

Letters from Serbia - the 2nd

Optimism at the Year's End

by László Végel

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As early as December 19th, unrestrained celebration began in Serbia, with everything that usually accompanies it, including firecrackers, of course. Namely, on that day, precisely at midnight, rockets torched the sky, everything was lit up; a special airplane carrying 50 of our meritorious citizens who, with joy and celebration because of the abolition of the Schengen visa regime, embarked on a short European tour, was sent off from the Surčin Airport with spectacular fireworks. The chosen European pilgrims' tour guide was none other than Minister Božidar Đelić – according to his own report on his property, one of the wealthiest politicians in the country. He was not the only politician who used this unique opportunity for marketing causes. The intensely populist Mayor of Jagodina Dragan Marković Palma took chosen local villagers to Vienna, giving them an opportunity to see the world and acquaint themselves with the experiences of Western European farmers. As he said, for the majority of the villagers this was the first trip across the border, and not to mention the privilege contained in the fact that they all stayed in a five-star hotel in Vienna.

Special busses, also with deserving citizens, departed from Subotica, a town located only about 30 kilometers from the Hungarian border, towards Hungary, i.e. the European Union. Cued by the shout – tape rolling! – ministers in black limousines appeared at the border crossing. Among them - Foreign Affairs Minister Vuk Jeremić. On the other side of the border they were welcomed by the Hungarian ministers who symbolically stamped their Serbian colleagues' passports and let them through without visas. Among a sea of flashlights a TV reporter, his voice trembling with emotion, spoke about the significant event.

There was talk of everything, except the past. And this night could be a irretrievable opportunity for us to remember what was in fact the reason for the European Union to

Pisma iz Srbije, 2.

Optimizam s kraja godine

od Lasla Vegela

Decembar 2009.

U Srbiji je već 19. decembra počelo neobuzdano praznovanje, sa svim onim što uz to obično ide, uključujući dakako i petarde. Toga dana, naime, tačno u ponoć, rakete su zaparale nebo, sve je blještalo, veličanstvenim vatrometom je sa surčinskog aerodroma ispraćen specijalni avion sa 50 naših zaslužnih građana koji su, na radost i veselje zbog ukidanja šengenskog viznog režima, pošli na kraću evropsku turneju. Vodič izabranih evropskih hodočasnika nije bio niko drugi do, prema onome što je sam prijavio kao svoju imovinu, jedan od najimućnijih političara u zemlji, ministar Božidar Đelić. Nije on bio jedini političar koji je ovu jedinstvenu priliku iskoristio u marketinške svrhe. Naglašeno populistički nastrojeni gradonačelnik Jagodine, Dragan Marković Palma, odveo je odabrane seoske domaćine iz okoline u Beč, i pružio im mogućnost da vide sveta i da se upoznaju s iskustvima zapadnoevropskih farmjera. Kao što reče, većina seljaka je prvi put kročila preko granice, a da i ne govorimo o privilegiji da su u Beču svi odseli u hotelu s pet zvezdica.

Iz Subotice, grada udaljenog od granice s Mađarskom svega tridesetak kilometara, krenuli su specijalni autobusi sa takođe zaslužnim građanima u Mađarasku, odnosno u Evropsku uniju. Na graničnom prelazu, na uzvik – pazi, snima se! – pojavili su se i ministri u crnim limuzinama. Među njima i ministar za inostrane poslove Vuk Jeremić. S one strane granične linije dočekali su ih mađarski resorni ministri, i simbolično udarili pečate u putne isprave srpskih kolega i propustili ih bez viza. Blještali su blicevi, a televizijski reporter je, sve zamirućim glasom od ganutosti, izveštavao o značajnom događaju.

Bilo je reči o svemu, osim o prošlosti. A ova noć bi mogla da bude nepovratna prilika da se prisetime zbog čega je zapravo Evropska unija pre 18 godina srpskim građanima zave-



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introduce such a visa regime to Serbian citizens 18 years ago. The next day's newspapers only partially dealt with this issue. Once again, confronting the past was left out. Such an attitude says almost everything about the position of the Serbian press, about the freedom of media, as well as about the dominant political atmosphere in the country.

