



WHICH NAME IS SUITABLE FOR EVERYONE?

As the moment of the decision of the European Council whether Serbia is going to receive the European Union membership candidate status or not approaches, thus the diplomatic efforts of Brussels and Washington concerning the compromising solution about the regional presentation of Kosovo at international forums that would be acceptable for Belgrade are becoming more and more intensive.

The solution of this problem is the wish of everyone – from Belgrade, via Pristina and Brussels to Washington. Surely, each of them wish for the solution out of its own interests meaning that everyone believes it would help gaining their goals. Belgrade is hoping that the agreement would restrict the final obstacle of Serbia towards the receiving the European Union membership candidate status. The candidate status is urgently needed to the governing coalition led by the president of Serbia Boris Tadic in order to use the success for the beginning of the pre-electional campaign for local and parliament elections about to be held in the following spring. For Pristina, the presence of Kosovo at international forums with the acceptance of Serbia would mean that Serbia essentially even though not formally accepts Kosovo as separate international entity. Besides, the Government of the prime Minister Hashim Tachi would reveal itself of the pressure by that agreement, especially from the European Union, to show more flexibility in the negotiations with Belgrade. Further, for Brussels the gaining of the agreement would mean that the process of negotiations between Belgrade and Pristina come to new results, that the European Union is solving the actual problem of the Balkans as well as that in practice it shows that the European diplomacy is capable of solving the problems in Europe.

And finally, for the USA the agreement would mean the Serbia is one step closer to admitting Kosovo some day in some form, which is the necessary proof of their policy that Kosovo should be the independent country which has not given the results even after four years now. So, if everyone are looking forward to the agreement, the question is why there is no any? As it is always the case, the problems are hidden in tiny details.

The USA have shown how important they consider the solution to that problem through the visit of the US Deputy State Secretary William Burns to Belgrade and Pristina included in his European tournament. In his messages sent from Pristina it is already seen that the USA, for the first time after four years since Kosovo declared its independence, put pressure on Kosovo's side to do some kind of compromise. American policy towards Kosovo so far have been one sided and under the influence of strong prejudices according to which Kosovo's Albanians have the right on their state and Serbia to accept such reality. 'We ask from both sides to be creative and flexible and to insure that both sides Kosovo and Serbia can take part in regional forums. Both sides must find the formula that is suitable,' said Burns. He emphasized his understanding of this complex and sensitive question and added that it is very important for Kosovo to gain the right to be presented on the regional level, so in that sense it has to 'recognise the opportunity that is currently available.' All other symbolical and technical questions that are being analysed these days are significantly less important than having their own right of voice, their place at the table.', concluded William Burns. The message of the American diplomat to the government in Pristina was quite transparent - seize the opportunity to gain a chance to sit at the international forums together with Serbia at the same table and it is up to you to make a way how to explain it to your public. Before visiting Pristina the American diplomat visited Belgrade.

For Serbian hosts he has chosen the words of praisal for the upgraded relations with America and announced 'that he expects the improvement in the domain of economical cooperation.' Still, the basic topics of Burns' conversations in Belgrade with the highest Serbian representatives were the relations



with the European Union and Kosovo problem. The US Deputy State Secretary William Burns declared during the conversations with the highest representatives of Serbia that 'the USA strongly supports the European Union membership candidate application of Serbia' and considers that 'the aim can be reached in the following weeks'. 'We are also hoping that Serbia is going to fulfill all the obligations in order to help us help it reach the candidate status.' added Burns. According to his words important is pragmatic approach to the problem, and reaching the candidate status would reveal new possibilities - 'not just in the relations of Serbia with the European Union but in its relations with the USA', said Burns. As well as for his hosts in Pristina, the diplomat has sent transparent message about expected pragmatism in solving the problem if Kosovo's presence at the international regional forums.

