

## ELECTIONS – FOR AND AGAINST

The results of local elections at Belgrade municipality of Zemun confirmed the continuing of political trend in Serbia according to which during the last year the government is getting stronger and the opposition is getting weaker. Zemun, one out of seventeen municipalities of Serbian capital, with 160 thousand voters who make about ten per cent of electorate in Belgrade, is one of the places where the elections are being held one year after the general elections. That is why the voting in Zemun always represents a test for the government. Local elections, of course, never give completely real picture of the mood of complete electorate because every local community has got its characteristics and Zemun is known, for example, for its traditional right wing mood of its citizens. Still, these elections reveal the trend, especially when compared to the results in the same municipalities, of the previous cycle. That is why the elections in Zemun are so important, not because of the fact who is going to be the government in this municipality, but because of the consequences on political scene.

The comparison of electoral results in Zemun in 2013. And 2009. Between the actual and former government clearly reveals changes that have happened in Serbia. The winning one at Zemun's elections now, as well as four years ago, is the governing Serbian Progressive Party ( SNS ) of Aleksandar Vučić. The difference is in the fact that the progressives ( public name for Serbian Progressive Party ) at just recently finished elections in Zemun won fantastic 51, 83 per cent of votes which is almost 18 per cent more compared to 2009. When this party was supported by almost 34 per cent of citizens ! ? Today the oppositional Democratic Party ( DS ) of Dragan Djilas was supported by 8, 94 per cent of the voters which is almost 19 per cent less than in 2009. When this party, while still governing, was supported by 27, 71 per cent of the voters. It is interesting still the electoral result of the Socialists Party of Serbia ( SPS ) of the current Prime Minister Ivica Dačić which was supported in 2009. By 7,17 per cent of the voters and now 11, 54 per cent of the citizens which is the growth of almost 4,5 per cent.

What are going to be the consequences of the results of Zemun's elections on the political scene of Serbia? Are they going to lead to the early parliamentary elections on which the leading Serbian Progressive Party would only confirm its dominance? Do the oppositional Democratic Party and its leader Dragan Djilas who is also the mayor of Belgrade, have the legitimacy, after the electoral debacle in Zemun govern over the capital of Serbia? These are the questions occupying the political public in Serbia.

What is going to happen at political scene of Serbia at this moment mostly depend on Serbian Progressive Party and its leader Vučić. In front of them is easy work but only at first sight. After one year of governing this party enjoys huge support of citizens which, according to some research, exceeds 40 per cent.

That is why most of the political analysts in Serbia, including those supporting the opposition, suggest to Vučić that at new elections he should turn his popularity into new mandate. As a reason for coming out to the early elections they state the fact that the Serbian Progressive Party is now at its peak of popularity ( even though that the result from Zemun has shown that it is still not their peak ) and that it can be expected due to difficult economic situation its popularity starts decreasing in the following period. It is the reason for recommendations to Vučić to seize the moment and politically capitalize his popularity. It is also the wish of majority in Serbian Progressive Party who can see in new elections the opportunity for the party to gain more positions in the state administration. And trully, after these elections Serbian Progressive Party would be even more dominant political force in Serbia which would, like in supermarket, choose one smaller coalitional partner, from socialists ( popular name for Socialists Party of Serbia ) they are sharing the government currently with, via oppositional Djilas' democrates ( popular name for the Democratic Party ) whose representatives would have a chance to come back in the governing position, or the Democratic Party of Serbia ( DSS ) of former president and prime minister Vojislav Koštunica, to the United Regions of Serbia ( URS ) of the current Minister of Finance Mladjan Dinkić, who has been the irreplaceable part of the government in the last 12 years. These elections, where the winner is known, would actually be the advertisement for the future minor coalitional partner of the progressives. If thing beeing watched that way, the question is not whether there are going to be held early elections but why Vučić has not scheduled the elections yet?

