

SERBIA IN FRONT OF THE MIRROR

„ There are no great changes without great efforts. There are no great changes without new rules, creativity and determination. Great changes do not happen a priori, evolutionary, by overgrowing of one system into another. They happen by discontinuance, by breaking the chains and by establishing new relations“, Zoran Djindjić, year 2001.

By Serbia getting closer to the beginning of joining negotiations about the membership in the European Union (EU) and by the first steps towards the normalisation of relations between Belgrade and Priština there have been opened questions of the reforms in the economy and society. It turned out that the question of reforms is the key for the further development of Serbian society. In the last 13 years, since the democratic changes, Belgrade has been too busy with solving problems which almost any other country in its way to the membership in the European Union have not faced, such as the cooperation with the Hague Tribunal (The International Tribunal for war crimes made in the former Yugoslavia, situated in the Hague and founded by the United Nations) and the problem of Kosovo. It has brought to the situation that almost all energy of the political elite as well as the society was directed toward these problems no matter which solutions they were supporting. Thus has happened that Serbian society and economy did not change and that the country was more and more lagging not only concerning the European Union but the neighbours as well because of which it did not become poorer but was also losing its foreign politics influence, which according to its geographic position, number of citizens and potentials belonged to it.

By the assassination of the Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić in March 2003. , the inner reforms in Serbia were almost completely stopped. Djindjić was the politician who knew how important it was for Serbian society to start changing and adjusting to the changes in the world. He had strength to start inner reforms trying at the same time to solve other difficult problems such were the relations with the Hague Tribunal, Kosovo and the Europe distrust , despite the fact that he did not have, unlike all other Prime Ministers after him, factual control over the police, army, and security services. „ Serbia can not change and all of us to stay unchanged. In order to change Serbia, each of us needs to change a bit – in his attitude toward problems, in his mentality, in his working habits. Because Serbia, it is the total of all of us“, used to message Djindjić. And as it usually happens in Serbia, during the lifetime of the Prime Minister Djindjić minor number of the citizens of Serbia were ready to accept the demand for the change of their mentality and habits. After his tragic assassination, majority realised that he was right. Unfortunately, too late for Serbia, which was approved in the following years.

Politicians who inherited Djindjić, Vojislav Koštunica and Boris Tadić, had other priorities. Koštunica, the leader of the Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS) has become the victim of his own wish to enter the history as the creator of modern Serbian Constitution, to keep the Montenegro in the frame of mutual state with Serbia, and to solve the problem with the Hague in a way that no one could ever accuse him in the future of cooperation with this institution!?! Dealing with his own strategic goals, he almost brought Serbia at the edge of conflict with the rest of the world and the existence of people so that voters turned their backs to him at the elections in 2008. In that way Koštunica, from the politician who triumphantly won the elections in the year 2000. over the former Serbian leader Slobodan Milošević with more than two million votes came to the situation , eight years later, that his political party has become minor party worrying for the census at every elections, and which almost any parliamentary party will not enter the coalition with. Koštunica's deeds are not going to last much longer. Serbia is surely going to change its Constitution in the following couple of years, and Montenegro has been the independent state for six years now.

Boris Tadić, who took over the Democratic party (DS) after Djindjić's assassination, tried not to repeat same mistakes like previous Prime Minister Koštunica in a way that he tried, whatever it took, not to become unpopular. It was done through the „ politics of rating“ which base was in doing only the things that the researces approved to have been liked by the voters or things international community insisted on, such was his going to Srebrenica, searching for the Hague fugitives, or the beggining of technical dialogue with Priština. It was the politics without the essence because it was not solving any opened problem that then Government inherited. Social and economic reforms were not carried out, and changes being done were motivated by the wish to be established stronger control or personal government. Thus occured the „ Judiciary reform“ which turned out into the first class European scandal and the greatest obstacle to the European integrations of Serbia. There were not even tried the reforms of state administration, public companies, pension fund, health care and educational system. The exception is successful reform of Serbian Army but only because the international community was very interested in the changed to be made in this field since the signing of Dayton Agreement by which was ended the civil war in the former Yugoslavia. That is why the reforms in the Army have not been stopped during the last ten years, no metter that on its head were the Ministers from different parties. The way Tadić's politics appeared was maybe best described recently by Montenegrin Prime Minister Milo Djukanović at the meeting of European socialists in Budva (Montenegro) : „ I can understand that politics has also got its marketing dimension, but it is a serious problem, if you reduce politics to the marketing. If we forget that politics is the activity of solving real social problems, and we focus ourselves only on presenting ourselves as those dedicated to the European goal, who at the same time do not show having the energy and vision for solving numerous difficult social problems, then it becomes a problem“ ., said Djukanović.

