



THE AGREEMENT

Belgrade and Pristina, with the European Union intermediation came to an agreement about presenting Kosovo at the international regional forums. The agreement provides that at the international regional forums in front of the Pristina delegation says not only 'KOSOVO' but also '**this name does not predict Kosovo's status and is in the correlation with the Resolution 1244 and the decision of the International Justice Court about the Kosovo's independence declaration**'.

This agreement is in many ways a benchmark concerning the question of relations between Belgrade and Pristina and as it is, it could become the model for solving other existing problems between Albanians and Serbs. It is the benchmark because countries being promoters of Kosovo's independence (the USA, Germany, Great Britain and France) used to demand by now from Belgrade to absolutely accept that Kosovo is an independent state. By this agreement for the first time are seen certain concessions given to Serbia in order to fulfill long-lasting and sustainable solution. Still, this agreement has not solved the essential problem that exists between Belgrade and Pristina – **whether Kosovo is independent state or not?** The fact that Belgrade announced that the agreement about regional presentation counts only for the regional international forums and not for the participation of Kosovo in work of Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) or the United Nations (UN) shows the length of the road ahead of both sides and international community in order to find the formula which could enable cooperative functioning of Serbia and Kosovo. Still, there is an impression that this agreement marked the road for solving some more serious problems.

Serbian government can be more satisfied with the agreement reached with Pristina than Kosovo's administration. The government in Belgrade has through this agreement solved the problem it has had with the most powerful countries part of the international community – the USA and Germany and enabled for Serbia the European Union candidate member status. As the European Union membership status candidate Serbia will strengthen its international position among others about the Kosovo question. The additional reason for the satisfaction of Belgrade is the fact that the international community has for the first time since the self-proclamation of Kosovo in February 2008. accepted the demands of Serbia and the need for compromise.

The governing coalition in Serbia led by the Democratic Party (DS) and the president **Boris Tadic** by reaching the European Union membership candidacy has got its 'wind in the back' for the parliament and local elections which are to be held this spring. The candidacy does not, naturally, guarantee electoral winning to the democrats (colloquial name for the Democratic Party) because they will have to convince the citizens they are not responsible for the economic problems Serbia is facing with. The additional problem for the democrats to use the candidacy for its winning is the fact that unlike the previous elections, 'European story' is not any more their exclusive story but is 'shared' with other parties among which is the main oppositional party Serbian Progressive Party. Besides, everything that happened about Kosovo in the last six months as well as the pressure of the European Union headed by Germany on Belgrade as a consequence brought to the decrease of support for the enroll of Serbia in the European Union and to the decrease of citizens' support to the European integrations. It means that reaching the candidacy in March 2012 the democrats can not capitalise in citizens' voices as it would have been the case in December 2011. However, the fact is that the democrats have now got the platform for the elections, meaning that for them is more suitable to come out to the voters with the candidacy reached than without it.



The European integrations are the basic program of the Democratic Party and now the democrats can announce to their voters that they fulfilled their main pre-electoral parole, as well as to seek for the new mandate in order to continue providing this programme.

In Serbia, contrary to Kosovo, does not exist serious political opposition to the agreement between Kosovo and Serbia. The strongest oppositional party, Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) with chosen words stated their opinion about the agreement demanding democrats to publicly announce what 'Pristina achieved' from Belgrade. This way the progressives (colloquial name for SNS) tried to send a message to its voters that they differ from the Democratic Party but also to send the message to the international community that they do not oppose the achieved agreement. It is a good thing for Serbia that apart from the government , the strongest oppositional party is not against the achieved agreement and it reveals the stability of political scene and its predictability.