So, if the essence of politics is the rating of the political party, which was until recently the prevailing understanding of politics in Serbia, then coming out of Serbian Progressive Party to the early elections is quite logical decision. However, that kind of understanding politics, especially promoted by until recently untouchable governor of Serbia, the former President Boris Tadić and his surrounding, can be right for some time for the governing one, but it is quite disastrous for the society. According to that political theory you should always tell the citizens what they want to hear, in public should be promoted only these problems that citizens in the research name as important, and that you should run away from any difficult problem that can lead to the decrease of the rating, independently of how important its solving can be for the society. It is the politics of rating, without any content , only with its marketing dimension.

Politics is , however, the profession of solving real social problems. It has got its marketing dimension, but its essence is solving problems and executing changes in accordance with the programme of governing political party and the needs of the society. And that kind of politics can only provide politicians with energy and vision. Unfortunately for Serbia, there have been a few politicians of that kind throughout Serbian history, and last of them was Zoran Djindjić , the first Prime Minister after democratic changes , assassinated in 2003.

The leader of the progressives Vučić during one year of the government has shown that he understands politics in a similar way, as well as that difficult problems can be solved and at the same time being equally popular. He simply understood that citizens did not expect miracles and impossible things by the politicians, because they were aware themselves, very often even better than those leading them, in what kind of society they lived. They want to see that the politician has got a plan and a vision of solving problems in society, that he is determined to execute his plans, that he is not arrogant, that he is not becoming richer and richer over their backs, that he is not letting his assistants behave in a bad way, that he wants his state to be economic and at service to its citizens. There lie the roots of almost plebiscite popularity of the progressives and their leader Vučić. In less than a year they managed to show the results in the struggle against the corruption and criminal, because even the wealthiest individuals are not safe, to solve the knot of Kosovo's problem which has been burdening Serbia for decades, and that they are ready to start fighting against economic problems. When you look at the politics that way then you are looking at things as long-termed and you do not think about the new elections every time when the rating increasing for one per cent. Besides, Vučić is quite aware that new elections mean that all processes he has started in society would be stopped, at least for six months, which means that after the elections new government would face even greater problems. So, if Vučić was to ask for new elections, he would only do it if he would not be in a position to, with his current coalitional partners, fulfill reforms he was planning to do. It is especially related to economy, reforms of pension fund and health care fund, and the savings of the state, which are going to be the most important themes in Serbian politics after June 28th, no matter if Serbia is going to receive the date of the beginning of negotiations about joining the European Union or not. So, if Serbian Progressive Party manages to fulfill all the reforms planned, the actual Government is going to survive with thorough and serious reconstruction. Reconstruction is political message to the citizens that governing party can change its own ministers if they do not work properly. In that case the question of new elections is not going to be determined as urgent at least for some time yet. Unless Serbian Progressive Party manages to fulfill these reforms with current partners, it is going to be a reason for new elections.

The position of Serbian Progressive Party to easily choose whether it is going to come out to early elections or not additionally helps the fact that they do not have strong oppositional party behind themselves that would breathe at their necks and that would be ready to take over every voter disappointed in the government. Today opposition of Serbia forms few minor parties, of which almost every hopes to be chosen for minor partner to the progressives after new elections. So, even if some voters become disappointed in the work of Serbian Progressive Party because of economic reforms or Kosovo – there is nobody to take over these voters. That is why the progressives are in the position to choose.

For the oppositional democrats, the electoral defeat in Zemun is a hard punch. What attracts the attention even more than defeat, because every party can face the electoral defeat at voting, is the way the democrats were defeated at these elections. It seems that the representatives of the party gave up a fight even before the elections in Zemun, probably because the analysis of the public opinion showed that the progressives were close to winning half of the votes.