The importance of Kosovo's problem to the USA can be seen in a fact that one of the topics at the meeting of the US State Secretary Hilary Clinton and the high representative of the European Union Catherine Ashton held in Washington was the situation at the Balkans, mainly the relations between Kosovo and Serbia in competition with the topics such as the world economic crisis, relations with Russia, Syria's crisis and nuclear crisis in Iran. 'The USA strongly supports the dialogue monitored by the European Union, in order to try reaching the improvement in the Euro integrations of Serbia and Kosovo', bespoke the US State Secretary. There is an impression that the USA once again clearly demonstrated to the European Union that without its involvement there would not be the solution to Kosovo which government is obviously under the 'influence' of Washington and not Brussels. It was also a message to the European Union that European diplomacy is still not capable of solving their own problems. Withal, would otherwise be possible for the US Deputy State Secretary to offer Belgrade support for its European Union status candidate if Belgrade shows flexibility or to offer to Pristina the improvement in the European Union negotiations concerning visa liberalisation when the USA is not the member of the European Union?

It seems that at the moment Belgrade after a few months has got the advantage over Pristina speaking of solving the problem of regional presentation. Confronting the December requirement about the European Union status candidate, Serbian referendum on the North of Kosovo which led to the worsening of the relations with the local Serbian leaders as well as the fact that without the solving of this question there will not be further progress in its European integration, Belgrade offered at least two compromising solutions for the name of Kosovo at the international forums it would be ready to accept.

Those suggestions were supported by the European Union which marked them as reasonable, thus the pressure went on Pristina's side. In that way should be understood the visit of the US Deputy State Secretary because it is obvious that only Washington can make a pressure on Pristina.

The problem for Hashim Tachi lies in a fact that it is obvious that Kosovo will not be presented at international forums under its constitutional name 'Republic of Kosovo'. Since all other countries in the world (except for Macedonia confronting Greece about its name but which accepted that names for the internal and international usage will not be the same) are presented at the international forums by their full constitutional names, the fact that Kosovo is not in that position testifies that Kosovo is not completely independent.

From Tachi's point of view, it is unusual that countries which admitted Kosovo under its constitutional name now require that country to be presented at the international forums under a different name only because Serbia requires so. Besides, Kosovo's government is afraid that if it accepts the change of the name, which is suggested by the European diplomats and negotiators, Kosovo would infinitely stay marked in the international community with that name. Why would Serbia ever agree that the name of 'Republic of Kosovo' stay in the international community if now Pristina itself agrees to use another name?



Another problem the Government of Kosovo is facing is referendum of Serbs on the North of Kosovo on which they rejected the possibility to live under the authority of Pristina. Despite all the sides including Belgrade, Pristina and International community ignored the referendum, this declaring of Serbs has already got certain influence. The voice of Kosovo's Serbs on the north will not be of an influence inside Kosovo but is going to be of an importance for Brussels, Berlin as well as for Belgrade. That voice showed that the plan of Ahtisaari (the plan of former Finland's president Martti Ahtisaari according to which the independence of Kosovo was declared) came to its end concerning the rights of Serbs. Simply, very soon Pristina will be asked to expose new proposal for the autonomous position of Serbs. If Pristina does not come out with the solution it could face the imposition of the solution for Serbs including the essential autonomy and full connection with Belgrade as it is facing the imposition of the solution for the international forums presence. Pristina will have to accept the fact that its sovereignty on the North is going to be obeyed formally but this region is going to have full independence concerning the Government, Parliament, police and sources of income. Such cases of autonomy are known around the world and the last was created by the USA – the case of Kurds in the Afghanistan. One solution of that kind would enable finding the model of coexistence between Kosovo and Serbia without mutual admittance, in order not to block Kosovo at international institutions, that its sportsmen can take part in international competitions for example. Simply, the Government in Pristina will either realise that it has to find the solution in accordance with Belgrade and that it will have to make significant cessions or it will be in a situation to have the solution imposed.

The pace of agreements for Kosovo's solutions depends on Belgrade and Pristina but also on Brussels. However, whether this problem will come to an solution depends mostly on Washington. If the American administration decides to put some pressure on Kosovo's side as in the case of regional presentation of Kosovo, to demonstrate some 'flexibility' and 'cooperation' everything is possible so as things to happen that are at the moment for the citizens of Serbia and Kosovo in the domain of science fiction.