An absurd of the grand festivity which took place on the occasion of the abolition of the visa regime is illustrated by the fact that in Tito's period, with the red Yugoslav passports, citizens were able to travel freely. So, of course, they did. It was understandable that 'Yugos' went everywhere, even to the most remote parts of the globe. And now there was a necessity to celebrate with fireworks, as if it was some event of planetary importance, the return to the state which was lost – by one's own fault – in the early 1990s.

But what about the past?

Streets which were once named after Tito were all renamed. They were mostly named after Serbian rulers or Serbian heroes. There was an abundance of suggested candidates. The most important thing was to erase the memory of Tito's name. However, this also devaluated the partisans, anti-fascists – instead of them, the nationalist chetnik leader Draža Mihailović triumphantly entered history textbooks. Draža, affectingly called „đeneral“, became the new national hero. Between 1941 and 1944, he believed that the fight against communists was more important than the one against fascists. Beside this „heroic act“, he intended to establish, along the way, a Greater Serbia. After Tito came to power, one of Draža's closest associates gave away the location of his hiding, so he was captured and sentenced to death by court martial. All things considered, it turns out that Tito's secret police was much more efficient than the security service of this Serbia which aspires to join the European Union. Those services have been searching for Hague indictee Ratko Mladić for ten years now. They are searching the skies and earth – as one of the ministers stated – but in vain, because they haven't found him. For a while now, they have been looking for the grave of Draža Mihailović, also without results and despite the fact that, according to official estimates, ministers and state secretaries are thoroughly doing their jobs.

Simultaneously, events and significant dates from the history of the anti-fascist struggle are slowly sinking to the darkness of oblivion. Some independent intellectuals have warned

la takav vid viznog režima. I sutrašnje novine su samo delom dotakle ovo suštinsko pitanje. Suočavanje je (i) ovom prilikom izostalo. Takav odnos kazuje gotovo sve o položaju ovdašnje štampe, o slobodi medija, kao i o dominantnoj političkoj atmosferi u zemlji.

Svojevrsni apsurd velike fešte, priređene povodom ukidanja viznog režima, ogleda se u činjenici da su u Titovom razdoblju, s nekadašnjim crvenim jugoslovenskim pasošem građani mogli slobodno da putuju pa su, naravno, i putovali. Bilo je po sebi razumljivo da su „jugosi“ obilazili sve, pa i najzabačenije tačke zemaljske kugle. A sad se ukazala potreba da se vatrometom, poput kakvog događaja planetarnog značaja, proslavi povratak u ono stanje koje je – sopstvenom krivicom – početkom devedesetih izgubljeno.

Ali gde su lanjski snegovi?

Ulice koje su nekad nosile Titovo ime, redom su preimenovane. Nazvane su uglavnom po imenima srpskih vladara, ili srpskih junaka. Predloženih kandidata bilo je na pretek. Najvažnije je bilo da se Titovo ime izbriše iz sećanja. Ali, time su devalvirani i partizani, antifašisti - umesto njih, u istorijske čitanke trijumfalno je stupio nacinalistički četnički vođa Draža Mihailović. Draža, od milošte zvan „đeneral“, postao je novi nacionalni heroj. On je između 1941. i 1944. smatrao da je važnija borba protiv komunista, nego protiv fašista. Osim ovog „junačkog dela“ namerao je da, usput, uspostavi i Veliku Srbiju. Nakon što je Tito došao na vlast, jedan od najbližih Dražinih saradnika odao je njegovo skrovište, pa je uhvaćen i vojni sud ga je osudio na smrt. Sve u svemu, ispostavlja se da je Titova tajna policija bila i te kako efikasnija od službi bezbednosti ove Srbije koja teži ulasku u Evropsku uniju, a koje, evo već deset godina traga za haškim optuženikom Ratkom Mladićem. Prevrću i nebo i zemlju – kako je izjavio jedan od ministara – ali uzalud, jer ga ne nalaze. Već neko vreme traži se i grob Draže Mihailovića, takođe bez rezultata, i to uprkos tome što, prema zvaničnim ocenama, ministri i državni sekretari temeljito obavljaju svoje poslove.

Paralelno s tim, događaji, značajni datumi iz istorije antifašističke borbe polako tonu u tamu zaborava. Uzalud su neki nezavisni intelektualci upozoravali političare da je

politicians in vain that the anti-fascist tradition is an integral part of European values and that Serbia, if she wants to join the Union, cannot renounce those traditions; even more so since it is that due to Tito's merits and those of the Partisan movement, Europe holds the Serbian anti-fascist past in high regards.