While Serbia, since 2003., for almost ten years has been wasting its time on solving problems which were not the essential ones, but which have been burdening it, and while it has got on its head leaders not mature enough for the difficulty of the function they have been doing – other countries have been making progress.

Thus Romania, Bulgaria, this year also Croatia, have become members of the European Union, Montenegro started negotiations about the membership and in the similar situation would also be FYR Macedonia and Bosnia and Hercegovina if they did not have the problems with the name of the state and the blockade of Greece as well as the blockade of the institutions. Serbia was becoming poorer and poorer and its political and economic elites monopolizing the society were becoming richer and richer.

It is the exact reason why the Government, formed in Serbia after the elections in 2012, wanting it or not, did not have much choice. It could continue governing in the same way as its predecessors in the last ten years, waiting to, sooner or later, spend the electoral credits in the same way that happened to Koštunica and Tadić, or could try to do basic reforms of the society. The way that the Government bravely entered into solving the problem of Kosovo with strong will to finally solve it as well as its transparent declaration towards the membership of the country in the European Union, shows Serbia which has got the Government and which is aware of the position of the country and which is determined in leading the realistic politics. Still, everything that have been done concerning Kosovo and European politics represents only a pre-term for the most important test of the Government – the establishing of the inner economic and social reforms.

That Government is ready to walk a new way showed the autohised text of the leader of this Government, the President of the strongest political party in the country, Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) and the first Deputy Prime Minister in the Government Aleksandar Vučić, published in respected Serbian daily press of proeuropean orientation „Danas“. „ We are, I guess, the only who overslept the breaking of Berlin wall, or did not understand at all political and economic processes that were rolling over Europe and the world“, wrote Vučić and added that „ the only good in all that is that we are, at least after twenty years, managed to view, accept and admit our own mistakes, pragmatically and really trying to fix the cosequences of all harmful we left behind us“. Vučić announced the change of the Constitution of Serbia towards Europe but also towards Russia („which we are going to respect and love, but not idealize „) which „ represents the beginning of the creating of more successful, modern and stronger Serbia, Serbia which is going to be able in a couple of years to become a real leader in the region , according to the level of the incomes and pensions, economic growth, political and every other stability, and not to be leaders in the region only during the electoral campaigns, and that not in any thing be in front of any of our closest neighbours, and not to mention European giants“. The Deputy Prime Minister at the end of his text announced that the goal of the Government of Serbia was going to be „ successful and progressive economy.“

Thus Serbia finally admitted that it had lost ten years which was a bad news for its citizens. Surely, the guilt for it should be taken by everyone, from the citizens voting for those not having any visions of solving problems, but mostly to Serbian political leaders who understood the government in a way of doing something good only for themselves and their surrounding without any intentions of solving the essential problems. A good news is that country continues where it stopped in the year 2003. It is absolutely pointless whether the current Government has brought the decisions because there was no other choice after ten years of wrong politics, it is clear that Serbia this way moves forward or it is the politics of the new Government.

If the Government successfully reforms Serbian society, modernise it, and makes it competitive in the world – it is going to be a historical progress for Serbia which can not survive unless it changes itself, and makes strong and efficient economy. After a long time, country has got the Government capable of understanding that, and it is the best news for Serbia and its citizens. That is why the key question of Serbian society is whether it is going to succeed in upcoming years to change itself and reform in order to be capable of competing first with out neighbours, which are ahead of us today, and later in the European Union. That is why the energy is necessary to us, the conscience of the citizens that painful reforms lead toward the good in the future and a lot of energy. About that spoke Zoran Djindjić in 2001. , at the beginning of his great reform venture that was tragically interupted by a bullet in March 2003. „ The reforms can only succeed if the feelings of hope and willingness in Serbia win over the feeling of empty wisdom and cynicism.Hateful, sceptical, suspicious societies can not acquire great goals and exellent results. Key words: reforms, optimism, determination, engagement.“ , spoke Prime Minister Zoran Djindjić 12 year ago. It seems that Serbia today has got enough strength to do exactly that. Ten years have been lost but „ better ever than never „ as it is said in one Serbian folk saying.