



NEGOTIATIONS AND POLITICAL SKILLS

If it was clear that after the elections held in May Ivica Dačić and his Socialist Party of Serbia could have been proclaimed the only real winners, now after almost a month of negotiations about the Government it can be said that the leader of the socialists (popular name for the Socialist Party of Serbia) has grown in probably the most skillful politician on Serbian political scene. Whoever is about to constitute the future Government , the socialists are going to have crucial influence on its programme and composition.

Serbia is one step from the Government constitution after only six weeks from the general elections and four weeks from the second round of presidential elections. If we bear in mind that the Constitutional deadline for forming the Government is the first day of September and that Belgium in the year 2010 /2011 chose its Prime Minister and the cabinet after 541 days or the Netherlands which did not have the Government for 208 days in 1997, then it can not be said that Serbia is waiting too long for its new cabinet. That is why the atmosphere created in Serbia that the Government should be formed as soon as possible, was partially in function of pressure principally on the socialists but also of unreal expectations of domestic public that the Government, whatever it is, will solve all crowded problems Serbia has got.

What is the secret of Dačić's success in negotiations about the Government? How is it possible that the party which is the third due to the votes of citizens is leading besides the two „ formally „ strongest parties? The answer is simple. Dačić is the only one who knew what he wanted to achieve. Thereto also in favour of Dačić was the confusion that the Democratic Party (DS) faced after the defeat of its leader Boris Tadić at the presidential elections as well as in favour of the shiftlessness of the progressives (popular name for the Serbian Progressive Party – SNS) after the suprising triumph of Tomislav Nikolić at the presidential elections. While the first one have not recover from the defeat and the second one from the triumph – Dačić has worked hard in order to position his party as good as possible at the negotiations about the Government.

The leader of the socialists knew that the triumph of Tomislav Nikolić at presidential elections almost disabled „big coalition of progressives and democrates „ (popular name for the Democratic Party) which is the only political combination in which his party is not in the Government. That coalition might have been possible if the presidential elections had been won by the leader of the democrates Boris Tadić . Then ,in such a situation where the democrates would have won all elections and the progressives would have lost them all, other ones would have to save the party that emerged on great expectations that it was going to overtake the government. In such a big coalition the democrates would be senior partner nevertheless they had less candidates than Nikolić's party. Triumph of Nikolić disabled big coalition. Simply, the progressives achieved political future , saved the party and enabled its future development and progress and thus they do not have to save themselves from anything anymore.



Dačić has estimated quite good that situation and thus played harsh towards the democrates too as well as towards the progressives. In addition to that, the progressives offered the position of the Prime Minister to Dačić wishing to attract him enter the coalition with them and not with the democtates – he has got all the cards in his hands.

Thus we have come in a situation that it has become realistic to form the Government in Serbia which base is going to be the Democratic Party and the Socialists Party of Serbia, and whose Prime Minister would be the leader of the democrates Tadić or the Government in which the dominant parties would be Serbian Progressive Party and the Socialists Party of Serbia and in which the Prime Minister would be Ivica Dačić.

And through the example that he did not immediately choose the government in which he would be the Prime Minister, we can see Dačić's maturity as a politician. So, despite the fact that in every coalition is going to be needed at least one more partner in order that future government reach necessary majority of 126 places in Serbian parliament which gives the importance to minor parties such as Liberal-Democratic Party (LDP) of Čedomir Jovanović, the United Regions of Serbia (URS) of Mladjan Dinkić and the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) of Vojislav Koštunica, in the triangle of Tadić, Nikolić and Dačić is the solution of Serbian post-electoral drama. And in that triangle- the key is in the hands of the leader of the socialists.

