

## THE DEFENCE AND LAST DAYS

Conflict at the head of the Democratic Party ( DS ) between the President of the party **Boris Tadić** and his deputy and popular Mayor of Belgrade **Dragan Djilas** has lasted since this party lost the elections held in May this year. The conflict escalated during the last week by the exchange of public accusations between the two leading people of the party. Thus was revealed the fact that between Boris Tadić and Djilas does not exist any communication and that they have completely different visions of the party's future.

The experts in knowing the situation in the Democratic Party reveal that problems between the leading people in the Democratic Party have started a few years earlier, since the moment when Djilas as the Mayor of Belgrade according to the research of the public opinion has become more popular than Tadić who was at the time the President of Serbia. That is exactly why, during the pre-electoral campaign for the May elections, it was more important to Tadić that Djilas and the list of the Democratic Party for the Assembly of the city of Belgrade did not gain even one more vote than he would gain as the candidate for the President of the Republic than how many votes he was going to gain in total?! And when it becomes more important where the votes are gained instead of thinking of the fact that every vote enables general success of the party and its candidates – the consequence is the defeat. At the Belgrade Board of the Democratic Party are still talking about the meeting that leader of the party Tadić allegedly held with the presidents of the municipal boards in Belgrade before the elections when he directly threatened that they were going to have problems „ **if the Democratic Party at the elections for the Assembly of Belgrade should win one more vote than him as the presidential candidate or the party list for the parliament.**“ At night when the votes were counted for the parliamentary and local elections as well as for the first round of the presidential elections the real drama took place at the head of the Democratic Party, because this party won around 36 per cent of votes at the elections for the Assembly of the city of Belgrade, led by Dragan Djilas. Meanwhile, the list for the Assembly of the Republic whose bearer was Boris Tadić won around 22 per cent of the votes of the supporters while Tadić himself at the first round of presidential elections won more than 25 per cent of the votes. The additional problem was the fact that the Democratic Party in its Belgrade campaign did not use either the name of the party or the name of Boris Tadić , instead it was the list of Dragan Djilas. Already then the Belgrade organisation of the party was „accused of“ taking care only about „ its result“ and not about the entire party. In the terms of that speaks the statement given immediately the next day, on the May 7th, by the leader of the Democratic Party Tadić at the electoral meeting in Pančevo ( City situated 20 km east of Belgrade) where he said that „ **the greater enemies than the leader of the Serbian Progressive Party Tomislav Nikolić are those who in the Democratic Party work only for their own personal interests** „ without precisising who they were. Surely it was clear to everyone that he was aiming at his deputy Djilas as well as his other deputy **Bojan Pajić** , the president of the Government of the Autonomy Province of Vojvodina ( the north Serbian province which together with Belgrade represents the most developed part of the country).

So, the conflict between Tadić and Djilas was inevitable no matter what the result of presidential elections was. This conflict only sped up Tadić's defeat and made it public.

After the defeat at presidential elections, Tadić has become the candidate of the Democratic Party for the Prime Minister. Despite of the fact that he did not want immediately to announce publicly that he was going to accept the candidacy, it was clear that Tadić did not have any other choice when he did not resign all of his functions in the party immediately after the electoral defeat. Formally, all deputy presidents in the party, including Djilas and Pajtić, demanded from Tadić to accept the candidacy for the Prime Minister. Basically, the decision that Tadić would be the candidate for the Prime Minister was made by a group of his personal friends who have been running the Democratic Party as well as the country together with Tadić for the last nine years. In any case, to the democrats (popular name for the Democratic Party) at that moment seemed as the right solution that Tadić should become the Prime Minister. His friends would protect themselves and their businesses, the party would remain the leading one and the deputy presidents Djilas and Pajtić who were accused by Tadić's surrounding friends of not running any campaign for the election of Tadić would show that they did not oppose to Tadić's candidacy for the Prime Minister. Djilas even at one moment offered to become the deputy Prime Minister at Tadić's government! To that offer Tadić did not even answer which tells that even then the relations between them were disturbed. At that moment the question of the leadership in the party was not actual. When it became clear that the other parties were going to form the government and that the Democratic Party was moving into the opposition, the question started to emerge whether the party needed a new leader. It was logical because the failure in constituting the government was his second great defeat in only two months. Whether he wanted to admit it or not, Tadić led the negotiations about the government alone so that the defeat is only his. Despite the new defeat, Tadić firmly rejected the idea of withdrawal from the position of the president of the Democratic Party. „ **Nobody in the party has asked for my resignation and I am its president**“, said Tadić at the beginning of July in the interview for the respectable Serbian weekly NIN.