However, thanks to the Russians, the blossoming of the chetnik cult has been somewhat halted. Prior to the visit of Dmitry Anatolyevich Medvedev, the Russian ambassador to Belgrade noticed that streets which previously had the names of Soviet communist generals in the Serbian capitol had been renamed; this caused a stir in government circles. No time for joking – such was the thinking of the political elite. The statement by the Russian ambassador had a clear critical edge, it seemed like a warning from above, and something had to be done. The authorities overcame this sensitive issue by promising that they would very soon name some streets after Soviet generals, but in their excessive zeal, they forgot about Tito, since he was again left out. If we honor the Russian „Bolsheviks“, who served to Stalin, what should we do with the Bolshevik Tito and his generals? Why does Stalin's nomenclature deserve higher honors than Tito's?

The State Secretary of the Ministry of Justice decreased the efforts in the discovering of the chetnik leader's grave, and the anniversaries of significant events from the anti-fascist history are again being marked, discretely. For now incognito, but given the circumstances, it does represent a step forwards. Intellectuals who, in principle, generally criticize the authorities, spitefully noticed: well, well, sometimes it is really worth to listen to and accept the advice of the „Russian brothers“.

It is in such a grotesque situation that Serbia is looking for a new political balance whose keyword is: national unity. That is the main feature of the reconciliation between chetniks and partisans – to the advantage of chetniks! That is why the Democratic Party – an adversary of the Milošević regime – formed a coalition with Milošević's party, the Socialist Party of Serbia, in the first place. They are in power together, whereby neither of them renounced their respective pasts; instead of that they only „modernized“ their programs to a certain extent, at best. Therefore, among other things, that was the reason why on the festive December 19th, during and after the fireworks, no one mentioned the causes of the twenty-year-long sanctions. That would have caused a little embarrassment for the

antifašistička tradicija sastavni deo evropskih vrednosti, i da Srbija, ako želi u Uniju, ne može da se odrekne tih tradicija; utoliko pre što upravo zahvaljujući Titovim zaslugama i zaslugama partizanskog pokreta, Evropa visoko ceni srpsku antifašističku prošlost.

Ali, zahvaljujući Rusima, bujanje kulta četništva je unekoliko zastalo. Uoči posete Dmitrija Anatoljeviča Medvedeva, naime, ruski ambasador u Beogradu je primetio da su u glavnom gradu Srbije preimenovane ulice koje su ranije nosile imena sovjetskih komunističkih generala; na to je u vladinim krugovima došlo do izvesne uskomešanosti. Đavo je odneo šalu - razmišljala je funkcionerska garnitura. Izjava ruskog ambasadora je imala prilično jasnu kritičku oštricu, delovala je kao upozorenje s neba, pa je trebalo nešto učiniti. Ovo osetljivo pitanje vlasti su prevazišle tako što su obećale da će, vrlo uskoro, neke ulice nazvati po imenima sovjetskih generala, ali u prevelikoj revnosti ponovo su zaboravili na Tita, jer njemu nije ništa dopalo. Ako odamo počast ruskim „boljševicima“, koji su služili Staljinu, šta da radimo s boljševikom Titom i s njegovim generalima? Zašto Staljinova nomenklatura zaslužuje veće počasti od Titove?

Državni sekretar u Ministarstvu pravde smanjio je napore uložene u otkrivanje groba četničkog vođe, a godišnjice značajnijih događaja iz antifašističke istorije ponovo se, diskretno, obeležavaju. Za sada inkognito, ali, s obzirom na okolnosti, i to je već korak napred. Intelektualci koji iz principa generalno kritikuju vlast, zlorado su primetili: gle, gle, ponekad ipak vredi poslušati, prihvatiti savete „ruske braće“.

