

HYSTORICAL AGREEMENT?

There has not yet passed two months since the new Government was chosen and it has already faced the problem of all problems in Serbia – the status of Kosovo. The answer to the question how it is going to be solved the problem of Kosovo directly influences the future of Serbia. Being so, the smartest thing to do is to start solving the problem immediately rather than hiding it under the carpet and running from the responsibility. There is an impression that the Government of the Prime Minister Ivica Dačić has decided to do exactly so.

According to the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia – Kosovo is the South Autonomous Province of Serbia. According to the facts and the real situation, most part of Kosovo is functioning under the independent governance of Kosovo's Albanians. Albanians constitute the dominant majority of citizens of Kosovo at the territory that unilaterally proclaimed the independence on February 17th 2008. and which was accepted by 89 countries of the World, including the USA, 22 countries of the European Union and all countries of the Balkans apart from Romania and Greece. At the smaller part of the territory (three municipalities around the crossing borders with Serbia and the Serbian part of the divided town of Kosovska Mitrovica) that is mostly situated by Serbs there is an autonomous local Serbian government admitted by Belgrade and which does not accept the independence of Kosovo. Beside the north part, one third of Serbs who live at the territory of Kosovo are at the enclaves surrounded by majority of Albanian citizens and which, different from the north of Kosovo, out of practical reasons accept the Governments of both Priština and Belgrade. On Kosovo there are numerous Serbian monasteries , many of which are several hundred years old, some of them are on the list of World Cultural Heritage of UNESCO. There monasteries are under the administration of Serbian Orthodox Church , they enjoy the autonomy with Kosovo's authorities, and they have got special police protection. It has been the fact situation lasting since June 1999. , since Serbian forces withdrew from Kosovo and NATO took the control over the province under the auspice of the United Nations.

It is certain that the political dialogue of the highest level between Belgrade and Priština is going to start next year. It is inevitable because only by the political dialogue the existing state of frozen conflict, that threatens to become permanent similar to the situation on Cyprus, can be turned into sustainable political solution that could bring benefits both to Kosovo and Serbia. Otherwise, Serbia and Kosovo are both going to become hostages of the unsolved conflict which is going to have permanent consequences on their future.

Political dialogue between Belgrade and Priština is at the interest of everyone, first of all for Serbs and Albanians. Besides, checkmate position that Serbia and Kosovo are in demands searching for new solutions because nobody has won – neither those proclaiming the independence of Kosovo nor those who are against it. The part of international community that supports Kosovo's independence did not manage to put Serbia into nonplus situation by its politics of fait by the fact that most of the countries of the world admitt independent Kosovo.

Kosovo, four years after the proclamation of the independence, despite strong support of the USA and the leading western countries among which are Germany, France and Great Britain, has not become the state. This country is not the member of the United Nations as well as many other international organisations from political to sport ones. The authorities of Kosovo do not only have problems with the international legitimacy but also with Serbs who live on that territory and who refuse to admit the independence of Priština.

Although, until recently the Government of Kosovo has not even tried to communicate with Kosovo's Serbs, meaning to try to gain their trust by concrete measures and cessions. In Priština was expected by the inertia that the international community is going to, by pressuring Kosovo's Serbs and Serbia, ensure the admittance of Kosovo's independence. Kosovo today, four years after the proclamation of the independence, does not have defined borders that are efficiently controlled by the government, the biggest minority community – Serbs do not admit Kosovo as their state and have got their system of the government that includes independent health care system and educational system. Kosovo is simply – the unfinished state. It only confirms that Priština can not develop and progress as an independent state until it does not receive the admittance of the independence from Serbia and Kosovo's Serbs. That is why the countries that are the sponsors of Kosovo's independence, want to start political negotiations of Belgrade and Priština and are trying the result of these negotiations to be that Serbia, in any kind or form, admit the independence of Kosovo.

For Serbia the upcoming negotiations are the chance to finally solve the problem that has been burdening it for the whole century. In the last four years Serbia has managed to successfully deal with the powerful countries that are sponsors of the Kosovo's independence by the help of Russian Federation and the National Republic of China which refused to admit self-proclaimed independence of the northern province. Serbian diplomacy can praise itself for managing in the struggle that most countries of the world, including the Muslims' countries, do not admit the independence of Priština. So, the struggle was successful but it is exhausting Serbia. The situation with Kosovo negatively influences the relations of Belgrade with the USA and the European Union (EU), the process of Euro-integrations which has been publicly announced priority of all Serbian Governments since the democratic changes in the year 2000. has almost been stopped, and the unsolved problem of the territory, despite the fact that there are no armed conflicts, influences the coming of the foreign investments and the development of the country. Serbia as a small country in the process of the transition can not afford itself the luxury of keeping that problem unsolved.

