

ИБАРСКЕ НОВОСТИ

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THE INTERVIEW: RADOVAN MILICEVIC, President of the Municipal anticorruption commission and the director of NGO LINGVA- written by Vesna Mrakovic Jokanovic

THE CORRUPTION AS THE WAY OF SURVIVAL

According to the Transparency International report, on the list of 133 countries ranked, in January, in regard to the corruption index, The State community of Serbia and Montenegro has ingloriously ranked 106th in the world. Our country is in the group with Macedonia, also with Honduras, Bolivia, Sudan, Ukraine and Zimbabwe. Nor the domestic public opinion research work gave better picture. The corruption is marked as one of the biggest social problems which spread over all the segments of life: the judiciary, the police, the health department, the education, public and local administrative organs, and the economy. The corruption has been discussed many times, but little or nothing at all has been done. Radovan Milicevic, the director of NGO LINGVA and the coordinator of many campaigns against corruption, is one the few who persists in unequal struggle against this social and moral misfortune.

IN: In September last year, the Municipal commission for the struggle against corruption was formed in Kraljevo, and you were elected to be its president. What are the experiences and the results of this commission's work?



By the reference of the Ministry of finance, the temporarily board of Kraljevo municipality formed the municipal anticorruption commission, the first of that kind in Serbia. The commission is consisted of seven members, four are the representatives of the institutions (police, judiciary, the Medical centre "Studenica" and the public enterprise "Ibarske novosti"), and three members are independent citizens. The members of the Commission were accepting citizens every Friday, from 3 pm to 5 pm, in Kraljevo municipality building, from September 12th until December 2003. 120 citizens applied the Commission with complains. The largest number of complains (over 90 %) referred to inefficiency of the judiciary organs (the case procrastination) or dissatisfaction with the court's verdicts. The rest 10 % of the citizens complain referred to corruption in the Health services, the education and the organs of local self-government. Discouraging is the fact that majority of those complains was anonymous or without appropriate material evidence.

On the Commission's demand, in November last year, out of totally 2.051 criminal acts, an accusation, that is the accusation preposition was submitted in 624 cases, which means for 30,5 % of criminal acts. In 2002 this number was decreased for 28,8 % - out of 2.784 criminal acts, for 800 the accusation was set up or the accusation preposition. In the first eight months of last year,

out of 1.056 criminal acts, only for 199 (18,8%) the accusation was set up, that is the accusation proposition.

From the field of business criminal, that percent is much smaller. In 2002, out of 232 cases, 37 were solved, or 15, 95 % and the delinquents got the prison sentences from three to six months or the currency penalties. In the first six months, last year, out of 121 cases only two were solved in the field of business criminal or 1, 65 %. That means that the average number of business criminal cases that were solved by the judiciary organs in period of year and a half, was 11, 05 %. Last year the police brought 243 criminal charges. The prosecutor rejected four requests and out of total number, only 1, 7% referred to corruption.

IN: I suppose that all those data are only the “the top of icy hill” and that the struggle against corruption can’t be solved only by repressive state organs that are not immune on corruption and are marked by citizens as the institutions liable to this “illness”.

“LINGUA” believes that the initiative in the struggle against corruption, in the case the politicians are inefficient, should be undertaken by citizens. Unfortunately, for ten years we have lived in the state which didn’t respect the minimal democratic standards and norms, going in one war after the other, in the state that was bombarded and was under sanctions. The common citizen lost the criteria for “normality” and the guidelines in normal social streams. The corruption is not present only on the summit of the state, but has its roots everywhere, from the bottom to the top. The common citizen does not regard the corruption as the negative appearance that has to be disrooted, it became for him an easier and sometimes the only way to reach the wanted goal. The corruption in all spheres is something that is, infects, expected here, logical, normal and doesn't surprise anybody, which causes more dependence than indignation. The most people, not being aware of it, see corruption as the way of survival. It is what mostly make difficult solving the problems and make the struggle against corruption in our community more difficult and more serious. That is being confirmed by the experiences that "LINGUA" gained during the realization of the campaign "Anticorruption-the project of encouraging" during 2002, but also by the questionnaire carried out last year. The Lingua's activists polled 300 people using the method of accidental sample, asking them to evaluate the success of the realized anticorruption campaign and to give their view on solving the corruption problem.

The analysis of the questionnaire's results showed that the citizens consider the corruption problem as one of the current problems of the local community. Though they are aware of the corruption problem and of their consequences, the paradox is that only 40% of the people polled think that the corruption decrease can directly affect the improving of their living standard.

On the question-what is the most efficient way of struggle against corruption, the most citizens think that the answer are the repression methods carried out by the Government, while the change of the citizen's consciousness on the necessity of personal participation in opposing the corruption is on the last place among the answers. It is evident that the citizens are not aware of the fact that they are the part of entire problem and that the struggle begins "from below", in order to reach the summit, itself, at the end. The expectations that removing the few corrupted people from the top will solve the whole problem are not realistic. We have to understand that the problem is much more complex and requires engagement of everybody.

IN: The experiences of international organizations dealing the corruption problem show that this problem has to be pointed out at least five years as to encourage and actively involve citizens in

the struggle against this destructive appearance. Lingua has been actively working on this field for three years, and you have announced the new anticorruption campaign. What does it concretely imply?

From March 1st, "LINGUA" has started the new campaign called "*Be brave! Say No to corruption!*" whose goal is to encourage the citizens to actively fight against this deviant social appearance. By having experts as the guests on TV Kraljevo, printing and distributing the posters, leaflets and labels with appropriate contents, we will point out the significance of personal engagement of citizens and it will be clearly presented that the key of solving the corruption problems is in their hands.