In purpose of possible crisis endings in the Democratic Party should be known the relations in the party during the previous almost nine years of leadership. Tadić has formed around himself a tight circle of close friends who he was making important decisions with, in the party as well as in the country. Some of them had state functions, some of them did not, but that circle was making all decisions. Most of these friends were the members of the Democratic Party but they disdained it, its procedures, and they were diminishing its importance. They considered that Boris Tadić is bred by himself, that the political organisation which president he is exists only to serve to him. The logic of this group was that everyone in the party and in the state were only the executives of the decisions made by the President. The consequence of that was the complete isolation of Tadić from his party as well as creating of the atmosphere that the party is only an obstacle to Tadić's political career. In the party this group of people was mockingly called – the Court, and they called themselves the creative team. Apart from the group of close friends there was also the party's head, meaning the deputy presidents and individual influential political persons. In this group especially were noticed the deputy presidents Dragan Djilas and Bojan Pajtić who are the leaders of Belgrade and Vojvodina, and as being on these positions gained popularity that was independent of Tadić or of the Democratic Party.

The third deputy president and the former Minister of Defence **Dragan Šutanovac** had a great party authority based on his merits in the Democratic Party but in the previous few years he excluded himself from the party's business. Thus the great power got the fourth deputy president **Dušan Petrović** who understood the importance of party's organisation and who was the leader of it all excluding Belgrade and Vojvodina. It can be said that because of that power he gained as well as the structure he built only Petrović had an access to the creatives who were making decisions. Since the party was at the same time the governmental one, the party's head was dealing with the global questions and the local party's leaders were on their own. Simply, nobody controlled them. Some of them used the situation to become the successful mayors and some of them to become richer. It was some kind of silent pact between the party's functioners and the president – we were going to be silent at the meetings of the General Board, we were not going to oppose any of your decisions and you let us do whatever we wanted to do. And that is why today, when the Secretary of the Presidency of the Democratic Party is lamenting over the certain individuals in the Democratic Party who became rich over the night, should ask himself how it was possible that the party did not know about that, that there were not any mechanisms for solving such situations, and why „the best among them“ (Stefanović's description of Tadić) as the President of the party let that happened. In the history of the Democratic Party has never been less democracy than today, more of anarchy, more of making decisions in the centers of power that are completely out of the party. To be honest, all of them took part in it but only the most responsible will pay the price for that. For almost nine years there has been recorded only one case of the suggestion that was not adopted by the board of the party and was supported by the President. It was in the year 2008. when the „creatives“ wanted Vuk Jeremić to become the Prime Minister which faced harsh opposition of the deputy presidents of the Democratic Party.

Today, Tadić is paying not only the price of his alienation from the party but also of his presentation in public created by his „creative“ associates that he is a nice arranged marketing product used by everyone and nobody knows in what purpose?! Which means – nobody knows what is the content of that product. Politics does not have anything in common with the commercial marketing, meaning that you can not sell the politician the way it is done with coffee or detergent. Citizens who are voting can be influenced by the image or the appearance of the politician, or the video of good production, but the policy that is offered is crucial. Tadić's surrounding was not willing to accept that fact for years because if they did they would have to admit that their part in Tadić's success, which was not small, was not the only that mattered. The relation of the „creatives“ towards Tadić and the party was best seen after Tadić's electoral winning in 2008. when around the headquarters of the Democratic Party were given shirts on which was written „Creatives have won! Boris Tadić is the President!“ It was a slap in the face to the Democratic Party as well as Tadić himself. The „creatives“ gave message to the party that it is irrelevant the fact that thousand of activists took part in the campaign, shared flyers and programmes, put electoral posters, took part at the party's promotions, led „sure votes“ to the polls and were convincing citizens to vote for Tadić. These activists, according to the opinion of the creatives, did not win. By that message they also sent message to Tadić that even he did not win but them?! It was obvious that more than million votes Tadić gained in the year 2008. were not important. Since they believed that they won and that they took over the government it was logical to them to share it as well.

