

THE LEAVING OF THE MASTER OF SERBIAN ECONOMY

By leaving the Government of Serbian Minister of Finance and Economy and the leader of the United Regions of Serbia (URS) Mladjan Dinkić , the career of this politician, who was in every government in the last 13 years, is put to the hardest temptation. Does this mean political ending of Dinkić, as it is estimated by most of the analysts and his political opponents, or the new , oppositional, role for this skilful politician is going to be „ new beginning“ as he is announcing himself, we are going to find out soon.

Serbian public heard for Dinkić back in 1995., when he became popular for his book „The Economy of Destruction“ in which he described economic politics of Slobodan Milošević (the President of Serbia in period 1989- 2000). After great success of the book and popularity it has brought to him, two years later, young assistant at Faculty of Economy, Mladjan Dinkić, became coordinator of an economic group named G17 consisting of respected economists such are Ljubomir Madažar, Boško Živković, Veselin Vukotić, Branko Milanović, Mirosljub Labus, Ivan Vujačić, Srba Antić..Dinkić's professional authority among them was the smallest but he had an idea to gather them , strength and energy to organise them and promote them in public. It was one of the best Dinkić's ideas that was going to characterize his throughout upcoming decades in politics. Honestly speaking, here can be noticed another Dinkić's characteristic and that is that he does not cope with any kind of political and professional competition because today not any of the founders of G17 are actively with him in politics. That is why G17+ (political party founded in 2002. out of non-governmental expert organisation G17 which in 2012. merged in United Regions of Serbia) , which owed its progress and survival to his energy , work and vision, was at the same time limited by Dinkić's selfishness and wish not to have the competition. That is how one great idea ended as a small political party.

Dinkić realised that Serbian voters do not trust the politicians so he decided to enter politics – as an expert. G17 was non- governmental organisation with wide net of confidants and boards all over Serbia and to which it was not difficult to formally transform into political party in 2002. Through summer schools of economic politics he used to find young and educated people throughout Serbia and the region of western Balkans and many of them were or are still today at important positions in economy and economics or even are the Prime Ministers in their countries. The decision to enter politics as an expert was an excellent Dinkić's movement by which he showed that he knew how to find a free space in politics. It was his another virtue which enabled him long political life. Dinkić was very popular until his entering the Government in autumn, year 2000. He was even in final selection of favourites for a candidate of the Democatic Opposition of Serbia (DOS) for the President at the elections in year 2000. in case that Vojislav Koštunica (a President of SR Yugoslavia, mutual state of Serbia and Montenegro in the period 2000. to 2003. and Prime Minister of Serbia in the period 2004. – 2008.) would reject the candidacy.

After the changes on October 5th, Dinkić became the Governor of the National Bank of Yugoslavia by which started his state career lasting for 13 years during which he almost completely controlled public finances, bank system and economy being at various positions of Minister and Deputy President in the Government of Serbia. He had courage to maintain unpopular measures such as introduction of the tax on additional value or fiscal cash registers, a reform of Office for Taxes and closing of national banks. His career was marked by controversies such as the foundation of National Savings, the dismissal of employees at National Bank, a promise of one thousand of free shares, investing into ski resorts, searching for the money of former president Slobodan Milošević at Cyprus, the investment of Fiat in Zastava and public accusations for criminal acts of businessman Mile Dragić and former Minister of Defence Prvoslav Davinić who were later released on court. He did politically brave acts as when he in spring 2008, after the decision of Koštunica's Government to aggravate relations with western countries because of the admittance of Kosovo, publically announced that „ he was not going to take part in collective madness.“ He quickly passed the way from popular independent economist people see their salvation in, to the unpopular politician whom citizens, being right or not, accused of low standard, difficult situation in economy and finances, and unfulfilled promises about better life. He did not hesitate to use state position in politics. That „ partition“ (a term of lawyer and stateman Slobodan Jovanović for using state in political purposes) he brought to perfection. Every state institution, agency or local self-government he used to control was in function of his party. While other parties needed years to make changes in areas they were controlling, Dinkić was able to make it in a month. He was very careful that his party representatives and activists were engaged by state institutions and public enterprises controlled by his party and he was quite unique because of that at political scene of Serbia. At the end of 2007, he suggested a Law of right on free shares and money atonement, and then he would already in January next year, during presidential elections, according to that law promised to the citizens that they were going to receive one thousand euros due to free shares. His letter to voters with the announcement about receiving free shares at the memorandum of the Ministry, sent to several million addresses, brought the winning to the former President Boris Tadić (president of Serbia and then leading Democratic Party in the period 2004. – 2012.) at very dramatic elections when he was losing after the first round of the elections. After parliamentary elections in 2008. he demanded to lead the area of regional development in order to create via that area legal frame for financing regional politics. Thus in state amends he created terms for political act – merging unpopular G17+ in new party, United Regions of Serbia. By signing the agreement about the investment of Fiat he brought the winnig to the Democratic Party (DS), which he was in coalition with, at elections in May 2012. He was accused of using his position to point the investments into municipalities where his party was the governing one. One situation of that kind concerning the moving of Slovenian factory Gorenje from Valjevo to Zaječar, where Dinkić's party was the governing one, brought to the conflict with former Prime Minister Mirko Cvetković (the President of the Government controlled by the Democratic Party in the period 2008.- 2012) which was the introduction into his first abolition from the Government in March 2011.

