Twitter Thread by Zoran Kusovac

Zoran Kusovac
@zkusovac

THREAD #Serbian #Orthodox #Church bishops start Conclave (#Sabor-Holy Assembly in #SPC parlance) to elect new #Patriarch, 3 months after previous died of #Covid. Election much more about politics than religion, mainly #Serbia #Kosovo relations but also #Russia Orthodox Church /2



2/ vs. #Ecumenical Patriarch of #Constantinople. Most of numerous traditional cleavages within SPC (Young Lions vs. Old Guards); Serbians vs. TransDrinians; ecumenicals vs. hardline Orthodox etc. will be irrelevant with only the split between Russian vs. Greek students, roughly/3

3/corresponding with main division: support for whatever "solution" President Vucic might propose to satisfy int'l demand to at least de facto recognize Kosovo vs. stubborn refusal to accept anything not in line with current Serbian constitution that says #KosovoJeSrbija. /4

4/Due to 3 decades of heavy politicking under 1 weak Patriarch (Pavle) & his insipid successor (Irinej), those who'd otherwise be God-obeying "good guys" are staunchly in Kosovo Status Quo camp, refusing any deal. Those bishops who were in bed with politicians & secret services/5

5/ now support "accommodation" with Kosovo. Voting system is peculiar: Conclave picks 3 eligible bishops (each needs to obtain simple majority of votes i.e. 23); names of top 3 are sealed & 1 is drawn. System was designed in Communist times to prevent manipulation. Both sides /6

6/have preferred candidates: "govt" Irinej of Novi Sad, unpleasant arrogant manipulator who has several minions that could take his place if he cannot make it into the 3 (Porfirije of Zagreb, slick cunning sweet-talking politician), Jefrem of Banja Luka etc. Anti-Vucic camp was/7

7/ fielding modernist, youthful, softspoken Grigorije whom hardliners tried to sideline moving him from Herzegovina to Germany in 2018. But he is not real candidate, only trailblazer for softer but also firm-in-refusal Teodosije of Kosovo. Last resort of this camp is Joanikije /8

8/of Nikši■, stubborn opponent of Montenegrin identity but also firmly against change of Kosovo status. Earmarked to succeed firebrand #Montenegro-Serb Amfilohije who succumbed to Covid, Joanikije would only step in as last ditch: if got to be elected patriarch, only 3 young & /9

9/ inexperienced Montenegrin-born bishops remain to assume Cetinje throne. Naming non-Montenegrin there would be asking for trouble & adding fuel to separatist tendencies, something Joanikije, all Constitutionalists & the reasonable faction of Irinej's camp want to avoid. /10

10/Govt side can count on at least 18 certain votes; depending on concrete names it could muster up to 24-25 (23 needed). Opposition is certain of 20 & could reach 23-24. So voting will be tactical along some classic #Vatican #conclave patterns. Ideally both sides want to have/11

11/ 2 out of 3 in 2nd round to maximize chances (all 3 is practically impossible). If, as is to be expected, both sides give up their initial front runners, "gov't" might sacrifice Irinej to get Porfirije and/or Jefrem in; "opposition" would give up Grigorije hoping to boost /12

12/Teodosije and/or another candidate possibly Jovan of Slavonia. But if Irinej makes it in, rivals will be forced to push for Joanikije. In hardest-fought scenario both might have to compromise on 3rd candidate chosing 1 at least broadly acceptable to both camps and there lie/13

13/ the chances of Hrizostom of Sarajevo, Jovan of Šumadija or even some of the other backbenchers like Ignjatije, Justin, Irinej Dobrijevi■ or Dositej. Once 3 names are in the 2nd round everything is possible (Church believes that Holy Spirit guides the hand picking winner). /14

14/ There is little chance for foul play as even losing ballots will be opened & revealed to the Conclave, unlike in 1990 when only the one with Pavle’s name was opened. Length of voting will be indicative: longer balloting is sign of a harder battle that may go on to Friday. END