

V.I.P. Daily News Report

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ANALYSIS

DS in Election Campaign: All or Nothing

The Democratic Party (DS) led by the Serbian President Boris Tadic has launched its election campaign for the parliamentary elections on May 6 vigorously. They used their ruling position and were the first party that submitted the electoral list to the State Electoral Commission (RIK) whereas the other parties had not been given the official forms for the tickets; that way the DS secured itself the first position on the ballot papers.

It is obvious that the DS will go all or nothing at the elections, as if the survival in power for them is a matter of life and death. Their greatest asset in the election campaign – according to the things we have seen so far – will be Tadic himself.

DS believes that Tadic can bring them victory, and he himself has decided to improve his party's result at the elections by playing the role of an esteemed statesman of the world that will bring new investments to Serbia and create new jobs.

Focus of the DS' campaign is on economic and social issues, but the party leaders forget that the party has been in power for many years. They appear as if somebody else has brought Serbia to bad economic and social situation the country has been facing with, so now the DS, when it comes into power, will put it all in order. They also neglect the fact that they had already promised similar things in the previous campaign as well as that the results have been rather opposite.

It is interesting that there is no a single word about high corruption – which is the issue the EU officials have been insisting on, and which is the party's weak point – in the DS' election campaign.

Tadic has also forgotten that he should be the president of all citizens, so he acts now as the leader of his party. He visited Kragujevac on Sunday as the president of the state, but addressed the DS election meeting as the party leader. However, it is a normal thing in the election campaigns in Serbia - now as before. One should wait and see what reactions it would cause as well as how the regulatory bodies that monitor the elections would react to that.

Although it is still unclear whether the decision would be made the presidential elections to take place at the same time (in theory, there is a chance the presidential elections to be called by April 6, but by that date the Serbian president should resign in order to create conditions for that), so, Tadic has gunned the campaign engine as the pillar of his party's election campaign.

He sent the Minister of Foreign Affairs Vuk Jeremic to Moscow last week in order the minister to secure him a visit to Russia and a meeting with the newly appointed President Vladimir Putin. But, according to some diplomatic sources, it did not work out. Anyway, Putin has not been inaugurated yet, so it is highly unlikely that he will confer with Tadic before Serbia's elections.

Tadic's associates have been operating full blast to make it sure that their leader will visit Washington, where the US President Barack Obama should confer with him. It is an old wish of Tadic's, but something like that will highly unlikely help him in the election campaign. It remains to be seen if Obama will help Tadic. In that event Tadic probably would not run in the presidential elections, because it would not be convenient Obama to meet with the outgoing Serbian President.

Tadic prepares several other visits to the European leaders in order to intensify the image of the esteemed statesman of the world. One can also expect that he would confer with the Italian Prime Minister Mario Monti. Tadic, in addition to economic and political reasons, is linked with Rome through some other, possibly even sentimental ones – at least some Belgrade-based newspapers wrote so.

Maybe it would be better for the international community not to interfere too much with the elections in Serbia for at least two reasons. First, it is not absolutely certain that Tadic's party will be in situation to set up a new government after the elections; second, all promises Tadic would make in return, highly likely would not be fulfilled, or it would take a long time these to be fulfilled.

The list of Tadic's international activities will also most likely contain some poorly recognised award for democracy, tolerance or something else; it is expected, also, that by the elections some foreign investor will come to Belgrade and sign unbinding agreements on possible investments. So, the Azerbaijan airline will most probably get to capitalize the national airline Jat Airways, since it can offer a couple of new smaller airplanes which will be of use to Jat on shorter flights.

In April, the government will start distributing free shares of Telekom Srbija to the citizens. The value of one share is about 60 euros, which is not a small sum for the impoverished Serbs. Finally, at the end of April the ATP tennis tournament will also be held in Belgrade organised by the family of ATP no. 1 Novak Djokovic; Novak's father Srdjan is believed to be close enough to Tadic, so the entire event will likely be used for the pre-election campaign.

Sooner or later, however, the DS will have to face reality: an electorate which has become drastically impoverished during the rule of the DS-led coalition, the growing unemployment rate, the prolonged drop of the national currency. Therefore they cannot hope that the voters will believe them.

The voters do not trust much the DS's coalition partners either, the bloc gathered around the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) of Ivica Dacic, former spokesperson of Slobodan Milosevic. Dacic began his campaign by saying that is possible that his SPS would not form government with the DS again. However, he promised the same at the last elections, and then in the end decided to the contrary. Even now he has problems with his electorate which is not favourably inclined towards the DS. Dacic has to be very cunning so as to trick his potential voters once again.

The Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) began its campaign quite modestly and will hand over its candidates' lists for MPs on Tuesday. Only after this will they enter into a stronger campaign, but which much less money and media pomp. It is the DS which, through its officials and tycoons, controls the money flows, as well as the media.

The first on the DS's election list, Belgrade Mayor Dragan Djilas, already attacked the SNS and its list of MP candidates in Kragujevac. Among other, he said that Ruzica Djindjic, the widow of Zoran Djindjic and in third place on the DS election list, was better than Jorgovanka Tabakovic, SNS deputy leader and third on that party's election list. The Progressives, who have the biggest chances of winning at the elections, will probably be the target of even stronger DS attacks.

It is interesting that, even with all the officials it has at all levels of government, the DS did not manage to secure too many candidates for its MP list, so Djilas was set to head all the DS lists, Djindjic's widow is second on the list for state parliament, and the aging president of the DS Political Council Dragoljub Micunovic is third on the list. It is obvious that the DS does not have many prominent public figures, especially intellectuals, in its ranks, as used to be the case. Besides, the party is clearly also aware that the majority of ministers from its ranks are not very popular.

Therefore, the beginning of the pre-election campaign was marked by Tadic and the DS. Everyone else has practically not started yet. Once they do, it remains to be seen what the chief topics will be. They will not find it easy to surpass the DS's promises. They promise the most. For the most part impossible things.

It also remains to be seen whether the electorate will understand why the DS did not fulfill in the past four years, and even before, the things it is now promising. On the other hand, it remains to be seen whether the opposition will be convincing enough for the voters to trust it to be able to fulfill its promises. Neither the ones nor the others will find it easy to convince the voters of it.