U ovako grotesknoj situaciji, dakle, Srbija traži novu političku ravnotežu čija je ključna reč: nacionalno jedinstvo. U tom znaku je i pomirenje četnika i partizana – u korist četnika! Zato je Demokratska stranka – protivnica Miloševićevog režima – i stupila u koaliciju s Miloševićevom strankom, Socijalističkom partijom Srbije. Zajedno su na vlasti, a da se pri tom ni jedna nije odrekla svoje prošlosti, u najboljem slučaju su samo donekle „osavremenile“ svoje programe. Uz ostalo, dakle, zbog toga tog prazničkog 19. decembra, za vreme i posle vatrometa, nije bilo reči o uzrocima bezmalo dvadesetogodišnjih sankcija. Koalicijom partneru bi to bilo malo neprijatno. Ali i dobrom delu biračkog tela jer - ne sme se zaboraviti – početkom devedesetih godina diktator Milošević nije silom dograbio vlast,

coalition partner. But also for the majority of the voters because – let us not forget – in the early 1990s the dictator Milošević did not grab power by force, he won in democratic elections, in a landslide. That is why the 1990s (too) were forgotten so quickly. And the price of this new national reconciliation was nothing else than an amnesia, diligently popularized by the media, orchestrated from above, a price paid by the Democratic Party. In return, the Socialist Party, too, is declaratory – accession to the European Union is a matter of national interest! With this compromise, the Democratic Party managed to establish a national consensus on the membership in the European Union. There is no significant political force in Serbia which could be able to stand in the way of this process. The anti-European Serbian Radical Party – former Šešelj's party – which after the last election still had the majority of deputies in Serbian Parliament – is practically devastated, and even though it still has a large number of deputies in Parliament, it is left powerless before the voters. The Serbian Progressive Party – which was formed by a simple division of the Serbian Radical Party, easily won over their supporters. According to latest public polls, its popularity has come dangerously close even to the Democratic Party.

What did, in fact, happen? The Great Enemy which could be blamed for anything, all the indecisiveness, falling behind, inconsistency, has almost vanished – the current ruling elite was left with nothing but to face itself. Now it will slowly begin to show to which extent the new government dealt with Milošević's heritage in its entirety, rather than with only its individual drastic parts. Will an authentic European road prevail, or the "Miloševićism with a human face"?

The foundation of national unity is certainly a common program for the preservation of Kosovo. Kosovo is an important Serbian paradigm in the new millennium, too, playing that same national-homogenizing role it had once before, in the late 1980s, when Milošević slapped together the unity of the Serbian nation, in the interest of "defending" the Kosovo Serbs. He revoked the autonomy of Kosovo (and Vojvodina), introduced a firm-hand centralism while, in the interest of defending Croatian and Bosnian Serbs, he began drawing up a new map of the Balkans. Kosovo ensured the unity of the Serbian nation, but its loss destroyed it, after which Milošević fell, too.

već je pobedio na demokratskim izborima, i to s nadmoćnom većinom glasova. Usled toga su tako brzo zaboravljene (i) devedesete. A cena tog novog nacionalnog pomirenja nije bila ništa drugo do medijski toliko prilježno popularizovana, odozgo dirigovana amnezija, cena koju je pak platila Demokratska stranka. Za uzvrat, i Socijalistička partija je deklarativna - pristup Evropskoj uniji je stvar od nacionalnog interesa! Ovim kompromisom Demokratska stranka je uspjela da postigne da se o članstvu u Evropskoj uniji uspostavi nacionalni konsenzus. Danas u Srbiji i nema značajnije političke snage koja bi bila u stanju da stane na put tom procesu. Antievropska Srpska radikalna stranka – nekadašnja Šešeljeva stranka – koja je posle posljednjih izbora još mogla da pošalje najveći broj poslanika u srpski parlament – praktično je devastirana, te iako još ima veliki broj poslanika u parlamentu, u biračkom telu je ostala bez snage. Srpska napredna stranka – koja je nastala prostom deobom radikala, s lakoćom je osvojila njihove simpatizere. Štaviše, prema novijim rezultatima istraživanja javnog mnjenja, svojom popularnošću se opasno približila samoj Demokratskoj stanci.

Šta se, zapravo, dogodilo? Skoro je sasvim nestao Veliki Neprijatelj na kojeg je bilo moguće svaliti svaku krivicu, svaku neodlučnost, zaostajanje, nedoslednost - sadašnjoj vladajućoj eliti nije preostalo ništa drugo nego da se suoči sa sobom. Sad će se polako ispostaviti u kojoj meri se nova vlast obračunala sa celinom miloševićevskog nasleđa, a ne samo s ovim ili onim njegovim drastičnijim delom. Hoće li prevladati autentični evropski put, ili pak „miloševićizam ljudskog lica“?

