

YET, THE AGREEMENT!

Instead of turbulent party elections, at the meeting of the Democratic Party Assembly that is going to be held on November 25th, current Deputy President Dragan Djilas is going to be inaugurated in new President of the party. At the same time, the Assembly of the Democratic Party is going to adopt new programme and statute changes by which are going to be fulfilled the terms of current President of the party Boris Tadić to withdraw from the presidential race and leave the party to his Deputy. Democratic Party is thus going to get its fourth president since the renewal of its work in 1990.

This solution of the crisis that overtaken the Democratic Party after the electoral defeat in May this year is possible after the agreement of current president Boris Tadić and his competitors, Deputy President Dragan Djilas and the leader of Vojvodina's democrats Bojan Pajtić. The details of the agreement first publicly announced Tadić when he said that he would not be the candidate if he did not made an agreement with Djilas which would imply not existing of the revanchism toward his followers in the party, the widening of the number of deputy presidents with his two deputy president candidates, the increasing of the authorities of the General Board of the party and introduction of new mechanisms such as internal control. He stressed that he insisted „that the Democratic Party should be positioned as strictly social-democratic party“, that he asked for the increasing of the jurisdictions of the Presidency of the party in order to reduce the possibility of autocratic running“ and the reform of the party which would imply „bringing of the new statute and enabling higher democracy in the party as well as establishing of vertical and horizontal communication“. Djilas and Pajtić immediately announced that the terms of current president for the withdrawal from the electoral race are for them „acceptable“ and agreed with the delay of electoral assembly meeting that was scheduled for November 10th. Immediately after, Tadić delayed electoral assembly meeting in 15 days and scheduled the General Board meeting on November 4th.

While announcing the decision of delaying the electoral assembly meeting, Tadić said that he still did not make any agreements with his opponent as well as that he himself was going to announce the decision about his withdrawal from the electoral race after the General Board meeting on November 4th. However, the agreement was made and it is only the show for the public. Being so confirmed a day later daily news Danas close to Tadić's current, which announced that the agreement „was made“ alluding to several sources from the top of the Democratic Party.

Why has Tadić suddenly withdrawn from the electoral race? The current president of the Democratic Party made the decision after waiting for the all municipal boards of the party to announce their candidacies for the position of the president of the party. Then it has become clear that for the new mandate he only has had the support of one third of municipal and town organisations.

In that situation Tadić did not have much choice – either to accept chaste way out and withdrawal from the electoral race with acception of his terms in order to „ keep his dignity“ or he would be defeated at the Assembly meeting. Surely, despite the predicted electoral defeat Tadić was not without arguments that would force other side enter the negotiations with him.

First, for the candidates being his opponents it is easier to take over the party without struggle than at the electoral assembly where there would be „ quite bloody“ and second, if he was to be defeated at the electoral assembly there was a danger of him leaving the Democratic party with his followers and forming a new party. Even more likely because he was severely accusing in his electoral campaign Dragan Djilas of „ attending to devolve the Democratic Party to tycoons“ as well as of attending to organise the party as a company. The accusations were so severe that it would be really odd if Tadić and his followers would decide to stay in the party that would with its majority support Dragan Djilas to maintain things they were fiery fighting against.

If Tadić's terms are analysed it is clear that the agreement which architect was Miodrag Rakić, person of great trust of Boris Tadić who has got good relations with Dragan Djilas and as can be found out from many sources probably the future Deputy President of the party, has already been made. Most of the terms are of general character such as the insisting on keeping the social-democratic orientation of the party which is out of any doubt, or to widen the authorities of the Presidency which has been also suggested by other presidential candidates. It is interesting that Tadić demanded that for the Deputy Presidents should be chosen his two candidates Goran Ćirić i Nataša Vučković being careful to suggest those acceptable to Djilas. Still, his demand for bringing a new Statute which would enable higher democracy in the party arrested special attention. Bringing of the new Statute and higher democracy was suggested by someone who sovereignly ruled the party for eight years? It simply means that Tadić himself admitted that in the party at the time when he ruled was not enough of the democracy? In that period, the party several times changed its Statute and every change was done in order to reduce the right of the members and organs of the party and to widen the rights of the President. That is , Tadić , for example, while he was the President got the „emperor's authority“ that gives right to the first man of the party that under certain circumstances , can suspend every decision of every organ in the party! That is why today, Tadić's demands for higher democracy in the party, no matter how righteous they are, seem as a wish to limit the authorities of the future president.

If the agreement should be realised, it is clear that Tadić is going to keep certain influence in the Democratic Party. For now it is not clear whether he is going to have a function such as „ honorable president“ that Pajtić talked about or he is going to stay without a function? About his future position even Tadić himself has not spoken about, except that he said to the press that „ he could stay in the party if it would be quite necessary.“ The fact is that Tadić now, if he wants to stay on function in the party, can count on the place of honoured president or the position of the President of Political Advisory, which he has already refused.

