



When we arrived for the interview, Minister Dacic has just finished his telephone conversation with his Ukrainian counterpart, and on Thursday he heard from the Russian Minister Lavrov. We ask him straightaway whether we, as the future OSCE Chairman, are going to, nevertheless, impose sanctions on Russia.

"Oh, that is out of the question! The OSCE is concerned about European security and cooperation and does not impose sanctions. Serbia as a candidate for EU membership only has an obligation to harmonize its foreign policy with the European one. Since we are not a member, it means that we ourselves have to institute sanctions against Russia, which is not realistic. The Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine invited me to visit before we take over the Chairmanship and Lavrov is expecting me to come to Moscow on December 19 to talk about the role of the OSCE."

Let us come back to politics in Serbia. You have been part of it for a quarter of a century already, and it has been exactly two decades since I interviewed you last. What have you done in the meantime for the citizens?

When one looks back in review mirror, some past times may even seem better than the present period. So, nowadays we have the best opinion of Tito's Yugoslavia and call it a "golden age", and I remember the period when Tito died when protests against him just started and when all the bad things were said about the system and that period. Therefore, when we realistically comprehend Serbia in the early nineties and Serbia of today, in 2014, I think that Serbia has made, at least, a strategic step forward, which means that today it is no longer the bad guy on the international political scene and that we have a chance that in the next five or six years, we will become a full-fledged member of the EU. Now, if this is translated to the level of an individual - people are never able to experience some great strategic goal from the point of view of personal benefits because it is not immediately reflected in higher salaries, pensions and more jobs. But these are the times when the foundations and platform are being created in order for that to happen. And has it been possible to do more and better, the answer is yes!

Has it?

As for me, I had enough time to draw lessons from what was wrong in the first part of that period when I was not number one in the party and the country. And now that I am the Prime Minister and Leader of my Party, I can commit myself to the causes that I think are the right causes. I am the one who signed the Brussels Agreement, who led the SPS into a coalition with Kostunica, and also with Tadic and subsequently with Nikolic. Each of these decisions was

historically necessary.

Aren't you afraid that the Brussels Agreement might turn out to be a mistake and a blemish some day?

It was not easy to make that decision. In the conditions when SRS and DSS were the opposition, Tadic did not dare make such moves and sign the Brussels Agreement. I dared because no one can ever say I am a traitor because, at least, I was at war with NATO. I thought about the interests of the country and what to do next. If Serbia had not signed the Brussels Agreement, we would have not been negotiating EU membership today.

You've been a proponent of the partition of Kosovo, isn't it too late for that?

I have always subscribed to the idea to solve the relationship between us and the Albanians as quickly as possible because it threatens to have long-term catastrophic consequences for the Serbian people as a whole. But, the time has passed when Serbia could have proposed a vision of its own for the resolution of the problem. Most of the EU countries that have recognized Kosovo are saying that this is a belated idea, while our people in Belgrade continue to call it a treacherous idea. That is why this happened to us. If someone had suggested it at the time when it was offered us in the 90s or at the time of Kostunica, the international community would have wholeheartedly accepted it!

We had a visit of the Albanian Prime Minister that took place in a tense atmosphere and with Rama's provocation. How did our Prime Minister react?

He acted the way he had to. When it comes to such press conferences with problematic issues, it is agreed in advance how to formulate them and in what way to talk about them. It is obvious that this was not respected by the Albanian side this time. So, clearly there was an intention of saying those words at any cost and the Prime Minister had to react. I think he reacted strongly enough without insulting anyone. We will hardly be great friends with the Albanians, but in order to live together and cooperate with someone, it does not necessarily mean you should be good friends. The function of foreign policy and diplomacy is to lessen tensions, not to add fuel to them. In that sense, Prime Minister Vucic tells me jokingly: "How can you be so nice to everyone?" Very simply, you just have to.

Is what Vulin is saying, that the return of Seselj is actually the US game, a sign that our policy line towards the United States will change?

No. Much of what he said can be made as a logical conclusion, like the circumstances of Vojislav Seselj's release. In the past two or three years I spoke with the Hague Tribunal about a dozen times asking them to release him. They did not want to do that, they kept on imposing some conditions which he did not want to accept. Now he was released practically without any conditions, and as soon as he arrived, he said he would not return voluntarily. This leaves doubts that there is more both to his departure from The Hague and arrival in Serbia.

And what about the relationship with Russia? Is a strategic commitment to the East even possible?

I think it is not. Since I have been involved in high politics, Russia never had a dilemma why Serbia is on the path towards the EU. In their opinion we will not be lucky enough in that effort, but they have nothing against it. I personally, as Prime Minister, asked President Putin if he

thought Serbia could become a member of the Eurasian alliance. The man looked at me and said, "It's not possible, not even geographically." I asked about BRICS, he said: "No, they are rich countries". I asked him if Russia was interested in military bases and his answer was negative. And what kind of a problem do we have with Russia, anyway? Whenever they ask me about this in Brussels, I tell them that they are really stupid. That is what I said both in Berlin and in Brussels. You are giving me a lecture, and you were here in East Berlin, Bratislava, Warsaw, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary ...under Stalin, Brezhnev and Gorbachev, and we parted from the Soviet Union back in 1948'. Our fraternal ties with Russia are traditional. We want to be neutral militarily, but politically our interest is to be an EU member.

What exactly is this interest in EU membership?

Take a pen and calculate. What is Serbia's GDP and how much should it give if it became an EU member, and how much should it get from the EU budget. At this point, Germany is the one that should be against the EU because it gives much more than it receives from the EU. Therefore, Serbia has an interest to be a member till it becomes a developed EU country because it would get non-refundable money. Only a dumb man does not understand this!

Are you going to run for President of Serbia?

I said I was going to run for President of Serbia and I had to justify myself for five months to President Nikolic. I said this in the sense that the SPS, as a serious party always has a candidate for President and will always have. Milosevic made a problem in the SPS by calling on the grassroots to vote for Seselj in the Presidential election.

You are known as a politician who likes to make an informal atmosphere.

That is what I learned from Tito. The audience lasted for half an hour and no one ever forgot what happened when they visited Yugoslavia. There is a body in the EU, which is called COELA, consisting of lower officials, which sits three times a week and discusses about all of us. When they arrived in Belgrade, I took them to Novak Djokovic's restaurant, showed them his trophies, then there was some music, we all sang. And those were the representatives of countries which only criticized Serbia. Now they call me to come to visit Brussels and no one any longer asks why Serbia this, why Serbia that. If this is something I can do for my country, it is not difficult. And I also like to sing.