The strategy of the USA and the western countries towards Serbia concerning the independence of Kosovo is simple – since Serbia is eager to become the member of the European Union, at every step of its progressing towards the full membership it has been influenced by the normalisation of the relations with Kosovo, meaning with some new cessions. At the same time of Kosovo's side has been demanded only one cession – not to use force in solving problems with local Serbs on the north of Kosovo. According to this strategy first have been solved issues that are not of political kind, such as free moving of the citizens, the mutual control of crossing borders and customs, and later during the process would be solved emerging political problems.

In order not to irritate Serbian public but also because there is not full approval of the European Union concerning the independence of Priština (five countries members of the European Union did not admit the independence of Kosovo), the official Brussels has never announced that the admittance of Kosovo's independence has been a term for the entering of Serbia into the European Union. However, it was quite clear that at the end of this process at least one country member of the European Union (read: Germany) , since the decisions have been made by consensus, was going to put the the decision in front of Serbia – the admittance of the independence of Kosovo as a term for the full membership of Serbia in the European Union.

While in Serbia the leaders were former president Boris Tadić and his pro-european Democratic Party (DS) that strategy of the western countries was partly successful. Tadić and his democrates (public name for the Democratic Party) simply did not have the way out. The European integrations were their primary political aim. Democrates could not risk the failure of the process of the integrations since it would mean the political defeat of the party.

However, the question is whether this process would end up finally the way western countries wanted, since Tadić and the Democratic Party did not have enough capacities to bring such an important decision – the admittance of the independence of Kosovo. Simply, the Democratic Party which has got political authority when we are talking about the European integrations does not have the image of the party that is strongly warried about the national interests. So that means that every Tadić's decision that could bring Serbia a step closer to the admittance of Kosovo would be considered as the great betray. It is exactly why the democrates created a slogan „ Europe as well as Kosovo“ which they won the elections in 2008 with. Slogan best shows the politics that democrates led because it has finished in a result – neither Europe nor Kosovo. They were balancing between the necessity of gaining the success in euro-integrations and the western requests for normalising the relations with Kosovo. That is why Tadić and the democrates did not even try to lead the political dialogue with Priština but put the negotiations at technical level. It is the reason why Tadić's government according every agreement with Priština dealt more with symbols that with the essence. The democrates were affraid of being accused of the betrayal. The intention of the Democratic Party was to, by the politics of small cessions in normalising the relations with Kosovo satisfies western countries and makes progress in euro-integrations. When Serbia would once get into the phase that it could become the member of the European Union , Tadić hoped that that political aim would mean so much to the citizens that they would accept the independence of Kosovo or that the positions in the world would change that much that Serbia would become the member of the European Union without accepting the independence of Kosovo.

The change of the government in Belgrade and the choice of conservative Tomislav Nikolić for the president completely disturbed such a plan. The plan of western countries was based on the assumption that Serbia would never and under any terms give up the intention to become the member of the European Union. By coming of the government of conservatives , despite their primarily proclaimed aim of becoming the member of the European Union, that assumption is now under the doubt.

Despite the fact that the new government has not by any gesture shown the sign of giving up the European integrations, it is going to be less submissive to the requests than Tadić's government. Simply, the European integrations are not the primary political aim of most of the parties consisting the government, so that the stagnation in European integrations would not cause any serious political problems to them. New government is less submissive to the influences of the European Union and on the other hand it has got more capacity for making hard decisions concerning Kosovo than former president Tadić and his Democratic Party. The president Tomislav Nikolić and the Prime Minister Ivica Dačić have got the image of nationalists in Serbian public and their decisions, no matter what they were, would not be considered as a betrayal. They demonstrated it immediately after they became leading ones when they announced that they would provide all technical deals with Kosovo that previous government managed as well as when they agreed Kosovo to take part in regional state meetings without the footnote (the footnote is the remark according to which the name of Kosovo at the official regional meetings had to be used without prejudicement of the position and status and according to the Resolution 1244 and the opinion of the International Court of Justice about Kosovo's independence declaration). If Tadić's government had done the same thing, they would have been accused of the betrayal by the public. Nikolić and Dačić as proclaimed nationalists can bring these decisions without any political consequences. It means that the permanent political solution of the relations of Serbia and Kosovo is going to be easier to achieve with Nikolić and Dačić than it would be with Tadić.