Temelj nacionalnog jedinstva svakako je zajednički program očuvanja Kosova. Kosovo je važna srpska paradigma i u novom milenijumu, igra istu onu nacionalno-homogenizujuću ulogu koju je odigrala već jednom, krajem osamdesetih, kada je Milošević sklepaio jedinstvo srpske nacije, u interesu „odbrane“ kosovskih Srba. Ukinuo je autonomiju Kosova (i Vojvodine), uveo čvrstorukaški centralizam dok je u interesu odbrane hrvatskih i bosanskih Srba počeo da crta novu mapu na Balkanu. Kosovo je osiguralo jedinstvo srpske nacije, ali njegov gubitak ga je rasturio, nakon čega je Milošević i pao.

President Boris Tadić uses a somewhat more subtle rhetoric in the project of establishing national unity. Kosovo remains the most important paradigm – it is clearly written in the 2006 Constitution that Kosovo is an inseparable part of Serbia and that it would stay like that forever. That Constitution is a result of a deal between three largest political groups at the time – Democratic Party, Koštunica's Democratic Party of Serbia and Šešelj's Serbian Radical Party. As soon as they came to an understanding on that issue, suddenly they all became pro-European. With Kosovo to Europe! – that is the slogan.

The abolition of visas and the foreseeable defrosting of the trade agreement with the European Union suggest that this program is based on reality. And in the interest of a clear emphasizing of this program, the Government immediately submitted candidacy for full-fledged membership. According to politicians' statements, the road is clear and straight, member states will accept the plea for membership within a year, which means that Serbia will take over the leadership position in the Balkans in a very short time. Minister of Foreign Affairs Vuk Jeremić announced the joyous news that Russia, too, supports Serbia's entry in the European Union. There are not many countries which can brag of such support. Preparing for a visit to Belgrade, Greek Prime Minister Georgios Papandreou told in an interview for the "Večernje Novosti" daily that Serbia deserves to become a member of the European Union in a "speedy procedure" and that it rightfully occupies an important position in the European agenda. Papandreou was recently the guest of honor at the annual Ambassadors' Conference where he expressed his anticipation that Serbia will become member of the European Union in 2014! That is the very same year during which Greece will preside over the Union. Last year's guest of the Ambassadors' Conference, Spanish Foreign Minister Miguel Angel Moratinos, issued a similar estimate. Serbian press particularly emphasized the fact that both Greece and Spain decisively support Serbia's efforts to preserve Kosovo. All that can only mean one thing – the authorities stress – Kosovo cannot be an obstacle for the acceptance of Serbia by the European Union.

Therefore, optimism prevailed in Serbia!

Optimism pervades even when it comes to Serbian economy. The Government announced that the International Monetary Fund approved Serbia the second tranche of the stand-by arrangement, thus enabling the use of an

Predsednik Boris Tadić primenjuje nešto suptilniju retoriku u projektu uspostavljanja nacionalnog jedinstva. Najvažnija paradigma je i sada Kosovo – i u Ustavu donetom 2006. godine lepo piše da je Kosovo neotuđivi deo Srbije i da će tako večno da bude. Taj Ustav je rezultat nagodbe tadašnjih triju najvećih političkih grupacija - Demokratske stranke, Koštuničine Demokratske stranke Srbije i Šešeljeve Srpske radikalne stranke. Čim su se o tome sporazumeli, svi su najednom postali proevropski orijantisani. S Kosovom u Evropu! – glasi parola.