However, not everyone in Serbia supported this agreement. Against its verification opposed many small oppositional parties such as right centred party of former President and Prime Minister **Vojislav Kostunica**- Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS),then ultra nationalistic Serbian Radical Party (SRS) led by Vojislav Seselj accused of war crimes during the civil war in former Yugoslavia in front of the Hague tribunal. These two parties do not have the political strength to endanger the agreement but they have the support of the significant part of the public, as well as certain intellectuals known for their nationalistic orientation. Against the agreement also stood up Serbs on the north of Kosovo meaning their political representatives. The informal leader of Serbs at the north of Kosovo and the governor of Kosovska Mitrovica (the only town in Kosovo in which Serbs remained in larger number to live) **Krstimir Pantic** declared that Serbs on the north of Kosovo feel 'anxious and disappointed with the agreement of Belgrade and Kosovo. ' **In our opinion the agreements are unconstitutional**', said Pantic and expressed his expectation that '**Constitutional Court of Serbia and authorised institutions will react appropriately and claim these decisions invalid**'. Serbs on the north of Kosovo have just held referendum on which they declared that they do not want to live on an independent Kosovo. Despite their relatively small percentage share in overall number of citizens in Serbia, their influence on the overall public ,political and social life as well as on Serbian Orthodox Church is respectively strong. The Serbian citizens , despite of their political opinion, are very delicate about the question of Kosovo, which is considered to be the place of the origin of Serbian state and where the Serbian churches are shrines. It is the reason why Serbian government , especially around the time before the elections, must be careful not to be accused of the 'betrayal of Serbian interests on Kosovo'. It especially refers to the governing Democratic Party because it does not possess the image of the party that defends national interests. It is the reason why the Serbian government in the following period is going to be less prepared to make compromises about other questions concerning Kosovo. Simply, leading coalition is by acquiring European Union membership candidate status gained what is expected for the campaign and until the elections it is not going to be ready to make compromises about anything so as not to give the motif to the opposition to accuse it of the national interests betrayal. The opportunity for new compromises will occur after the spring elections provided the current leading coalition again win the trust of voters. Then Tadic would have the opportunity to promote and carry out new policy concerning Kosovo as well as to do a 'painful turnover' he has announced in his public appearances.

That is exactly why the leading coalition in Serbia, before the elections are held, will have to find the way how to expose to the citizens another hard decision which is, most likely, the result of part of the deal with the European Union. It is the matter of the decision whether local elections for municipalities on Kosovo will be announced at the same time as for other municipalities in Serbia?



Until now there were regular presidential, parliamentary and local elections held in Kosovo despite the fact that Serbian territory was under the administrative governance of the United Nations since 1999. Voters on these elections were only Serbs and not Albanians who regularly boycotted them. On the other hand, most of the Serbs boycotted the elections organised by Pristina and it led to the emergence of dual institutions – Serbian and Kosovan. During last autumn, Germany asked several times of Belgrade to abolish 'parallel', meaning its own political institutions on Kosovo. Belgrade was not asked to stop financing medical or educational systems (all medical and educational institutions on Kosovo are part of Serbian medical and educational system). In conclusions of the European Council from last December among the conditions for gaining candidate status was not stated the one for the abolishing of Serbian institutions on Kosovo.

Serbia was then asked to '**maintain demonstrating believable commitment and to fulfill further progress in implementation of agreements achieved in the dialogue (with Pristina) including the agreement of consolidated control of border crossings, that it achieved the agreement about overall regional cooperation and that it actively cooperated to enable EULEX and KFOR to do their mandates.**' There exist some clues that Germany asks from Serbia not to schedule elections for local governing institutions on Kosovo because that way runs out the legitimacy of these institutions. Anyway, it is going to be much harder for leading coalition to, without much damage concerning image and ranking, maintain that decision than it was the case with the regional presentation of Kosovo. Because while citizens do not share any feelings or the attitude to the fact that on some regional forum are going to sit representatives of Belgrade and Pristina at the same table, not holding the elections on Kosovo is something that could turn into the topic. Not scheduling the elections on Kosovo the opposition in Serbia can use as a 'proof' that the government gave up Kosovo and accepted its independence. That is the reason why this question is more dangerous for the ranking of the governing coalition in Serbia.