If he had accepted the agreement during the summer, Djilas and Pajtić would have offered to him significant authorities in making most important strategic decisions in the party. Everyone who knows the way of functioning of political parties, knows that it is almost impossible that Tadić further operatively influences the leading of the party in the way he is doing that now while he is the President.

Exactly because of that, he demands of Djilas to promise that there will not be any revanchism towards „his followers“. However, there is no need for that because in a short time Tadić will not have any followers in the party at all. Those who support Tadić today will turn to a new leader because their political careers depend on him. Djilas will have to accept them beside the fact they were against him because he does not have any other municipal boards in places they are coming from. Problems can have only certain functioners who have personal problems with the new President. That is why those in Tadić's surroundig who believe that after some time he is going to be in a position to come back at the head of the party do not understand the way political parties are functioning. Its life continues, it is going to be led by the new leader, in front of the party are new challenges, and Tadić as the leader of the party in the future will never again be an option for them: if they are to be dissatisfied with Djilas, they are going to seek for new solutions. For example Bojan Pajtić, who is going to become the Deputy President of the Democratic Party. Still, Tadić is going to keep moral influence in the party and his word is going to be respected whether he is going to have the formal position or the place of common member of the party. This position he earned by withdrawing from the electoral race and by the agreement he achieved, because if he had lost at the elections he could not stay in the party. Still, what importance in the party he is going to have in the future depends only on Tadić. If he is going to try to interfere daily in the work of the party very soon he is going to get into the situation where no one is going to listen to what he has to say. If he is going to show up rarely, only when it comes to the strategic decisions for the future of the party, his voice is going to be of great importance in the future.

What Dragan Djilas gets by this agreement? Why did he at the moment of his absolute triumph at the elections accept the agreement with Tadić? Djilas made the right decision, why he would go to the electoral assembly and count the votes with Tadić's followers when he can get the position of the President without struggle? By this answer, Djilas prevents possible future division of the party and deprives his political career of burden of mortgage of „political murder of the father“. The new President of the party is going to face harsh struggle for party consolidation and bringing back the part of its lost rating as well as the remaining on the position of the Belgrade Mayor. In that situation the least he needs is the division of the party he is taking over, and to suffer the attacks of his former associates. He simply knows that when he becomes the president even those who support Tadić at the moment will become their supporters, that is why he needed an agreement. If the agreement is fulfilled, the candidacy of Djilas is going to support Tadić as well, and it is going to be a message to his followers to support the new President. It is the only thing he needs today. It is going to be harder for Djilas to govern the party with compromises he has made with Tadić but that united party has got more chances for success than in the situation that it divided after the electoral Assembly.

Still, by this agreement the biggest winners are Miodrag Rakić and Bojan Pajtić. Miodrag Rakić, who is the architect of this agreement, has been trying to make an agreement between Tadić and Djilas since the summer, and he finally succeeded. He is the person of unlimited trust to Boris Tadić, which is natural since for eight years of being in his administration, he has managed the most responsible functions such as the one of being the coordinator of all secret services. At the position of the Deputy President he is going to be some kind of connection between Djilas and Tadić.

By this agreement, Rakić ensured himself the beginning of one important, public political career which he has deserved by investing all of his strength in making this agreement and avoiding the division of the party. How the „man from the shadow“ is going to manage on the public scene the time will tell, but his influence with the new President is going to be significant as well even if he decides not to accept the position of the Deputy President. Another winner is the leader of Vojvodina's democrats Bojan Pajtić. He has additionally strengthened his positions in the party and now is holding the „control package of the Democratic Party“. It is confirmed by the fact that the new president of the Executive Board of the Democratic Party is going to be a man of great Pajtić's trust, Dušan Elezović, who is, to be honest, in particularly good relations with Dragan Djilas. In the future Democratic Party Pajtić is going to be more than only the Deputy President, meaning some kind of Co-president. That is why the future of the party is going to depend greatly on the relations Djilas – Pajtić. Tadić put a lot of effort in the last two months trying to make a quarrel between these two because it was his only chance to win the elections and he failed. Is their relation going to stay firm, facing the new challenges that the party is undertaking remains to be seen.

Still, the greatest winner of this agreement is the Democratic Party. The internal party's struggle between two currents that was partly led through the media, has brought the great harm to the party by putting it down, according to some researches, to eight per cent of total electorate! For such a state should be blamed both sides equally because it takes two for the quarrel. It did not have to be so because the Democratic Party has had a certain experience from the year 2000. When then actual Deputy President Slobodan Vuksanović applied his candidacy against Djindjić.

