SDS and HDZ, before the elections, regarding the voters registration in Brcko and non-existence of central area in Mostar?

Those were not compromises. That was done by OSCE, and my competency was to enable municipality elections to be held - free and correct ones - as much as it is possible in such a moment. These elections were not perfect, but they were better than the previous ones. The next elections will be far much better, when the media are more free. We have just helped the OSCE to resolve the problems of certain parties, and not only the HDZ and SDS, but also the SDA was consulted. SDA agreed that the voters from the central zone can vote for candidates in other municipalities, but that three conditions must be fulfilled: to adopt the Constitution Amendments, which has been done, then to enable refugee return, and to prevent the formation of the union of three West Mostar municipalities. HDZ must stick to that agreement.

Do you think this is possible, because ideas about the joining of municipalities already appeared in West Mostar?

I think this is absolutely possible. We are ready to do everything necessary in order to apply the strongest pressure we can, so that they can hold on to that which they agreed .

Mostar Concerns

Speaking of Mostar, I'm very concerned about the situation in that town, for which I think that it is at least as problematic, and dramatic as the one in RS.

What about the situation in Brcko? There is an impression that delaying the public announcement of the election results creates a balance on behalf of one side or another?

On the contrary, OSCE wishes to be certain that the results will be precise after counting the voters lists in absence, but also the sensitive voters lists, which is a new thing. This matter with sensitive voters lists happened in Brcko, and this procedure takes a long time.

How are the election results going to be implemented, and will SFOR guarantee the results implementation in, let's say, Visegrad where the Coalition won 20 seats, SDS 16, and Serb Radical Party 14 seats?

SFOR is only a last measure. Before that, it is needed to try on a local level, in municipalities. OSCE and OHR established a joint mechanism – ERIC (Election Result Implementation Commission). These commissions exist on local and state levels, and if problems are not solved on a local level, it will be solved on the State level. We trust that many of these problems can be solved on the local level, and for those that cannot, we will apply different sorts of political pressure, that is: banning travel; establishing conditions for receiving economic and financial aid; and banning candidatures for the next elections.

What is your assessment of the RS situation? The Parliament and Presidential elections have been scheduled. Krajisnik had the idea to unify the functions of RS President and Presidency member?

Krajisnik always tries to go against the Dayton, and this thought of his is a very bad one. There are still no conditions for holding the free and fair elections in RS, as long as media are not free and as long as legality is not respected. OSCE will supervise the Parliamentary and Presidential elections. The other condition is to respect the constitution decrees, so that the Assembly might decide whether it is going to acknowledge the presidents or not. If the RS President or Krajisnik resign after that, then the OSCE will be asked to supervise the next elections.

It Is Worth the Sacrifice ?

When will you post the new deputy which should come to the place of the late Gerd Wagner?

At the meeting of the Contact Group on the ministerial level in New York, the German Minister stated that Germany would announce the deputy. I still expect the names, and so far I haven't received one. It will be very difficult to replace Wagner because of his qualities. I think that it is good that Germans are concerned with the matters of the Federation and refugee return. I also asked the IC to provide us much safer transportation in the way of helicopter transport.

What do you think about the future of this country?

When a tragedy happens, like this recent one, people often wonder if it is worth the sacrifice. At that time I used to say: Look at the children in the streets, they are worthwhile sacrificing in this and in other countries. We cannot just leave. Our conscience would not be calm if we didn't do everything we could to make this country a part of Europe. I think that our efforts will pay dividends.