

Statement by Leonid Reshetnikov, Director of the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, has confirmed what it has long been speculated in public that the views of the Minister of Energy Zorana Mihajlovic are not “according to the will” of Kremlin. Serbian energy minister is only insisting on Srbijagas reform and modernization, the gas power supply company which has billion eur dept because of bad management by its CEO Dusan Bajatovic claims Mihajlovic. Serbian government, PM and all major stakeholders are supporting the South Stream project but expects silently more respect from Russian Gazprom.

Namely, Reshetnikov said in an interview for NIN that Minister Mihajlovic “sabotages the agreement of Vladimir Putin and Tomislav Nikolic” on South Stream gas pipeline. The media reported earlier that the Russians do not like that the Minister of Energy is not on the “same wavelength” with the Director of Srbijagas Dusan Bajatovic and because of the commitment to build a gas pipeline between Bulgaria and Serbia. they also talk about the fact that between the President of Serbia, Tomislav Nikolic and the Minister Zorana Mihajlovic there are differences on how the gas contract with Moscow should look like, so they speculate that she is a “subject” of his criticism during the last meeting with Putin.

Zorana Mihajlovic said that such claims are an attempt to “put in the center of attention what does not exist” and to draw attention from important issues such as the economic measures of the Government, reform of Srbijagas and other problems. Minister Mihajlovic said yesterday that there is no conflict between her and the director of Srbijagas Bajatovic and that the priority is the reform of this, and other public companies. Mihajlovic said that Bajatovic is only one of the directors of public companies that are owned by the state of Serbia, and that one should not talk about the conflict, but only on how to improve Srbijagas. “The priority of the development and operation of the Ministry of Energy in the gas politics is restructuring of Srbijagas,” she said, adding that when it is finished, she will “gladly exchange all wishes, congratulations, and whatever it was with Bajatovic.” Mihajlovic said that the improving and reforming of Srbijagas are necessary because too much money passed through this company, and there are no great results. She said that Serbia does not have a stable supply of gas, so it is important to build pipelines.

- I hope that the construction of the South Stream pipeline will start by the end of this year. That will give stability to Serbia so as to get gas from one more direction”, said the minister. She added that the construction of the pipeline Bulgaria - Serbia is also important, but the realization of the project is late because it was not started with restructuring of Srbjagas. She recalled that the Prime Minister Ivica Dacic signed a memorandum on the construction of the pipeline from Nis to Dimitrovgrad last year. “I believe that we will resolve these problems because it is one of the most important tasks to reform public enterprises, not only Srbijagas, but also the Power Industry of Serbia,” she said.

Foreign investment consultant Milan R. Kovcevic told Danas that the criticism of Reshetnikov is frivolous and it represents interfering in things that have nothing to do with

the economy.

- Since Reshetnikov is at the head of an institute, he should be interested only in facts and not to impose charges. If he dealt with the facts of the gas agreement between Russia and Serbia, he would clearly have come to the conclusion that Serbia is the one that is damaged and we are the ones who have a right to express a criticism to Moscow. Namely, Russians paid a very low price for Oil Industry of Serbia, and in addition pay under-large fee for utilization of mineral resources in the country. It should be added that the Russians are the majority owner of gas storage in Banatski Dvor and that we are unable to fill gas to the warehouse, which is located on our territory, if it is not from Gazprom - said Kovacevic who believes that the criticism imposed on her account is actually an indirect political pressure from Moscow to Serbia.

On the other hand, Vojislav Vuletic, Secretary General of Association for Serbian gas claims for Danas that Russia's objections to the account of the Minister Mihajlovic are "fully in place".

- I got the impression that Zorana Mihajlovic is the opponent the entire gas agreement of the South Stream from first day. In this respect one should consider critical notes on her account that arrive from Moscow. The story of how we are damaged by concluding a gas agreement with Russia in any way is completely meaningless. It is enough to say that the Italians requested from Moscow that South Stream goes through Romania, as a member of the European Union rather than Serbia, which it not a member yet. However, the Russians said no and the pipeline will go through our territory. So when it comes to that, we did not do a favor to Moscow, but it did to us - Vuletic says. He points out that no obstruction can stop the construction of the South Stream through Serbia or to force Russia to change its mind, so the start of the construction on our territory should be expected in the next month.

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They are stronger

Milan R. Kovacevic supports all that the Minister did in terms gas agreement. "The Russians are absolutely aware that as a state they are much stronger than Serbia, and in this case they demonstrate it. The first goal is to hide from Serbian public that the Russians by signing the gas agreement in the field of economy in Serbia they received more than they gave," said our source. -

Source; Serbia Energy/Agencies/Danas