For Dačić the first option for the cooperation has always been the Democratic Party. There were several reasons for that. First, serious political parties do not change partners from elections to elections. Second, both the Democratic Party and the Socialists Party of Serbia are parties of left wing orientation so it is natural that left oriented parties cooperate together. Dačić's socialists have learned how to cooperate with the democrates throughout the four years of mutual government since 2008. so that Dačić was under the pressure from his party to anyway enter the coalition with the Democratic Party. Finally, it is better for him to cooperate with the democrates that entered the crisis after the defeat at the presidential elections than with the progressives which are growing and are aiming at the same eleterate as Dačić. So, by threatening with the cooperation with the Serbian Progrerssive Party, Dačić was trying to scare the democrates to finally accept all of his terms. And he managed maybe because he was not threatening with empty weapon. The leader of the socialists was ready to start the negotiations with the progressives if the democrates had not decided to accept what he was asking for.

Dačić did not let the new government be constituted mathematically meaning that the simple third of 126 members of parliament was asked for. That is why he refused several agreements offered by the democrates and according to which the new government was supposed to be constituted by these two parties with the parts of Dinkić's and Jovanović's coalition. Apart from asking as wide as possible support for the government, he was the first one to ask what the new government was going to do? If that did not happen the new government would, as all previous ones, first constitute the cabinet and then think of what kind of economic policy it should lead. Meaning that it would be the economic policy that most of the economists in the government were supportive of. Honestly speaking, the leader of the socialists had to ask that question because in his coalition there is the Pensioners Party (PUPS) that is opposing the reducing of the pensions and it demands bigger social allowances.



Like there is no government without Dačić, there is no coalition led by him without the Pensioners Party. That is why the president of the Socialists Party of Serbia had to ensure that the government is going to maintain what he promised, meaning what the pensioners are demanding. And besides the protection of pensions, the socialists promised in their campaign that there would not be any pay freezing, as well as that the state is going to give more for the social allowances. To be honest, not only the socialists were open handed in the campaign but other parties as well. The leader of the United Regions of Serbia Dinkić specially and explicitly promised that there would not be any pay and pensions freezing so that it is not unusual post-electoral closeness of these two parties. So, either because he is a socialist or because he has got pensioners in his coalition, Dačić insisted on programme of new government that would be left wing oriented and socially responsible.

These demands of the socialists were condemned by many of Serbian economists who find the only solutions for the state in rigorous savings like the German model which is promoted by the German Chancellor Angela Merkel. It is not a secret that this model is also close to the Democratic Party despite its left oriented vocation. Simply, most of the economists in Serbia that are close to the Democratic Party consider that the model of overcoming the crisis offered by Angela Merkel is good for Serbia.

To Dačić as well as to Dinkić is quite clear that it is going to be difficult to keep the promise of pays and pensions if the state would save, meaning if the state chooses the German model of overcoming the crisis. That is exactly why he is asking that before the constitution of the government should be defined the economic policy of the country, meaning that the new government should choose one of two models: economic growth or saving. To be honest, the European Union is facing the same dilemma so Serbia can finally say that it is similar in something to the European Union. The growth implies additional borrowing in order to pump the money into the economy that should start new cycle, to create artificial or to save the existing working places in order to survive the crisis. It is the programme of French president Francois Hollande. According to the plan of French president the carrying out of this plan means further increase of public debt of certain countries, but the issuing of so-called euro bonds. The saving is less popular and means the reduction at all levels. The main advocate of this policy is German Chancellor Angela Merkel who asks for saving, lessening of the spending and stopping the growth of public debt. It leads to the unemployment increase, decrease of the economic growth and the recession, but Merkel is convinced that it is the only way to survive the crisis.

For Serbia is nice to have some of European dilemmas but the economic situation is quite different from the situation in the European Union. Serbia does not have the production as most of the European countries do so there is a fear that pumping the money into the domestic production would lead to the increase of the import or in short – that way Serbia would help the recovering of Italian or German economy where Serbia imports most of the goods from. That is why the advocates of this model consider that the money given from the additional borrowing should be used for the investments in infrastructure, electricity and agriculture. Besides, the rigorous saving might lead to the problems Greece is facing with, where it came to the breaking of the traditional political parties and citizens' protests.