The campaign was provided strictly inside the party, both candidates mutually respected the rules of the game and the party went out of that conflict even stronger. The Democratic Party needed this agreement because the unsparing struggle between two sides would be more intensive in the media as well as in the party in the next two weeks, before the Assembly meeting. The agreement is going to end up this war, will stop the falling of the rating, bring back some disappointed voters, and enable the President greater chances to recover the party.

Making an agreement however being good for the Democratic Party in stopping the inner party struggle is also going to have some negative consequences. This agreement is going to prevent the party, to through the inner party discussion analyses the reasons for the defeat of the party and try to find new solutions. So, the change of the leader was an inevitable term that the Democratic Party starts its recovery but does not solve all the problems. Because new leader can not make any success unless it understands the problems that led to the situation where Democratic Party lost the elections.

Then he will know what kind of changes he has to carry out in the party to bring it back again to the positions it was until recently on. That is why it is in Djilas' best interest to encourage inner party discussion concerning these questions.

The first question is the problem of the inner party democracy. The fact that the Democratic Party lost the elections is not a big deal because it is not the first or the last time in the democracy that someone who was the governing one becomes the opposition. When the political organisation enters the crisis according to its internal mechanisms for overcoming the crisis can be seen whether it is strong enough to survive the crisis and become stronger or it goes into history.

As some kind of a rule, the internal mechanisms are in connection with inner party democracy, with the discussions about problems and with the elections. It turned out that the Democratic Party does not have mechanisms for exceeding the crisis. If it had had them, the electoral assembly would have been scheduled immediately after the loss of the government. Because elections are the way of solving the problems and dilemmas in the democracy. In the period when the leader of the Democratic Party was Zoran Djindjić it was regulated by the Statute of the party the obligation of scheduling the electoral Assembly of the party 30 days after holding of the general elections. At the Assembly either the old authorities would gain trust again or the new one would be elected. In both cases, whoever was about to lead the party, would have had full legitimacy to do so. This article of the Statute was later nullified. That is why the Democratic Party faced the situation of waiting for the elections on November 25th instead of scheduling it in September. And in that meantime the party was collapsing, dual power was governing, media were full of headlines about bad relations among the party functioners, the organisation was losing the power every day at local level and its members were left without their positions they were having. When there are no internal mechanisms for solving the crisis, the crisis only deepens.

The fact that in three months after losing the elections, in the Democratic Party has not been carried out a serious discussion about the reasons of the electoral defeat tells that there are no democracy in the organisation. One of the characteristics of the Democratic Party was turbulent inner party life, letting the initiative to the individuals and the organs of the party and great influence of the parts of the party on politics. Although, Boris Tadić would have never been chosen for the President of the Democratic Party if local boards had not revolted after the decision of the Presidency of the party that Zoran Živković then actual Prime Minister had been the bearer of the electoral list of the party at the elections in December 2003. Then the revolt of the municipal organisations forced the Presidency to change the decision and choose then actual Deputy President Boris Tadić for the bearer of the lists. Similarly to that, after the rebellion of the party which started in autumn in 1993, Zoran Djindjić became the leader of the Democratic Party instead of then actual President Dragoljub Mićunović. In the spring of 2000, when then actual Deputy President Slobodan Vuksanović announced the candidacy for the President, he enjoyed the support of great part of the party. When the discussion is made in the political organisation and when in that process take part members and the organs of the party then it is the guarantee that the best decision is going to be made.

Withal, it is the rule of the democracy. That is why the party was not wrong when it chose in 1990. Dragoljub Mićunović as its leader, nor when it decided in 1994. and 2000. to be led by Zoran Djindjić nor when it voted in 2004. for Boris Tadić. These were the right decisions made in the best interest of the political organisation. That is exactly why, the relations that the new authorities of the party are going to have with for now the only official candidate for the President, Branimir Kuzmanović, are going to be a test of party's democracy. Branimir Kuzmanović is the only member of the party who showed the initiative and a wish to change something in the party's organisation. That is why the relations towards his suggestions about the reform of the Democratic Party are going to show whether the party wants the democratisation and whether the new authorities are ready to accept that they will not decide about everything in the organisation of almost 200 thousand members.

During the last eight years the character of the Democratic Party has been changed. Tadić is partly responsible for that and partly it is the consequence of the fact that the Democratic Party in 2008. took over the complete governance in the country, governing at all levels from local to the presidential. Thousands of party functioners became the state functioners as never before in the history of the party. Democratic Party was turned into the personnel party without the ideology or politics, where the membership did not have any initiative, in which for every decision it was asked the permission of the President or his surroundings, and many personnel solutions turned out to be wrong, among other things, because they were made out of the party or without any consultancy with the party. The party overflowed into the state device and nobody dealt with the party organisation or members and simply it was not the same Democratic Party that used to change Serbia. Communication with the members was cut and they could only watch their party governing while they were even not informed or consulted about the politics. Some state functioners have not entered the party for years. That is the reason why many members of the Democratic Party stayed at home during the elections in 2012 because they did not want to vote for their party which did not have time for them for four years! That practice continues so this crisis in the Democratic Party has been characterized by the absence of internal party discussion and any kind of initiative by the organs of the party and the members. Unless new leader stimulates the internal party life, healthy competition among people, ideas and projects and realises that the party democracy is an advantage and not a flaw – the Democratic Party will never again play the role it used to have in Serbian society.