The President Nikolić is aware of that fact and that is why at the meeting of the General Assembly of the United Nations in New York he messaged that „Serbia is willing to solve the problem of Kosovo and Metohija in a peaceful way“ through the „open and direct negotiations with the Albanians“. „Our aim is better life of all citizens, and especially those in our South Province. Without Kosovo and Metohija Serbia can not step forward as well as that the citizens of Kosovo and Metohija can not step forward without Serbia. That is why the dialogue at the highest political level the thing that citizens deserve. There is not going to be the avoiding of the responsibility any more and bringing of the negotiations to the solving of the technical questions, as well as trials to lessen the level of importance and the result is at its consequence more or less the same: the implicit accepting of the situation on the terrain. That is why the solution is in responsible, honest and direct solving of the problems through the direct negotiations with the readiness on cessions that must be proportional“, said the president Nikolić.

The good thing for Serbia is taking up the initiative in solving the problem of Kosovo. It can be said that Serbia is going for the first time since 2002, when the former Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić (killed in assassination in the year 2003,) asked from the international community to immediately start solving the problem of the status of Kosovo, to show what it wants. In the meantime, the friends of Serbia in the international community have been very often criticising Belgrade of knowing what it does not want but that nobody is announcing what they want concerning Kosovo. The former President Tadić tried to answer their objections by presenting his own Plan in four acts but as the plan was not followed by the concrete moves meaning the inviting of the political functioners of Kosovo's Albanians for the negotiations and adopting of the measures at Serbian Assembly it remained his personal and unsuccessful initiative.

What is Serbian platform for Kosovo announced by the president Nikolić going to be, public does not know at the moment but it is quite good that the Parliament gives its opinion about it as well as to give as wide support as it can by the political parties in Serbia.

Do the attempts of Serbia to directly negotiate with the government in Priština mean Serbian giving up its way to the European Union? Not necessarily. Even it is desirable to split up these two questions because solving of the century conflict between Serbs and Albanians is at the interest of both nations at the first place. The international community can help by its influence, but it must be aware that if the announced political talks between Serbs and Albanians fail, there is not going to be a new opportunity for a long time. Then the problem of Kosovo is going to remain as frozen conflict which is not suitable for anyone. That is why these negotiations must be seriously prepared in order to become successful, and both sides must be ready for „hard compromises“ as it recently said European Commissary of Foreign Affairs Catherine Ashton. Serbia should continue its European direction by fulfilling long, equally hard conditions such as economic and social reforms, struggle against criminal and the corruption and the organising of public administration. This work is not going to be easy at all and that is why, not just because of Kosovo, Serbia so far away from the membership at the European Union.

Recently the Prime Minister of Kosovo Hashim Tachi stated that „Serbia and Kosovo are mutual hostages“. This statement maybe best depicts current situation between Belgrade and Priština. Today all terms exist for the achievement of the historical agreement of Serbs and Albanians. In Belgrade and Priština the governments consist of the politicians with the respectable national authority but also good relations with the international community, Serbs and Albanians are tired of not solving the existing problems, and politics led by their two governments have been exhausted and did not give any solutions. So, the stage for the great historical event has been set up and in many things reminds of the eve of the Dayton by which was stopped the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1995. Is the opportunity going to be used still does not depend only on the leaders in Belgrade and Priština who are going to negotiate but on the international community as well. Because there would not be Dayton Agreement at all if the international community and first of all the USA did not firmly decide to end up the war in Bosnia and in that aim put on strong pressure on all three sides to do very hard and painful concessions. Is the international community at this moment aware that in solving the problem of Kosovo there are no „good and bad guys“ but that it is necessary to search for real and sustainable solutions, we are to find out soon. Still, the year 2013 is the most important for Serbs and Albanians because their century conflict might be ended either by the historical agreement or freezing of the conflict for longer period of time like the Cyprus scenario which deprives the future of both future generations.