The consequence is the appearance of new hope of European left wing Alexis Tsipras , young charismatic leader of the left wing coalition Syriza. „ Greek workers pay the tax which is unbearable.“ , said Tsipras and accused for the decades two greatest greek parties – the left wing Pasok and the right wing New Democracy that „ they have not even touched big capital „ but that they „ were chasing ordinary workers“. Dačić feels that in Serbia could happen the same thing meaning that the new left wing political force could emerge if the economic crisis' burden should go on the poorest people.

In the meantime, the Fiscal Council of the National Bank of Serbia announced the analysis of the current situation and the suggestion of the package of measures in which they demand the freezing of the pays and pensions, the rigorous saving and the increase of Value Added Tax (VAT) . The demands of the Fiscal Council were immediately refused by the Socialists Party of Serbia and the United Regions of Serbia which stressed that the rigorous saving is not acceptable. Both parties agreed that it is socially unacceptable pay and pension freezing, that they are against the raising of VAT, that it should be continued with the support to the local self-governments, and that they are for the new incentives for the liquidity of domestic economy. It is interesting that the two biggest parties , the democrates and the progressives, have not made any statements concerning the dilemma -growth or saving as suggested by the Fiscal Council. The leader of the democrates and the candidate for the Prime Minister , Tadić, make an appointment with the members of Fiscal Council but the public was left without any comments on his attitude concerning this question, and Jorgovanka Tabaković , the Prime Minister candidate of the progressives said that she „ supports the continuing of the arrangement of Serbia with the International Monetary Fund (IMF).“ From the democrates only the Deputy President and the Mayor of Belgrade and currently the most powerful politician in the Democratic Party , Dragan Djilas, said about this question that he „ supports the saving from the state and not from the citizens.“ Still, it must not be forgotten that he did it on the same day when in the city he signed the coalitional agreement with the pensioners when he guaranteed higher social allowances in the city for this category of the citizens. So, accidentally or on purpose, the question of forming the government turned into the discussion on economic policy of the government. This is exactly where Dačić took over the initiative, he imposed as the leader despite the fact that Tadić is formally constituting the government, he started to gather his block in a way that he assured the support of Dinkić's party on whose entering the government with the democrates he insists on. Already at the first negotiations he made the democrates accept that there would not be any pays and pensions decreasing. By putting Dinkić in the play he knows that he is going to force the Democratic Party to accept the incentives for the domestic economy, foreign investors and local self-governments.

That is why the coalition of the Socialists Party of Serbia with Dinkić is Dačić's best move at the negotiations. Dinkić who is politically closest to the democrates enter the conflict with the democrates both because of the different view on the economic policy as well as because of the Dinkić's independent appearances as the Deputy Prime Minister in the Government. Then came Dinkić's throwing out from the Government in March last year what he politically handled good despite his mentality of the politician who is easily entering the conflicts.

The democrates were strong then and Dinkić made an estimation that he could not survive the political conflict with them. He withdrew, left the party in the Government and he was preparing the party for the pre-electoral campaign.

He first started visiting the voters, he spent most money, but he managed – he entered the new parliament. Exactly that Dinkić, capable and being hateful by the democrates, has become the ideal Dačić's ally. Dinkić is the right wing but is populist so that his economic policy is similar to Dačić's- he is against saving on account of the ordinary citizens. The reason to invite Dinkić in the game, the leader of the socialists has found in the wish of the democrates that the third partner in their government become the liberals (popular name for the Liberal-Democratic Party of Čedomir Jovanović). The liberals were formed after leaving the Democratic Party in the year 2004. when Tadić was chosen for its president. Concerning the economic policy they are real liberals, but are different from other parties in Serbia because they intercede for the admitting of Kosovo's independence. Their attitude toward Kosovo socialists quoted as the reason for not wanting the government being dependent on Jovanović's liberals. Behind the suspiciousness that socialists show towards the liberals is something else hidden. Namely, Dačić is afraid that the democrates are quite willing to accept almost all the requests of the European Union concerning Kosovo except of formal admittance of its independence. He is afraid that the Liberal- Democratic Party would serve to force the Government make some steps concerning Kosovo on which today the democrates must not even think of. That is why he does not want to be in the coalition only with the Democratic Party and the Liberal-Democratic Party because he knows that there will not be place for him at the next elections if he is going to be in the government that will even informal admit Kosovo. That is why he needs Dinkić.