The new President is about to face the problems Democratic Party has with the civilian sector. Democratic Party has always been the party that was gathering around itself intellectual public, civilian sector, cultural public and many others that stimulate the progress of society. That is why the Democratic Party was more than just a party – it was the movement of modern Serbia. That it was so could assure Tadić himself when at the presidential election in 2004. he was supported by the all segments of the society, meaning that by his side were intellectuals, actors, musicians, writers, sportsmen, as many other respectable people of Serbia. Those were the same people who at the year 2000. in very difficult conditions, risking their careers, stood by Zoran Djindjić and the Democratic Opposition of Serbia that won and brought democratic changes to the country. Exactly those people brought predominance to Boris Tadić in the second round of the elections.

In that year of 2004., Democratic Party was the opposition, its president Djindjić was assassinated and no one who then supported the candidate of the Democratic Party could not expect any benefits. On contrary. Unfortunately, Tadić has not understood that this support was not given to him personally – but to the Democratic Party and its candidate. Democratic Party governed that way for eight years and there was no one to support him at the elections in 2012. Then, when it was almost certain that he was going to win, all those who risked by supporting the Democratic Party during the hard times, were no longer either with Tadić or with the Democratic Party. They have become either „white ballots“ or the opponents of the Democratic Party. It is the hardest defeat of the Democratic Party. Tadić has never understood why the social groups that traditionally supported the Democratic Party turned their backs to him. He assumed that their support was the „natural right“ of the Democratic Party, he was angry at them and accused them of the defeat! Instead, he should have tried to find the reasons for the conflict with this segment of the society. It is the task waiting for the new President of the Democratic Party.

He will have to understand that the Democratic Party lost the support of these groups because of the way it was executing its government. He will have to understand that these groups are not ever-lasting and natural support to the Democratic Party, and that other parties such as Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), Socialists Party of Serbia (SPS) or Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) are trying to prepossess them for themselves. And it is possible to happen because in the society there is no eternal division on black and white and that the Democratic Party is not for good at the good side, and its opponents at the bad side. Whether you are good or bad depends on the way of governing or the things you are doing and it is not going to be good for the Democratic Party if the future President does not understand that.

At the Democratic Party there is no argue about how the party has been governing in the previous years because that is the reason why it lost the elections. Were the members of the Democratic Party behaving arrogantly while governing? Were they making any tragic mistakes such it was, for example, the judicial reform which has become already at the time of the Democratic Party the greatest obstacle to the European integrations of Serbia? What it was done so little in the struggle against the corruption? Were the certain Ministers who are the members of the Democratic Party far more rich then they were at the beginning of the governing? Were there a complete control of media such it was not remembered nor in the nineties of the last century? Was the state power concentrated in the hands of one or more individuals who were executing it out of any parliametary control being responsible for their deeds only to the President of Serbia? Why the Constitution was violated during the government of the Democratic Party because all the power was concentrated in the hands of one man, and all democratic institutions such as the National Assembly and the Government were completely made senseless? Was that the mission and the politics of the Democratic Party? Or was it done in the interest of certain functioners and in the behalf of the Democratic Party?

New President of the Democratic Party will have to understand that in the society there is no longer a separation on two poles, meaning that the Democratic Party does not have to be good because the opponents are „at the side of evil“. Political scene has changed in the previous years, which is the merit of the former President Boris Tadić and there are no stereotypes any more. For example, the European integrations are no longer the topic only Democratic Party stands for.



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That is why the Democratic Party, in order to be successful, will have to fight its competition first of all the leading parties, Serbian Progressive Party and the Socialists Party of Serbia, in a way that it will have to prove that it is better in solving the problems of the society and to understand that it can regain their positions in the society only if they are better than its political opponents.

The answers to these questions represent the key for the future of the Democratic Party. In order to gain the right answers the discussion inside the party is necessary which is not happening. Because only if the Democratic Party understands where its authorities were making mistakes, it can expect that in some future elections become political organisation which is competitive for the government. In order to succeed, it is necessary for the Democratic Party that the next party assembly meeting does not turn into personal promotion of the new leader but to be the opportunity for the discussion about problems, facing the truth and seeking for the solutions. Only that kind of process can give solutions and bring the progress for the Democratic Party.

Everything else will be closing of eyes in front of the problems, and will lead to the situation where the Democratic Party will never again have the role in Serbian society as it had only until few months ago.