There will be the hot telephone line at citizen's disposal (phone: 036/ 21-458) and the anticorruption team will receive citizens every day, from 9 am to 5 pm in premises of LINGUA Centre, the street Olga Jovicic 24. Depending on each subject's problem, the member of LINGUA team will give advices to citizens, check all the demands (public and anonymous) and forward the evidence to police and to public judiciary.

On the basis of personal experiences from previous campaign, when during one hour contact show on TV Kraljevo over 30 spectators reported for giving the examples of the corruption they had been faced with, we are convinced that by installing the "hot-line" telephone and receiving the people interested in this problem we will more encourage the citizens to report everyday with concrete examples of corruption. The number of "hot phone line" and the address of the office will be printed on all leaflets, labels and posters. It is not unessential that I am at the same time the Coordinator of this campaign and the president of the Municipal anticorruption commission. I also have to add that the campaign is financially supported by the foundation *Olof Palme International* from Sweden.

IN: Our people wisely say that "fish stinks from the head". And if start from the "bottom", there is no success if don't reach the summit. You have been frequently pointing out that the basic assumptions for the corruption struggle, for respecting the human rights and democracy are-establishing the legal state, changing and respecting the law but also the lustration in all social structures. Instead of it we are the witnesses of nearly everyday affairs related almost to various types of corruption, misuse and the conflict of interests, which finally have brought extraordinary elections. Where are we today in relation to 2000?

On the list of twenty countries, made by Transparency International and which is the "bible" for the investors, in 2000 Serbia and Montenegro was next to last 89th place. According to the corruption index value ranges from one to ten (which is oppositely proportional to degree of corruption-in societies that have the index 10, the corruption is being neglected and in countries which have the index 1, the corruption is present in all the society's segments), that year, our country had the index 1, 3 and in December 2003 the index was increased up to 2, 3. The comparative analyses from 2000 and from January this year shows that corruption in Serbia has been decreased in relation to the period of Milosevic regime, but unfortunately it is still present. The positive shift from 77 percent is evident, but the start basis is very low as the index five has been considered to be permitted level and that countries having lower index also have distinctive

social problems. According to estimation of the representative of Transparency International, this shift, in the last three years, has been the outcome of the measures undertaken in the struggle against corruption, by the Government, Parliament, NGOs and various institutions.

Making comparison, out of the states of former SFRJ, the highest index has Slovenia-5, 9; Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia are even 60 places after Serbia.

Changing the corruption index mostly depends on rounding the institutional scopes, bringing the National strategy for struggle against corruption and the wish to carry out the regulations consistently and with minimal compromise.

The fact is that dangerous types of corruption, where politicians are directly involved frequently stay unnoticed. Let's say, if you have politicians involved in the judiciary, the police, than the members of one political party don't chase other members of own political option, because behind that usually stand some material interest and that is one of the most frequent high types of corruption. We have concrete examples with "sugar" affair. The prosecuting organs needed a year to establish who smuggled 100.000 tones of sugar. For one year, out of total quantity, the lawbreaker (from Cacak), who smuggled 300 tones was discovered!

The corruption as the type of moral depravity, presents very compound and stratified phenomenon. It is tightly connected to politics and then it has unimagined, destructive power. It is especially expressed in surroundings in which the poverty, for a long time, hold in clamps the greed for material property. The term corruption is usually connected to penal persecution and regulations of penal statute. In that purposes it is being determined as the appearance of bribery-accepting the bribe. However, the real meaning is much wider. In a word it is the change of the health condition into a polluted, rotten, perverted one.

In case the people don't work on keeping its democracy, if they lack civic virtue and responsible government, then democracy falls as the plunder of corrupted greedy persons.

The political parties, traditionally strongpoint of democratic system have been shaken by bad reputation and are being condemned more and more also by the citizens who are estranging from making decisions. Since the citizens are leaving political parties more and more, the democracy is risking becoming ambivalent and helpless formality. Every civic right, though guaranteed by law, can be broken by unskilled and corrupted leaders. therefore it is obvious that corruption problem, when speaking about social development, industry recovery, greater standard, the police and the judiciary independence, transparent and responsible government, presents the largest problem in our society. Though this problem is noticeable at every step, it is not clear why such a little attention has paid to it. In this "LINGUA" sees the biggest barrier. The lack of true actions with sincere wish for corruption decrease presents one of the major causes of enormous scale of this problem in our society. So that we are returning to the beginning, to the citizen's role in entire story and to our intention to induce them, through the campaign "**Brave! No to corruption!**" to understand the significance and the essence of the problem and their role in that "vicious circle".

TRANSPARENCY

According to Arias Sanchez, the former president of Costa Rica, the winner of the Nobel prize for peace and the founder of the Transparency International: "Corruption will always flourish in the darkness of the totalitarianism, autocracy and dictatorship- the regime being concentrated by power in hands of the few people. Absolutism and dictatorship, by definition, have much less need for the ethics than the democracy has". However, it is not claimed, by this, that democracy is immune on corruption. The nation which grows out of repression system doesn't have to be aware

of the corruption width in former regimes, in which exploration and informing by the media wasn't allowed. In the same time, that new democracy could be obscured by scandals, disclosed by the free press. The lack of transparency in non-democratic regimes, made among the citizens false impression that democracy in its essence is liable to corruption. The democratic leaders are faced with responsibility to explain and correct that wrong impression. The democracy has to be characterized by transparency. The most efficient guards of transparency, yet, have to be the citizens themselves, organized in order to reach that goal. The civic organizations have to develop conscience and to strongly support transparency inside and outside the national borders.