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Kosovo and Corruption

How did these two subjects come together again, when it was perfectly clear that we have learned this lesson seven years ago - existential problems of the citizens and their families cannot be resolved by resorting to nationalism? The fact that proves that we knew this back then are the citizens who voted for democratic options in 2000 and left nationalist parties without support. Advocating for democratic changes and democratic options secured these parties a 2/3 majority in the parliament - citizens made it possible for the government to start radical changes of the society, without a serious threat of the old regime, and above all to reject the old ways of governance. The government had to change in order to be able to change the others. It couldn't transfer to the others what it did not have in the first place. Above all, government couldn't fight corruption if corruption was in the foundation of its governance, and because of that the most prominent slogans of that time were about the transparency of the government, i.e., the way of governance that allowed citizens to control and waive corruption.

Economic programs of Ante Marković had no other, confronted economic programs, discussion about them was not possible because of deafening nationalistic noise; the atmosphere that was created was more appropriate for the beginning of the XIX century than it was for the end of XX century. All problems will be solved with the realization of the national question: Serbia will be one, we will be standing on our own soil, we will not buy goods from Slovenians, we won't let Germans buy our factories...

That famous sentence that the workers from Rakovica went to see the leader as workers and went out as Serbs, echoed for the next ten years...

Demands in 2000 were completely different and breaking point that made victory possible was a strike of miners in Kolubara. The new government spoke to them as to workers and citizens. Koštunica asked for their support and promised an end of isolation, economic reforms, showdown with criminals and corruption with a European helping hand. Support of the EU was the key evidence that the exit will be democratic and not nationalistic.

After the victory, government very quickly, at least symbolically, made moves leading toward the solution of the basic demands: Commission for the truth and reconciliation was being formed close to the office of the president of what was a federation then. Serbian government forms two transitional institutions, Anti-corruption council and Socio-economic council. So, three basic problems that needed to be addressed – problem of crimes and responsibility for them, difficult economic and social problems that have emerged because of theft, wars and sanctions and a problem of systematic, dominant corruption that revealed structure and fiber of the state and was the way of governance and survival of the regime – there simply were no contemporary answers and solutions for the change or responsibility.

Resolving Kosovo question hadn't been brought up back then. It was obvious to what kind of civilizational dead end it brought us. Signing Kumanovo agreement and arrival of the international mission was not accepted with resistance, but on the contrary, it came as a relief. The resistance was provoked by celebrating “victory” and medal give away, after the most shameful defeat. As the refugees approached the bigger cities police didn't allow them in the cities trying to hide them from the citizens and hide the shameful evidence of their unsuccessful politics. Once again the long columns of sad and deported people entered the country where no one wanted them...

Maybe we should be shortly reminded of the nineties, the time when everything was allowed – smuggling, robberies, murder...Everybody could be corrupted, it just depended on the ability and support from the regime, if it considered bigger scale actions. Smaller cases, like corruption in the school system, health system, jurisdiction and in the state services, were viewed upon with approval, so the circle of corruption expanded to such extent that raising a question of anyones responsibility became impossible. The only problem could emerge in case somebody disrespected established pyramid of corruption, or tried to change hierarchy of power. The punishment depended on the position in the hierarchy, on the damage that could be caused to the established system of governance. For the highly ranked, punishment was murder, usually in public, in broad daylight. That showed power and ruthlessness of the system. While you're in, you have all the opportunities and all the protection, but when you step out...Most of these murders are not solved to this day, and no one is insisting on resolving them, but the loudest silence comes from those who obviously know everything about that...

The ones who obeyed, who were only interested in the lucre of corruption, but not in the power that it could provide them with, enjoyed the support of the regime, and I think that they are the

real winners in this democracy of ours. Today they are the leaders of our development, capable people with money to invest in our development, not in somebody else's, which made them patriots without comparison. Our development plans, our concept of privatization, the speed of our integrations, the way we deal with money laundry or monopoly, depends on their needs. When the Vice president of the government wants to examine when will it be better, he pleads for the state to help them first in becoming regional leaders, and then to lead the development on all levels, probably starting with a premise that they know how it's done and the rest of us don't and that we should be able to learn from them.

To accomplish the requests from the beginning of the text, complete breakup with the previous regime, that was based on corruption on the highest level – police, secret service and tycoons – was necessary. Without confrontation with crimes and robbery it was not possible to set up a different system of values, that is why the Hague tribunal was our daily bread. Potential determination of responsibility for all who committed crimes, would enable necessary distinction of individual guilt from the collective responsibility of the entire nation. The ones that protected them from responsibility before the court, left all the others feeling personally responsible, because they supported, or haven't stood up against the system, that was killing in their name, with more determination. That is why it is possible now to lead a campaign for public broadcast of Šešelj trial, not knowing that at the same time, there are, because of the persistence of honorable people, trials for war crimes in our courtrooms that are public and can be televised as well. It would be healthy, like the truth always is, to listen to the testimonies of mothers whose children were all killed in a single day by policemen of the state that was once theirs and was obligated to protect them, to see the faces of those who probably did the killings and listen to the decision of the court.

If the government had demanded to publicly broadcast the takeover of the bodies from Merdare, dug from the graves all over Serbia, with the highest state honors, we would be confronted to the barbarianism of those who represented us and stimulated the other side to do the same, or at least show that we are capable of stepping out of our own dishonor.

Why all this wasn't possible and how did return to nationalism happen after the promises of democratic reforms and why do we secretly want isolation again? How did it come to the fact that almost half of those who went out to vote, voted for the extreme right, did they after seven years all become hardcore nationalist, or is it something else.

I think that the answer lies in the corruption as way of governance, in political parties that just added democratic sign to the autocratic model. Today, among our political parties, there are no significant differences in a way they are financed, in a way they deal with public matters, or in a way they deal with big issues. Neither government, nor the opposition allow or ask, depending on their role, for the control of public finances, public companies, financing of political parties, independence of jurisdiction, independence of media. There is no discord among them when it comes to big state jobs that are being run with a help of corruption – concessions, selling NIS (state owned oil company) and breaking the law, NIP, privatization, stealing private property of the citizens through selling or taking over stocks, that is being represented as the “secondary privatization”.

To hide these similarities and alliance when it comes to governing, and to avoid the danger of being asked to change its way, this government, just like the previous one looks for salvation in nationalism, and there is nothing more suitable for spreading the nationalism then to once again instrumentalize Kosovo issue. Nothing more suitable than nationalism to disavow public interest and free the corrupted government of any responsibility.

This was how those who probably don't think this way, who may want the changes, without bigger turmoil, were trapped. Because, how can it be understood that our president is both, for joining of Serbia to the EU and Kosovo remaining a part of Serbia? What is more important, are we giving up on building of modern democratic state if we don't save Kosovo and does our demand for 15% of the territory without a proposal for a democratic coexistence with 23% of the population disqualifies our ultimatum and casts a shadow of a doubt over our intentions?

Đinđić's comparison of legal grounds for keeping Kosovo to a streetlight that is regulating non-existing traffic in a desert, now sounds like a voice of reason which we have waived again, because his comparisons and metaphors were rooted in reality, and our reality now is rooted in fiction. We are still insisting on setting up a traffic light, and it is of less importance that there will be no traffic. Pragmatism that he had been accused of in collision with legalism looks very naive. His pragmatism was forced because of the circumstances he was in. Maybe he sometimes easily looked for shortcuts that were suppose to take us as quickly as possible away from the radical solution, that would break the last connection with those who wanted to preserve the old way of governing through corruption. His death contributed the most to abandoning the road towards the reformed democratic state to the one leading to one way street of Kosovo.