As a consequence, there was found quite bad excuse for removing the name of the president of the party from the names on the electoral list with the explanation that „party wants to promote local people „. It was an irresponsible movement towards their party because it is not all the same if you won 8,94 or 15 per cent of votes, because of the marketing dimension of politics we already talked about. Even more unfortunate for the Democratic Party, they did not lost in Zemun only from Serbian Progressive Party what had happened earlier but from socialists of the actual Prime Minister Ivica Dačić, compared to which they had always had better electoral results everywhere in the past, even in Zemun. Falling to the third place would be sometime in the past a signal for the alarm in the Democratic Party, but if you only strive to be a minor partner in some new government then it is easier to achieve from the third place rather than from the second.

Elections in Zemun revealed that inner party solution in the Democratic Party has not yet been finished, that this party is still dealing with itself, as well as that it can not manage to adjust to the new situation even though it has been in opposition for a year now. The fact that they scheduled elections for the city organisation of the party one week after the elections in Zemun shows that the party is still spending more energy to the inner party conflicts that to the achieving the electoral result. Speaking about the elections for a president of the city board of Belgrade, that result is going to determine significantly the future of this political party. It shows the support that was given to the former Minister of Defence and deputy president of the party Dragan Šutanovac when he announced over a month ago that he was going to be a candidate for the president of the city board of Belgrade where is positioned a person of trust of the actual president of the party and former serbian representative in waterpolo Aleksandar Šapić. The candidacy of Šutanovac is dangerous for Djilas because his possible triumph would promote former Minister of Defence in Djilas' opponent candidate in the party. The candidacy is also dangerous for the honoured president of the Democratic Party Boris Tadić who is trying to make a distance in public of the daily politics, but it is not excluded the possibility of his return as the head of the party he was leading in the previous eight years. Still, support to Šutanovac's candidacy gave almost all party's functioners who in the recent party's conflict were supporting Tadić. That is why this candidacy is in a way message of dissatisfaction to the actual president of the party. He understood it quite right, as well as he is probably aware of the consequences in case of Šutanovac's winning. Because of that he managed to convince his associate Šapić to withdraw and named for the candidate for the president of city board a leader of younger generation of democrates, actual general secretary Balša Božović. Božović has got a chance to win Šutanovac mostly because the members of the party in him see new wave of the party. Still, his winning would mean strengthening of Dragan Djilas' leadership in the Democratic Party.

Democrates fiery support the early elections, mostly because of the fact that opposition always and everywhere asks for the elections. However, it is a big question is that party really prepared for coming out in front of the voters? There is an impression that they are aware in the Democratic Party that they can not win at new elections. However, they have got a chance to become minor partner in the government, and elections are the opportunity for Dragan Djilas to „ deal with „ Tadić's followers who are now at the positions in party or state functions, and to strengthen his leadership in the Democratic Party.

The socialists of Ivica Dačić record constant growth in the electorate and they are on the good road to become the second strongest party in the country, which should make them happy in the party. The situation is, however, different because the Socialists Party of Serbia has got the position of the Prime Minister. When the Government was constituted in July 2012., the decision who was going to be in the government, the progressives of the democrates, was brought by Ivica Dačić. The price progressives paid for that was the position of prime minister for the leader of the socialists. Vučić and the progressives respect this fact but this situation, on long-term deadline, at least after next elections becomes unsustainable. Simply, Dačić's strategy according to which his socialists as the third party would play a game between two big parties, Serbian Progressive Party and Democratic Party, deciding who would be in the government would feel like the tower of cards because of the fact that Serbian Progressive Party secured itself a plebiscite support, and that Democratic Party has become the party struggling for the second place with Socialists Party of Serbia. It is exactly why to Dačić and his socialists is necessary the change of a strategy in order not to face the situation democrates are facing at the moment, that because of not understanding of changes and relations in society they lose the influence on the political scene.

At this moment nobody can tell with certainty whether there are going to be the elections in Serbia or not. Still, the fact is that some great changes are happening at the political scene of Serbia after which some new relations are going to be made. In these changes some traditional parties that marked our political scene in the last twenty years can disappear as well. Withall, in Italy are today on the political scene only parties that were not even founded twenty years ago. Why is that something that could not happen in Serbia?