Ukidanje viza i izgledno odmrzavanje trgovinskog sporazuma sa Evropskom unijom, sugeriše realitet ovog programa. I u interesu što markantnijeg naglašavanja tog programa, vlada je smesta podnela i kandidaturu za punopravno članstvo. Prema izjavama političara, put je čist i prav, države-članice će najkasnije u roku od godinu dana prihvatiti molbu za članstvo, što znači da će Srbija u veoma kratkom roku preuzeti lidersku poziciju na Balkanu. Ministar za inostrane poslove Vuk Jeremić, saopštio je radosnu vest da i Rusija podržava ulazak Srbije u Evropsku uniju. Malo je zemalja koje mogu da se pohvale takvom podrškom. Spremajući se da poseti Beograd, grčki premijer Jorgos Papandreu, u intervjuu za beogradski list Večernje novosti konstatovao je da Srbija zaslužuje da „ubrzanim postupkom“ postane član Evropske unije, i da s pravom zauzima istaknuto mesto u evropskoj agendi. Papandreu je nedavno bio počasni gost na godišnjoj ambasadorskoj konferenciji na kojoj je izneo svoje predviđanje da će Srbija postati članica Evropske unije 2014. godine! Dakle, baš one godine u kojoj će Grčka predsedavati Uniji. Prošlogodišnji gost ambasadorske konferencije, španski ministar za inostrane poslove Miguel Angel Moratinos, izneo je sličnu procenu. Srpska štampa posebno ističe da i Grčka, i Španija odlučno podržavaju napore Srbije da sačuva Kosovo. Sve to znači samo jedno – ističe vlast – da Kosovo ne može da bude prepreka prijemu Srbije u Evropsku uniju.

U Srbiji je, dakle, pobedio optimizam!

Optimizam provejava čak i kad je reč o srpskoj privredi. Vlada je objavila da je Međunarodni monetarni fond odobrio Srbiji povlačenje druge tranše stand-baj aranžmana omogućivši korišćenje dodatnih 350 miliona

additional €350M credit. The IMF has also agreed on a budget deficit in 2010 up to 4,5%. Until now, Serbia has used the first tranche of €788M of the principally agreed €2,9B. That was a cause for the Government to announce that Serbia will overcome the economic crisis in 2010. While much richer countries measure positive changes by tenths of percent and estimate the chances of leaving the crisis with the utmost caution, claiming that it will not be possible to see the real situation until the second half of 2010, Serbian President Boris Tadić stated that recession in Serbia was until now smaller than in developed countries. That it is below 3% at the moment! Macroeconomic stability was successfully maintained. Tadić estimates that an economic growth of 1,5 to 2% can be expected in 2010, which would be a very good result, given the fact that only two or three European countries can count on a positive result and growth. According to the President, the investment deal signed with the Italian company FIAT, which means 200,000 automobiles intended for export per year, will change the "blood picture" of the Serbian economy.

Citizens welcomed this joyous news with some suspicion. The number of travelers abroad did not increase much because – as was the almost unanimous explanation – the nation became significantly poorer during the last two decades, and those who had money did not sit around in Serbia until now. They traveled. In the best case scenario, the blessing of the visa abolition will be enjoyed by a narrow, but from the standpoint of modernization, important strata. General poorness will, however, last; the unemployment rate will not drop, and economists and entrepreneurs tirelessly repeat that as long as these tendencies go on, it is not serious to talk about overcoming the crisis. The Electric Power Industry has already announced an increase in power prices, and fuel, which was already the most expensive in the region, went up as well, giving the citizens a clear signal that a new wave of general price rises is to be expected. This is already very much present, since the black market reacts faster than the government. The opposition does not consider visa abolition and defrosting of the trade agreement with the European Union to be of vital importance. Just a regular paper, says the most popular opposition leader, President of the Serbian Progressive Party Tomislav Nikolić. He prefers to hold speeches on corruption, which is met with cheers from the masses. The Serbian Progressive party,

evra kredita. Saglasan je i s tim da budžetski deficit u 2010. godini bude do 4,5 posto. Srbija je do sada koristila prvu tranšu od 788 miliona evra od načelno odobrenih 2,9 milijardi. To je bio povod da vlada objavi da će Srbija u 2010. godini izaći iz ekonomske krize. Dok mnogo bogatije zemlje pozitivne promene mere desetim delovima procenta, i krajnje oprezno procenjuju šanse izlaska iz krize, tvrdeći samo da će tek u drugoj polovini 2010. da se vidi pravo stanje stvari, dotle predsednik države, Boris Tadić, izjavljuje da je recesija u Srbiji i do sada bila manja nego u razvijenijim zemljama. Da je trenutno ispod tri procenta! Uspešno je sačuvana, dakle, makroekonomska stabilnost. Tadić procenjuje da se u 2010. godini može očekivati ekonomski rast od 1,5 do 2 odsto, što bi, dakako, bio ozbiljan rezultat, s obzirom na to da u Evropi svega dve-tri zemlje mogu računati s pozitivnim rezultatom i rastom. Prema predsednikovom mišljenju, investicioni ugovor postignut sa italijanskim Fijatom, koji znači godišnje 200 hiljada automobila namenjenih za izvoz, promeniće „krvnu sliku“ srpske privrede.

