

Interview by Hido Biscevic, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council, to Turkish daily Hürriyet

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The Balkan Brotherhood

By Emre KIZILKAYA

The RCC which is established by the Southeast European countries, with its new headquarters in Sarajevo, is a symbol of the international solidarity. RCC's Croatian Secretary General Hido Biscevic, after thanking Ankara and Athens for their contribution to the central office of the organization, added that: “ in the Balkans we should forget blood, and concentrate on honey”.



The RCC, which replaced on 27th February 2008 the Southeast European Stability pact that was operating as an institution of the European Union, started its work in Sarajevo upon completion of the construction of its headquarters. Hido Biscevic, the first Secretary General of the RCC, which provides a common platform for the countries of the region, including Turkey, for collaboration in many areas from economic development to security cooperation, while advancing on their path for integration with the European Union, gave his first interview in the Turkish media to Hurriyet.

The Greek government renovated the RCC headquarters, and Ankara provided its furniture. Here, do you see any symbol of friendship that could one day lead us to the establishment of a new Balkan Pact?

You are right; there is a symbolism in those events. We are grateful to Ankara and Athens for their contributions to our headquarters, which is located in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I see this as a symbolic confirmation of the countries of SEE for continuing to elevate the level of their cooperation and for opening a new page in the history of the region.

We are a region of huge potentials and we are the owners of the very important cultural heritages. Our contribution to the European and world history does not consist solely of wars. We did bring positive contributions to culture, science, and economy. We should re-profile the image of our region in Europe. We will not create a new pact or an alliance. These were the

mechanisms of the past. Today we are talking about partnership which rests on shared European values and which focuses on EU membership and across the Atlantic cooperation visions.

Double Standard terminology

In the literature of international relations, the terms like “balkanization” are being used in a pejorative sense. For instance we hear it today even in Iraq.

Yes, that term carries negative connotations but I am always reminding my European friends about this: true, this term was produced to explain what occurred in our region once. Yet at the same time it is obvious that it is also a product of an approach which is paternalistic and of double standard. It is because the wars, the tensions and the fragmentations which are meant by this term have also been clearly witnessed in other parts of the continent in the history of Europe. Nevertheless it is time we should forget all these and as in the translation to Turkish,” think about the honey; blood should remain in the past”.

We used to eat imambayildi in Balgat

In the years 1993 – 1995 you were the ambassador of Croatia in Ankara. What are your experiences from Ankara?

My memories of Turkey are so vividly with me all the time. In the middle of the 1990’s when the Balkan crisis was escalating and when in the world uncertainties were dominant. The Turkish society was going through a profound transformation. I remember the friendly, comprehending and supportive attitude of the Turkish authorities. Many Turks were among them from my dear friends in Balgat to the Prime Minister of Turkey at the time, Suleyman Demirel. However, I foremost of all remember the simplicity, the warmth and the friendliness of those Turkish friends who were not the owners of important titles. We used to meet, argue, play basketball and tennis, and follow them with Imambayildi. It was one of the best periods of my professional life.

My namesake Hido demolished us

You are a person who loves sport. Did you follow Euro 2008 Turkey-Croatia game?

Of course I watched it. It was shocking for us. I went through the same stress which I felt while watching this game only once before and that was during the basketball game which we lost to Turkey a few years ago. Your Turkoglu certainly destroyed us and his name was Hido, could you imagine.

Hido Biscevic:

Ankara provided furniture to the Sarajevo headquarters of RCC which is being financed by the European Council with membership of the countries of the region and United States together with the contributions of the United Nations, the NATO and organizations such as World Bank. Secretary General Hido Biscevic (54), who conveyed his thanks to Turkey for the furniture donated, is an expert in the area of international relations with a journalistic and diplomatic background.