Dačić has strengthened his positions by cooperation with Dinkić and created political block that is by the number of the members of parliament quite close to the Democratic Party and Serbian Progressive Party. That cooperation is his ticket for the negotiations on both sides. Besides, Dačić knows that the agile Dinkić is going to overtake running the economy in the new government quite quickly which means that he is going to be protected from the anger of the voters because of the bad economic situation. Simply, if Dačić is going to be a part of Tadić's government then Dinkić and himself, as the Deputy Prime Ministers, are going to limit Tadić as the Prime Minister quite a lot. Dinkić is going to appear in public concerning economical topics while Dačić is going to talk about security, relations with Russia, energetics... In such a government Tadić does not have much space to promote himself but in the foreign politics. However, on this field he is going to compete with the president Nikolić whose main authorities are exactly at the foreign politics where according to the Constitution represents Serbia. If Dačić would constitute the government then Dinkić is would be quite necessary to him because of his engagement in economics. In such a situation, Dačić would consciously let Dinkić economic departments keeping for himself as the Prime Minister what is the best for the promotion.

Dačić knows that Dinkić is not his political competitor. Dinkić is hard-working and skillful politician who is burdened with many affairs and mortgages. His party survives every elections and subsists in the parliament as well as in the government only due to his work and energy.



But however his party would not enter the parliament without him , however with him it would not take more than 10 per cent of the votes. That makes his the excellent partner. Dačić knows that he has got big chances if the Prime Minister would be Boris Tadić whose positions are the in the party as well as in the state weakened after the defeat at the presidential elections.

That is why the democrates are for him first option for the government. The leader of the socialists knows that his biggest competitors are for four years now are Tadić's deputy and the popular Mayor of Belgrade Dragan Djilas as well as Nikolić's deputy and the new first man of the Serbian Progressive Party Aleksandar Vučić. That is why the socialists, before the agreement about the republican government, constituted coalition in Belgrade with Djilas' democrates. Simply, even if he forms the government with the Serbian Progressive Party, for Ivica Dačić is suitable to enter the coalition with the most powerful man among the democrates and thus build up the relations for the future.

In negotiations about the government Dačić played on the card of Russians. He suddenly went to Russia as well as he went to Banja Luka to visit Milorad Dodik , the President of Republic of Srpska(the part of Bosnia and Herzegovina populated by Serbs), a few days earlier. Beside the fact that both visits were arranged earlier they had political purpose in the negotiations. By the help of Dodik he eliminated the possibility to stay alone with the democrates and the liberals in the government (Dodik is in the personal conflict from earlier with the leader of the liberals Jovanović because of his statement that „the Republic of Srpska is was founded on genocide“.)The visit to Russia helped him show to everyone that he is the protector of Russian interests in Serbia as well as that he will not let Serbia become the member of NATO pact. And it is really so because Dačić's socialists keep the energetic department for which are most interested Russians in Serbia and where great investments are expected and he is personally the patron of serbian-russian base for quick interventions in Niš which many from NATO consider as future military base. The only competitor to Dačić concerning Russia are the progressives as well as Koštunica's democrates. Among the parties that he will probably constitute the government he is going to be the greatest friend of Russian Federation which is in Serbia always politically quite useful.

At the end, the last reason of Dačić's success is that while taking part in the negotiations about the constitution of the government he was thinking of May , 2016. when next parliamentary elections should be held. And at those elections he is going to have great plans – to become the first or the second powerful party. If he is going to act in the government in a way he has been doing so far during the electoral campaign and the negotiations about the government , he is going to be the one that should be seriously counted on.