Today ,when Tadić and the Democratic Party lost the elections nobody in Krunska Street in Belgrade ( the street in which is the headquarters of the Democratic Party) printed T-shirts with the slogan „ Creatives have lost. Boris Tadić is not the President.“ Now the culprits are looked for inside the party, and there are requests for the identifying of the individual responsibility in the party that for eight years nobody has asked any questions. Maybe it would be much simpler to start with the admittance of the „creatives“ that they are defeated and that they are responsible for many wrong moves one of which was – scheduling of the early presidential elections.

After the forming of the Government of Serbia it has definitely become clear that the Democratic Party stayed in the opposition. As it is usual so, the parties that are in the government in Serbia have started forming the same or similar coalitions at the local levels wherever it was possible. Everyday the democrates have lost government in some big municipalities around Serbia which is quite hard stroke to the party. In short, by losing the presidential elections only Tadić and few of his advisors have been left without a job, by losing the Government a several hundreds of workers left their working places and by losing the government on local level has endangered the existence of a few thousands of party members. It flounced the party and created conditions for starting the question of Tadić's responsibility. To be honest, Tadić himself gave reasons for the attack on him. At the moments when the party which president he is was losing the government in the municipalities daily, in the public were shown the photos of him taking rest in the swimming suit at the Croatian island of Vis, in the Adriatic Sea.

His deputy president Djilas then addressed the public with the open letter in which he accused the actual board of the party of „**being silent**“ as well as that he was on vacation that was not earned „ **tired of works that we have not started yet nor done**“. „ In the meantime, our opponents formed the Government , formed the government at local levels, constituted the Parliament, brought some laws, were choosing the mayors, were spreading international contacts, they took over all the instruments of the government“, said Djilas. „**We have left our half of Serbia for three months , apart from Belgrade and Vojvodina and few cities such as Leskovac, Paraćin and Užice – without any encouragement , without representing of the citizens' interests, without any perspective, without any action**“, said Djilas. The deputy president in his letter did not mention either the name of the president of the party Tadić or any other deputy presidents but it was clear who he was thinking of. „ **It is not a secret that I do not like all the people from the head of the Democratic Party. Fortunately, they do not like me either. What makes us different is , among other things, my conviction that this is not the summer in which the Democratic Party should be in the „ swimming suit“ . It passed one hundred days since our one electoral defeat and one post-electoral defeat. We, as the party of serious people have still not stepped forward in front of our members with the analysis of the cause and the consequence of losing the government**“, bespoke Djilas to the members of the Democratic Party. The deputy president of the Democratic Party stressed that the party did not have the strategic platform which should represent practical plan of reorganising of the party, in order to come back in the game in a year or two. It was clear that he was prior addressing to the members of the party when he said that what each member of the party wanted to hear , that he promised he „ **was not going to dispart the party**“.

He emphasized that the basic question for the Democratic Party and its followers was not whether on its top was going to be Boris Tadić, Dragan Djilas or a third person, but, as he said, the life question of the Democratic Party, how to be led, where to go and what the Democratic Party would mean to Serbia. „ **What we are today in is not the winning strategy. It is not any kind of strategy. As we are in the middle of reanimation, curing of someone’s earlier vanities and hurt vain. Serbia has changed from the elections, I have the impression that the part of the Democratic Party is trying to survive without changing the party or themselves. It is not the kind of politics I can support**“, said Djilas and thus started his campaign for the first man of the Democratic Party.

