



In his first interview given as First Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, Ivica Dacic indicated his intention, as Minister of Foreign Affairs, to turn Serbia into a recognizable brand, adding that during his tenure in office he did not expect to face any problems and conditioning either by the EU or Russia, particularly regarding the current conflict in Ukraine. He no longer wishes to talk badly about Tadic and does not fear that, after a four-year term, SPS would be "swallowed up" by SNS as the major coalition partner.

What is it new that this Government brings as compared to the previous one? What do you consider to be the essential difference?

In terms of goals, priorities and the energy required – there is practically no difference. The real difference lies in the electoral result that got Aleksandar Vucit the office of Prime Minister and great legitimacy for the entire Cabinet to continue the reforms so much needed by the Serbian society. On the other hand, the expectations from this Government are enormous, both on the part of Serbia, as well as on the part of our foreign friends.

What is the priority of the sector that you will be heading, what are the key tasks of Serbian diplomacy in the coming period?

We have to go on where we left off. In the past two years, Serbia restored its reputation, won equal treatment and took its place in the international community. Now it is necessary not only to confirm all this, but also to make even bigger strides forward in terms of EU integration in the first place, but at the same time also in the relations with key international players, neighbours and eventually also with a large number of countries that are traditional friends of Serbia (former Yugoslavia). We must now consolidate the position that we have taken and to move on from there. Serbia should finally be known for the best it has and is willing to offer. Therefore, one of the tasks of the Foreign Ministry will also be the promotion of our culture, tourism and sports... In brief, my intention is to make Serbia a recognizable and popular brand, and a respectable participant in international relations.

Serbia is split between Russia, on the one hand, and EU and the US, on the other. How will Serbia act if it received an ultimatum from either side which could disrupt its relations with the other?

Baroness Ashton said, only yesterday, that Serbia would not be exposed to any pressure or conditioning and I believe that her message was sincere and correct. We do not expect any ultimatums from our Russian friends either, for, ultimately, we have not given any reason for anything like that. The fact that Serbia is looking after its own interests without jeopardizing the interests of others is respected today, worldwide. We are committed to peaceful resolution of all conflicts, including Ukrainian, knowing from our own experience how much grief and misfortune is brought about by wars between neighbours and friends. Furthermore, we have no intention of losing any of our friends in the world by needlessly interfering into matters that we can neither influence nor resolve.

To be more specific – what will Serbia do if the EU requires termination of the free trade agreement with Russia?

I don't think that will happen. In this and every other situation, Europe is also guided by the interests of its citizens and European business. Since these interests are more important, more influential and far-reaching than our own interests with Russia, I believe that they will prevail in this situation, making it possible to find a solution that will satisfy all sides and enable continued economic cooperation between Europe and Russia. In Europe, millions of jobs and billions of euros depend on relations with and in Russia, as well as the relations with Europe. Therefore, I doubt that any one side would wish to do anything that would upset this balance. Moreover, many foreign companies opened their factories in Serbia precisely because they believed that they would be able to benefit from our agreement with Russia. Why would anyone want to change that now?

Despite expectations, Tadic is not part of this Government. Is it because he insisted that SPS should not be in the government and were you also a priori against his party's participation in it?

Boris Tadic was the President of Serbia, an institution which I highly respect, because it is high time institutions were considered more important than anyone's name or any party. For this reason, I don't intend to talk badly about the President of Serbia, albeit former President. However, he has already spoken extensively on the reasons for not being part of the Government. I have nothing more to add nor was I against anyone's participation in the Government. That wouldn't even be realistic, because I wasn't in charge of forming the government, nor would it be fair to the person who was.

According to some comments, this coalition is dangerous for SPS and that it risks to be "swallowed up" by SNS in four years.

These comments are apparently made by those who forget that we have been in coalition with SNS already for two years and that, nevertheless, only SPS has not been swallowed up on the political scene. We share in common goals and a significant part of values, but at the same time, we are two political parties, each with its own integrity and manifesto. And it will remain that way. At present, however, certain things are much more important than our differences and we are working and will continue to work on them together. When we achieve results, regulate our state and bring the EU negotiations to an end, resolve the accumulated economic

problems.....then it will not be a problem to put out our differences.

There were speculations that someone from the outside – more precisely Russians – used their influence in order to have you in this Government.

It is also speculated that Obama's security service includes extra terrestrials, meaning that the job of the press is to print, whatever.

Are you satisfied with the sectors that were given to you as a party? How would you comment on the "switching" of sectors between Sasa Antic and Zorana Mihajlovic?

First of all, I am very pleased with the attitude of Vucic towards us, as a minor coalition partner. That was enough both for me and for SPS, so we left it to him to suggest offices where he thought that our officials were needed. Therefore, the offices taken by both Antic and Zorana Mihajlovic were the choice of Vucic and SNS, so there is no reason for me to comment on it. I expect that everyone who took office as minister in this Government will do their best to achieve good results.