It would not be a surprise if Serbs from the north of Kosovo, in case Belgrade would decide not to schedule the elections, could answer with organising their own elections. Similar to the case of referendum, the international community could ignore the results of such elections. However, the question is what can be done if Serbs from the north of Kosovo again refuse to participate on local elections organised by Pristina? Which local leaders is international community going to negotiate with? It seems that the trial to force local Serbs by pressing Belgrade to non-willingly take part in the elections organised by Pristina could lead to the situation that on the north of Kosovo would not be legitimate governing institutions and would emerge various non-institutional groups. The existing Serbian institutions on Kosovo are not in a position to be abolished by force or pressure. There are no legal institutions if on the elections they are not chosen by people. Thus, instead of the pressure on Serbs from the north of Kosovo, there is a necessity for long process of gaining trust and arrangement with them about the way of holding the elections for local organs and their authorities.

The agreement about the regional presentation of Kosovo has not solved all as well as not the most important problems about Kosovo but it has opened new perspectives for solving problems between Serbia and Albania. It presents the turn in approach of part of the international community that supports the independence of Kosovo in their solving that problem. Till this agreement, that part of the community strictly insisted on the fact that Belgrade should accept the independence of Kosovo. In order to force Serbia to do so, the pressure was used by conditioning the process of European integrations. Besides, that part of the international community refused to discuss about any other greater rights for Serbs on Kosovo claiming that the Ahtisaari's plan (the plan of former president Martti Ahtisaari accepted by the United Nations) had given wide rights to the national minorities and local autonomy. After the referendum of Serbs from the north of Kosovo, who refused the institutions from Pristina, it is quite clear that Ahtisaari's plan did not vivify and that Pristina will have to offer to Serbs much more concrete offer for the



autonomy they would be able to accept and which could enable them tight connection with Serbia not only through medical and educational systems.

Hence, Belgrade and Pristina are facing the historical agreement about the rights of Serbs on Kosovo, and only that kind of agreement can guarantee that Serbia and Kosovo will be able to live together. The path which should lead to that historical agreement has been marked with the agreement of regional presentation. It is exactly the thing that Pristina is afraid of and there lies the reason why almost all Kosovo's opposition and public consentingly rejected the agreement of regional presentation. Kosovo's public had used not to give any concessions concerning the relations with Serbia.

Besides, Kosovo enjoyed the support of the USA, which would always, sooner or later, step up in their favour. Four years since the declaration of Kosovo's independence it has become quite clear that Kosovo can not vivify as a state as long as Serbia stays against it, and also that is quite difficult to force Kosovo's Serbs to accept what they do not want to. That is the reason why Pristina is going to be asked to step up with a new offers and to convince Serbs it is offering them perspectives of stable and good life. In the case of regional presentation, Pristina has ,for the first time, instead of unreserved support not to relent in relations with Serbs or Serbia got the new claim to show flexibility.

The Prime Minister **Hashim Tachi** himself admitted that fact, stating that in the days before signing the agreement he ' **was in continuous contact with the highest representatives of the USA, Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy , Turkey and Albania.**'Of special importance for new relations of Serbs and Albanians is that the USA, with the determined influence on Kosovo's government, played the key role in reaching the agreement of regional presentation putting a pressure on Pristina. Thus ,after reaching the agreement about regional presentation the US State Secretary **Hillary Clinton** in her special announcement for the Voice of America in Albanian language , stated that the decision of Pristina' s authoritiest to accept the agreement about its presentation in regional organisations with Belgrade ' **was very smart and brave.**' ' **I am an optimist concerning the progress Kosovo has made and I am pleased that this important political decision will bring Kosovo closer to the European integrations. I encourage people of Kosovo to support this decision and support the achieved progress.**', said Clinton.

The agreement about regional presentation of Kosovo represents great opportunity to become the introduction in historical agreement of Serbs and Albanians. The terms for that are that both Serbs and Albanians have become aware that without the agreement there is no further progress as well as that the USA and the European Union apart from Serbia which is under constant pressure as in the case of regional presentation, put some pressure on Pristina too. If it proves to be true, it is possible that the dispute which recently seemed almost unsolvable and frozen very soon could come to the solution.