We have not waited for long on Tadić’s response. He messaged that in the party they were analysing and defining the responsibility and the guilt for the electoral defeat, that there was no need for hurrying up with that because the destiny of our country was no longer in the hands of the Democratic Party, as well as that he did not believe in the division of the Democratic Party which he called the „national institution , extremely important for the future of Serbia.“ „ **The whole September is going to be the month of analysing of the electoral results and the situation in the Democratic Party including the party departments, and at the beginning of the month on the General Board everyone is going to have the opportunity to say his attitude, to define the responsibility as well as the guilt**“, said Tadić and emphasized that he was going to ask that the meeting of the General Board, where the final analysis of the electoral result would take place, should be open for the public saying that „ **the citizens of Serbia should know about the situation in the Democratic Party**“. The president of the Democratic Party said that he had already taken over the responsibility for the electoral defeat and that „ **he is ready for the analysis of his guilt too**“, as well as that „ **he always governed according to the principles of the organisation without running away from the responsibility of guilt**“. „ **I immediately took over the responsibility and now I want to see what the reactions of other functioner in the party are going to be, from the deputy presidents to the municipal organisations. How they are going to estimate their responsibility as well as their guilt, taking into account the results of the elections since 2004. till today, because one cycle of the Democratic Party , its work and contribution to the reforms has been finished**“, bespoke Tadić to the members of the Democratic Party.

By the analyzing of these two appearances it can be concluded about the tactics of Tadić and Djilas. Djilas wants to solve the crisis immediately while the members of the party are still angry about the electoral result. For most of the members of the Democratic Party he represents the perspective at this moment, partly because he is more popular than Tadić and partly because he is the mayor of Belgrade. Djilas knows that he must take over the party instantly and that is why he is looking for the way to skip complicated and long-lasting party procedures. It is only going to be possible if the party puts enormous pressure on Tadić to resign. That is why he needs as his allies municipal boards and local leaders who he will have to give more importance. Besides, he has to become the president of the Democratic Party as soon as possible in order to easier remain at the position of the mayor of Belgrade. Simply, if he has got behind himself the strongest oppositional party , the price of his eventual political alternation from the position of the mayor of Belgrade would be too high. Djilas’ position is even more strengthened by the fact that today he can choose which of the actual officials of the Democratic Party he wants with him.



It is the reason why most of the officials of the Democratic Party are silent about the conflicts in the party because they are waiting to see whether Djilas is going to invite them or not. Only if that does not happen Tadić can expect their support. The exception is the deputy president of the Democratic Party **Dušan Petrović** who is in personal conflict with Djilas so he does not have any choice but to support Tadić. Still, the impression is that at this moment Djilas is waiting only for one support and that is from the leader of Vojvodina's democrates and the deputy president Bojan Pajtić who, different from other high positioned officials of the Democratic Party, is the only one who can choose and not wait to be chosen. If Djilas enters the pact with Pajtić – Tadić's chances for staying at the head of the united Democratic Party without the arrangement with the two of them are practically minimal.

Tadić's strategy is different. He needs time in order to other members of the party accept the fact that he is the president of the party in the opposition. That is why he wants whole September to pass in analysing of the electoral results, of looking for the responsible ones for the electoral defeat, and that the electoral assembly of the Democratic Party should be held at the end of the year if possible. It is the reason why Tadić emphasizes „ **that parties in the opposition do not have that kind of deadlines, which does not mean that the decisions should be made slowly but that at this moment it is very important to carefully conclude – what is and whose responsibility is and second – whose guilt it is.**“ Besides, the current president of the Democratic Party is going to ask to be discussed about all the electoral campaigns from 2004. till 2012. expecting that the judgement of the party towards him would be better if he proves that in this cycle he managed to win the elections twice and lost them once. Naturally, Tadić does not know that in politics there are no credits, meaning that only important is what has happened last. So, he is going to be judged only according to his last defeat no matter how many winnings he has had earlier. If it is of any comfort, it is the general rule of the politics. However, it is clear that the attempt of Boris Tadić to delay the discussion about the new leader of the Democratic Party has got the only purpose to make Dragan Djilas nervous and make him leave the Democratic Party and establish a new party. It is clear to Tadić that he can not win the battle against Djilas and Pajtić. Thus he can remain the president of the party only if he forces them leave the Democratic Party.