Građani su prilično sumnjičavo dočekali ove radosne vesti. Nije se naročito povećao broj putnika u inostranstvo, jer – gotovo je jednoglasno objašnjenje – nacija je za protekle dve decenije prilično osiromašila, a oni koji su imali para, ni do sada nisu sedeli u Srbiji. Nego su putovali. Blagodeti ukidanja viza će u najboljem slučaju da uživa jedan uzak, ali sa stanovišta modernizacije, važan sloj, opšta osiromašenost će, međutim, potrajati, broj nezaposlenih se neće smanjivati, a ekonomisti, preduzetnici neumorno ponavljaju da je, sve dok ovi trendovi istrajavaju, neozbiljno govoriti o prevazilaženju krize. Elektroprivreda je već najavila poskupljenje struje, a poskupelo je i gorivo koje je i do sada bilo najskuplje u regionu, iz toga su građani lepo razumeli da se očekuje novi talas opštih poskupljenja. A to se već i te kako oseća, jer crno tržište reaguje brže od vlade. Ukidanje viza i odmrzavanje trgovinskog sporazuma sa Evropskom unijom opozicija ne smatra životno važnim. Običan papir, kaže najpopularniji lider opozicije, predsednik Srpske napredne stranke Tomislav Nikolić. On radije drži govore o korupciji, što nailazi na odobravanje masa. Srpska napredna stranka, koja se izdvojila iz Srpske radikalne stranke, sve je popularnija. Prema najnovijim istraživanjima javnog mnjenja, polako sustiže i Demokratsku stranku. Ironija je sudbine da ta stranka, proistekla iz nekadašnje radikalno antievropske stranke,

which separated from the Serbian radical Party, is gaining in popularity. According to latest polls, it is slowly catching up with the Democratic Party. It is ironic that this party, originating from a formerly radically anti-European party, today criticizes the slowness of the government in European integration processes. They, too, consider the accession to the European Union to be a matter of national interest, but without forgetting to add that the struggle against corruption is a national interest, as well, because they are well aware that corruption is the current government Achilles' heel. Tadić himself is aware of this; he announced a decisive struggle against corruption for a couple of times now, but the eagerly awaited results did not arrive. However, the Government claims that everything will fundamentally change as soon as the Anti-Corruption Agency starts working on January 1st 2010. On the other hand, the Agency seems to be fully aware that the focus of corruption is in the political elite, and that is why it negotiated a law by which all state officials are required to submit reports on their property and incomes. Persons who hold several offices will have to decide by April 1st which one to keep. It is envisaged that the property cards of nearly thirty thousand Serbian officials will be published on the Agency's website.

A promising endeavor, but we should not have any illusions because it is useful to know that until now, there were similar committees, but those were established by the government, and nobody ever took them seriously. In fact, those committees did a sort of a Sisyphean task; the combat against corruption resembled an operetta, because political parties protected their members. The will of the party was stronger than the law; today it is so influential that it keeps a significant part of the civic sphere under its control. While during Milošević's rule there was an active, critical civic structure, today the majority of civic organizations are just serving as decorative ikebana in party headquarters. And those who do not unreservedly accept such a role are marginalized, financially disabled, outcast from the media. That way, critical thought is being destroyed, remaining only on the internet, to a certain degree. There is, however, press which reveals scandals, but there is no competent, independent press, and even if there was one, if it was not obedient, the oligarchs would easily economically disable it. They would simply stop advertising in disobedient papers and rebellious TV stations. What was once being forbidden by politics is today

danas kritikuje sporost vlade u evropskim integracionim procesima. I oni smatraju da je priključenje Evropskoj uniji od nacionalnog interesa, ali ne zaboravljaju da dodaju da je i borba protiv korupcije nacionalni interes, jer dobro znaju da je korupcija ahilova peta aktuelne vlade. I Tadić je svestan toga, nekoliko puta je već objavio odlučnu borbu protiv korupcije, ali željno očekivani rezultati su redom izostajali. Vlada, međutim, tvrdi da će se iz korena sve promeniti čim 1. januara 2010. godine počne da radi Agencija za borbu protiv korupcije. Agenciji je pak, čini se, sasvim jasno da je žarište korupcije u političkoj eliti, zato je i isposlovala zakon po kojem su svi funkcioneri obavezni da podnesu izveštaje o svojoj imovini i prihodima. Onaj ko upražnjava više funkcija, moraće da do 1. aprila odluči koju će da zadrži. Predviđeno je da na vebsajtu agencije bude objavljeno imovno stanje blizu trideset hiljada srpskih funkcionera.