Being aware of his unpopularity he knew that he could only survive in politics if he started solving problems so work and efficiency became his trademark. At every elections he managed to, despite the electoral forecasts, enter the Parliament and become the member of the new Government. It had its price because effort and money invested in one position of the member of parliament of Dinkić's party was unproportionally big compared to the competition. When it was about political benefit he never cared about the expenses. He tried to find new politics by founding a party that would promote evenly developed regions. This was excellent movement but with system error because new party needed a new leader. That is why Dinkić's politics of regionalism faced a fiasco despite the fact that this idea had a lot of followers Without new politics he was left only with work and efficiency. These characteristics can only lengthen political age but they can not replace political idea. He did not manage to create strong and popular political organisation out of his party which would give him right on great part in the Government. To the control of public finances and economy he used to come due to his negotiational skills and using the situation where it was necessary for the majority. Great political parties can not accept that small coalitional partner alone controls public finances. That is why he had a conflict with Zoran Djindjić (the first democratic Prime Minister after October changes in Serbia, in period 2000.- 2003. , assassinated on March 12th, 2003.) in 2002. and then with Democratic Party as well in 2011. as well as now with Ivica Dačić. He could chose an easier political road and avoid negative campaigns if he had reduced his part in the governing proportionally to the electoral result. It did not happen because it was contrary to his hot political temper which was his great advantage but also his limiting factor.

What does Dinkić's political future look like? He has already announced that he is coming back into parliament as he did back in 2011. when he, similarly to what he is doing these days, got fired in the Government. Two years ago his first statement after coming back to the position in the parliament was that „ the Government separated from people“, and that „by Parliament it should be reminded who it was chosen by.“ Still, the situation he was facing then was quite different from the one he is facing today. Two years ago, his party stayed in the Government , he had his Ministers and influence and regular elections were about to happen in a year. Today it is not the case.

Dinkić's leaving from the government is going to disturb the opposition more than the Government. Government, which is now formally going to have less representatives in the Parliament, is going to be more homogeneous and the opposition, which is now going to be more numerous, is going to be more unstable. Dinkić knows quite well that he needs a great rank for his survival in politics and that it can only be a position of the leader of the opposition for which he is going to face a struggle with the president of the democrates Djilas. In order to take over the leadership, Dinkić will have to be very sharp opposition in order to present every attack on himself in the future as a political act. His critics is going to be pointed personally at the Prime Minister Dačić but it is indirectly going to be the attack on the whole Government. Such Dinkić's position is going to force Democratic Party to be more radical.

The radicalisation of the opposition could indirectly make more firm the alliance of the progressives and socialists which could transform into strategic partnership. In that case, the losers are Dinkić as well as Djilas because their political wish is that after the next elections become part of the Government as a minor partner of Serbian Progressive Party (SNS).

Simply , Dinkić is going to hope for the repeating of the situation from summer 2003., when he by announcing the scandal named Bodrum managed to break down the democratic government of the Prime Minister Zoran Živković (Prime Minister of Serbia in 2003. After the assassination of Zoran Djindjić). Still, then the occasions went in his favour because Živković's Government was unpopular and Dinkić had an agreement with then greatest party in Serbia – Democratic Party of Serbia (DSS). In other cases when he was entering the conflicts with the governing parties he was never alone. When in 2006. he resigned in the Government of Vojislav Koštunica he had an agreement with the Democratic Party (DS) of Boris Tadić which then was the strongest party in the country. The leaving of the Government in 2011. and conflict with the Democratic Party did not worry him much because country then was only a year and a half away from the elections and he had contact with the upcoming force in Serbian politics, today governing Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) . Today , he is all alone, he is an easy target for the attacks of political opponents and he has got the competition at every step, from the Government to the opposition. If he wants to be in the Government again after the next elections , Dinkić will have to cause its breaking down by attacking the President of the Government and the leader of the Socialists Party of Serbia (SPS) Ivica Dačić as well as to have higher rating than now greatest oppositional party – Democratic Party. Dinkić's political future so does not only depend on the results of the work of the Government but on the fact whether his party is going at the next elections , without state infrastructure, weakened by the leaving of many experts, without fresh political ideas and with an unpopular leader, manage to make good electoral result. Different from the years 2003., 2006., and 2011., he is now all alone, without any allies and against popular Government. That is why it is very difficult, almost impossible task even for a skilful politician such as Mladjan Dinkić.