It is exactly the spot where we come to the critical question – is it more important for Tadić to stay the president of the Democratic Party no matter what the price is or will it result in separation of the party or is it important that Democratic Party becomes stronger no matter who the leader is? The impression is that the actual president of the Democratic Party between the party and his armchair – chooses himself. Being so confirms also Tadić's suggestion that the meeting of the General Board of the party that is scheduled for the 1st of September should be open for public! It is a dangerous suggestion because there is no party that ever let the direct watching of the meeting of any party authorities. The Democratic Party can only after such a meeting of the General Board in which the party officials are going to accuse each other for hours and put into public all „dirty laundry“ lose again a few more per cent of its otherwise weak rating. It seems that to the actual president that fact is of no importance at all.

His plan is that on such a meeting he confronts Djilas and Pajtić with the attacks of Dušan Petrović and other local leaders loyal to him, to let a lot of mutual accusations and that in that mud he would be the only one to stay aside. Tadić's stream is going to accuse Djilas of the electoral defeat because he did not accept Tadić's suggestion to be the presidential candidate a few months before the elections. That meeting of the General Board is certainly going to lead into the separation of the party and its dividing and has for its purpose to prevent changes in the party.

Ahead of the Democratic Party is hard and uncertain period. The triple meeting among Tadić, Djilas and Pajtić which is announced in media for the beginning of the next week is the last chance for the changes in the party to happen by an agreement which could imply the staying of the current president Tadić on an important function which is not the presidential, but without any influence on operative managing of the party. That would be the first and for the Democratic Party the best scenario. The party with more than one hundred thousand members would survive and the new leaders Djilas and Pajtić would enter new energy, new politics and new regulations. The Government would have strong opposition and the pressure to make its moves more carefully. Another scenario is the war in the Democratic Party between Boris Tadić and his surrounding on one side and Dragan Djilas and Bojan Pajtić on the other side for the position of the president of the party. Tadić has got minimal chances to win this war but it can last for months and it can make the serious harm as to the one side, so to the other as well, but to the party in general. As it is usual so, in this war it is going to be revealed much of the dirty laundry. Djilas and Pajtić are going to try to make as wide front as possible against Tadić in order to force him resign. In this scenario party would need more time to recover from the „civil war“ but it would stay united. What rating and authority depends on the intensity of the conflict. The third scenario implies that Djilas and Pajtić together or each of them individually give up the long-lasting fight with Tadić and decide to establish new one or maybe two parties. It is the worst scenario for the Democratic Party and the left centre in Serbia because instead of one strong party there would appear two or even three parties. They would attack each other because they would pretend on the same electorate. The Democratic Party would probably without Pajtić and Djilas and with weakened Tadić and his „creative“ surrounding be at the edge of census but it would take votes from Djilas and Pajtić.

At this moment nobody can predict the solution of the situation. The greatest responsibility is on Boris Tadić. Whatever happens in the Democratic Party he is the leader who is leaving the political scene. It is obvious that Tadić will never again play such a political role on the political scene of Serbia he has had until three months ago whatever happens to the Democratic Party and whatever his part is going to be in it. It depends on him whether he is going to be remembered in the history as the politician who let his party function and develop after the defeat at the elections or as the one who destroyed the party he led by refusing to accept changes. And whether someone is great politician and a statesman can be seen not in the way he is coming to the political scene but in the way he is leaving it.

The novel „Defence and the last days“ was written by the one of most-known Serbian writers of the XX century Borislav Pekić who was one of the founders of the Democratic Party in December 1989.