

V.I.P. Daily News Report

V.I.P. News Services, Čika Ljubina 6, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

phone/fax: (381 11) 32 82 360, 32 86 140, 32 86 141

e-mail: office@vipnews.rs vipnews@sbb.rs

Publisher: V.I.P. News Services

Editor-in-Chief: Vladan Marjanović

News Desk Editors: Rade Stanić, Davor Lukač

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ANALYSIS

Tadic Painted in the Corner

If the Democratic Party (DS) leadership does persuade its leader, the Serbian President Boris Tadic, to do it, the presidential elections could take place at the same time with the parliamentary elections on May 6 after all – but Tadic will have to give a lot of thought whether he should do it, or not, because it could be a curtain-raiser to his fall from power, according to the latest information *V.I.P.* has learnt.

Reportedly, Tadic should resign on April 4 so the early presidential elections could be called and scheduled for the same date with the parliamentary, but the presidential ones should have two run-offs.

Tadic, however, will not find himself in a better situation even if he makes a decision the presidential elections to take place in regular term, in late 2012, the sources from the governing coalition claimed. The same sources pointed out that the conditions are finally met Tadic's old rivals from the DS leadership to attack him as well as that they can count on help from some other parties for that.

There are only some ten days till expiration of the deadline within which it is still possible to start the procedure for holding of the presidential elections in the way the first run-off to take place at the same time with the parliamentary elections term. It would certainly animate the election campaign which has been rather anemic so far. Anyway, the second run-off in that version would take place on May 20.

However, in order the procedure to be activated, it is necessary the president to resign first. So, the final decision will have to be made by Tadic himself.

According to the same sources the DS deputy leader and the current Belgrade Mayor Dragan Djilas as well as one of the DS deputy leaders and the current Minister of Defense Dragan Sutanovac backed the idea Tadic to go for the presidential elections at the same time with the parliamentary ones. If the DS would form the government with smaller parties after the elections – perhaps without the United Regions of Serbia (URS) led by Mladjan Dinkic, but with the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) led by Cedomir Jovanovic – then highly likely the DS' candidate for the Prime Minister will be Sutanovac whereas Djilas will be the DS' candidate for the Mayor. The two have been considered to be disinclined to Tadic, but they have been supported by the party itself.

If this idea is going to be carried out – and it will be certain as early as on May 7 if it will be carried out – then Tadic will depend on his party in the second run-off of the presidential elections. If the DS could form the government, then the position of the Serbian president would not be so important to them any longer. According to the Constitution a president does not have large competences, so a strong prime minister can marginalize the president.

The DS will likely win less votes at the parliamentary elections than the leading opposition Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), which – according to all surveys – should become the strongest party represented at the parliament. The most important thing for the DS is the difference between the SNS and the DS not to be too wide, in order the DS to set a government with smaller partners. In that situation Tadic's parallel engagement in presidential campaign will be good, because the DS, thanks to him, could get a few percents of votes more than the party would get without him.

So, if the SNS would have a narrow lead of three-four percents, it should give the DS realistic chances to set up a new government with the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS)-led bloc and the LDP.

With secured positions in that new card deal – on the assumption that smaller parties would demonstrate full cooperativeness and not make the talks on new coalition complicated – the bloc within the DS that does not favor Tadic could lessen intensity of the campaign for the second run-off of the presidential elections.

It could scuttle Tadic's chances in the second run-off of the presidential elections, in which he would highly likely lock horns with the SNS' candidate, the party leader Tomislav Nikolic, two weeks after the parliamentary elections. That way a situation that has been unthinkable until recently – the DS to form the government, but to lose in the presidential elections – could happen.

Anyway, the LDP leader Jovanovic would not be sad if he saw defeated Tadic, and he probably could give a hint to his voters not to vote for the DS leader in the second run-off, or maybe even to vote for Nikolic.

For that favor he could do to Sutanovac and Djilas, this theory goes on, Jovanovic would probably be awarded by the position he considers as the first prize – the position of the Minister of Interior in the new government. That will be even more interesting than to see the self-admiring Sutanovac at the position of the prime minister, bearing in mind Jovanovic's controversial reputation. Alternatively, Jovanovic would accept the position of the Minister of Foreign Affairs as well.

Without additional reservoir of votes in the second run-off, Tadic's chances to win would be drastically slimmer. If he would lose from Nikolic and have to step down from the position of the president, his position of the leader of the DS would become untenable in the shortest period possible. Or, at least his opponents in the party and outside it count on it.

Everything above-mentioned is applicable in a situation in which there will be no presidential elections in May, but later on this year – possible scenario for decline of Tadic will be the same as well as the circle of people in the DS who would make gains from it. Only their position, it is supposed, would become even stronger than in the period immediately after the parliamentary elections.

It turns out that Tadic in any way will be facing with great problems to keep his position and influence as well as that it is just a matter of time when he will not be able to do it any more.

Naturally, just like any other scenario in the politics, this one can come to nothing in several ways. One possibility is the difference in votes between the SNS and the DS could be so wide that the DS would not have other option but to start talks with the SNS on forming of the grand coalition, but with the SNS as the senior partner. (It is believed that the SNS, in any other combination of the parties, would have a lot of problems to set the government).

Regardless of the continuous criticisms the two parties have been exchanging and continuous swearing of the DS officials that the alliance with the SNS was out of the question, the results at the elections could change it.

And, in the event the two strongest parties to reach an agreement on setting of the government, it is logical to expect the two parties to make a deal on the presidential elections, from which Tadic could make gains for himself and prolong his political life.

Also, parallel holding of the parliamentary and presidential elections could – because of larger identification of the electorate with the persons rather than with the parties – result in that the SNS because of Nikolic and the DS because of Tadic to make even wider difference in votes regarding all other smaller parties than it would be.

(That is the major reason why the smaller parties, above all the SPS, oppose the idea presidential and parliamentary elections to take place at the same time.) It would also make chances for setting of the grand coalition bigger.

However, even in this version, Tadic should count on rather strong resistance in the DS over making of such an alliance, the resistance that would be led by Djilas and Sutanovac themselves, but this time they would be backed by numerous like-minded ones in the party. Finally, it leads to the conclusion that – whatever he decides – Tadic will make a move that will only accelerate his decline from power – both in the party and in the state.