

V.I.P. Daily News Report

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Issue No. 4883

Thursday, June 21, 2012

ANALYSIS

Uncertainty over Government Formation Continues

Assessments and speculations over who eventually will form the government oscillate and change almost on a daily basis. So, on Wednesday – although the meeting between the Democratic Party (DS) leader Boris Tadic and the United Regions of Serbia (URS) leader Mladjan Dinkic was announced, and later held, in order to try to reach an agreement on formation of the new governing coalition which would include the Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) and the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) as well, suddenly news spread in Belgrade that an agreement on different make-up of the government was reached: the one made of the Serbian Progressive Party (SNS), the SPS and the URS.

Since this claim came from a source marked as “serious”, the news spread quickly outside Serbia as well, so some of the local analysts found themselves in position that they had to explain to their fellow analysts and friends from abroad that, as far as they knew, nothing like that happened.

A statement of the SNS acting leader Aleksandar Vucic voiced on Wednesday that potential partners in a government led by that party “disappeared into thin air” should be one of indirect confirmations that there is no such an agreement at all.

Nevertheless, rumors that the new government would be made of the SNS, the SPS and the URS started spreading throughout the city in the afternoon again; this time rumors included even the names of the ones that would be appointed to some positions in the government and other state’s bodies. There are observers who claim that this time it could be for real, or at least more probable than coalition lead by the DS.

Still, it mostly looks like nothing is still certain when it comes to the make-up of the new government. Anyways, the situation is too fluid one to say any prognosis.

DS more hinders than contributes to formation of government: The longer the talks take place the more obvious is that the DS, as a potential linchpin of the new government, due to unsolved problems in the party, is more and more an obstacle for faster formation of the government rather than a force that could give dynamics to the process and speed it up.

Even some perfunctory observers of the political events have noticed lately that some papers close to certain circles of the DS launched articles that criticize this or that prominent figure from the party.

For example, it is striking that several articles have appeared these days, which negatively, or at least suggestively read about a DS deputy leader and the Minister of Defense of the outgoing government Dragan Sutanovac; firstly the articles read about his involvement into a lucrative construction business, and then, by an unhappy combination of circumstances, and because of the tragedy in which, about an explosion of a grenade during an exercise at the training range two Military Academy cadets died earlier this week.

Whereas in the second case Sutanovac is mentioned as someone who should resign as the Minister of Defense for moral reasons, the first ones pose a question of origin of the money that he, or his wife, will invest in the business.

Political and journalistic circles associate this negative attention focused on Sutanovac with influence of another DS deputy leader, Dusan Petrovic as well as the influential State Secretary at the Ministry of Justice Slobodan Homen, who are allegedly at bitter odds with Sutanovac.

Unsolved Tadic’s status makes situation complicated: Even the conflicts between the top DS people do not make the situation complicated to such extent like the instable position of the party leader Boris Tadic does.

After he was defeated by Tomislav Nikolic at the presidential elections, Tadic found himself in front of seemingly clear choice - to stand down from the politics, at least for a while, or somehow to get the position of the prime minister in the government that the DS would form.

However, it means that - if the DS is not going to be a part of the new government - Tadic will not get the only position that makes him possible to relatively keep control, above all over his party. Without a strong state’s function, his position of the party leader does not mean much any more, because the electoral defeat has weakened it to a great extent.

Since the DS is not ready to go into opposition (except if the agreement reached by a group of other parties forces the party to do it) - because it will mean that the party will lose the positions and monopoly it gained during the last four years, whereas it can be a part of the government only if Tadic will be the new prime minister - the party is stuck in between two opposing interests: a necessity the things to be changed as less as possible regarding the situation so far, in which it is absolutely dominant, and a necessity to make a cut and the party to regroup and refresh itself after Tadic’s defeat and significant drop in the support the electorate used to give to the DS.

Attempts international factors to get involved into the matter: In such an atmosphere some of the political factors have been trying to reactivate importance of the international factor in formation of the government by trying to make an impression in the public that their presence in the government would bring additional benefit in a form of major financial support from abroad.

So Tadic, who has been representing his party only since the electoral defeat, visited Brussels earlier this week without an obvious reason, probably with an intention to hint to the general public in the country that the EU still prefers a government led by the DS, or perhaps with an intention to convince the possible partners in the government that formation of exactly such a government would mean considerable financial assistance of the EU.

Other parties have been resorting to the similar trick as well, so the ones from the SNS and the SPS have been trying to make an impression that in an event of formation of the government, whose part they will be, will mean that the country can count on major financial assistance from Russia.

It is almost needless to say that such inklings are empty talks as well as that these are just attempts to bluff out both the possible coalition partners and the general public.

The irony is that, naturally - unlike some other times when the impact of the outside factor onto formation of the government was significant - this time both the USA and the EU in a strongly manifested way distanced themselves from the stories about their influence, whereas Serbian parties have been striving with might and main to get them involved by all means.

When it comes to Russia, things are different, because it has had no opportunity, or means, to be involved in the events in the Serbia's political scene so far; but this time the country manifests ambitions for that. The latest issue of *NIN* weekly writes that one of the messages the SPS leader Ivica Dacic brought recently from Moscow is the one that Russia would not like to see Tadic heading the new government.

On the other hand, Serbs like to overstate their own importance as well as the degree of interest of the international factors, even their alleged interference in the events in the country.

Thus, this particular part of the saga on making of the new Serbian government is just a must-have spice.