Obećavajući poduhvat, ali ne bi trebalo da imamo iluzije, jer nije na odmet znati da su i do sada postojali slični odbori, i njih je osnivala sama vlada, ali nikad ih niko nije uzimao ozbiljno. Ti odbori su obavljali zapravo svojevrсни sizifovski posao, borba protiv korupcije ličila je na operetu, jer su stranke uzimale u zaštitu svoje članove. Volja partokratije bila je jača od zakona, danas je ona toliko uticajna da drži pod kontrolom i znatan deo civilne sfere. Dok je za vreme Miloševićeve vladavine postojala aktivna, kritički nastrojena civilna struktura, danas veći deo civilnih organizacija poput ikebana krasi stranačke prostorije. A oni koji ne pristaju na tu ulogu bez ostatka, bivaju marginalizovani, materijalno onemogućeni, iz medija izopšteni, na taj način se kritička misao zatire, ona je prisutna manje-više samo na internetu. Postoji doduše štampa koja otkriva skandale, ali ne postoji merodavna, nezavisna štampa, pa čak i da je ima, ako ne bi bila poslušna, oligarsi bi je s lakoćom ekonomski onemogućili. Ne bi se, jednostavno, na primer oglašavali u neposlušnim novinama i na buntovničkim televizijama. Ono što je nekad politika zabranjivala, to danas onemogućava nevidljiva ruka tržišta. Ovoj vlasti se potčinjavaju čak i mediji

being disabled by the invisible hand of the market. Even by the media which are in the hands of foreign capital subordinate themselves to this government; they too do not want to risk, because only profit matters. The tone of the former anti-Milošević media – such as B-92 – is today not different at all from the tone of the former pro-Milošević radio and TV stations. This general homogenization is sowing the seed of authoritative democracy. Partocracy prevents the functioning of stable, autonomous institutions, which renders democratic processes very much vulnerable. Furthermore, it remains to be seen whether it will be possible to break the rule of the Serbian oligarchs and stand in the way of the intertwining of oligarchs and partocracy established back during Milošević's rule – which, on the "European road", is much more important than the visa liberation, the latter having a symbolic importance which must not be underestimated. Namely, it is a public secret that Serbian oligarchs are financing political parties and that it is in fact them who embody the real, "invisible power" in Serbia.

Since December 19th 2009, the government lived in holiday delirium, putting even firecrackers and fireworks in the service of politics. The sky was all lit up; however, behind all that glow, sinister clouds were gathering.

koji su, inače, u rukama stranog kapitala, ni oni ne žele da rizikuju, jer je profit najvažniji. Ton nekadašnjih antimiloševićevskih medija – na primer B-92 – danas se već ni po čemu ne razlikuje od tona nekadašnjih promiloševićevskih radija i televizija. Ova sveobuhvatna homogenizacija seje seme autoritativne demokratije. Partokratija sprečava funkcionisanje stabilnih, autonomnih institucija, što čini i te kako ranjivim demokratske procese. Veliko je pitanje, nadalje, da li će biti moguće slomiti vlast srpskih oligarha i stati na put preplitanju oligarha i partokratija konstituisanih još za vreme Miloševićeve vladavine – što je na „evropskom putu“ mnogo važnije od ukidanja viza što, dakako, ima simboličan značaj koji se ne sme potceniti. Javna je tajna, naime, da u Srbiji oligarsi finansiraju stranke, i da pravu, „nevidljivu vlast“ u Srbiji upravo oni otelotvoruju.

Vlast je od 19. decembra 2009. godine živela u prazničnom zanosu, čak je i petarde i vatromete stavila u službu politike. Nebo je blistalo, iza sveg tog sjaja su se, međutim, gomilali tmasti, zloslutni oblaci.

*(translated from Serbian by
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*(Preveo sa mađarskog
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