

Serbian Unity Congress

КОНГРЕС СРПСКОГ УЈЕДНЊЕЊА



Feb. 15, 2008

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
The Secretary of State
U. S. Department of State
Washington, D.C.20520

Dear Madame Secretary:

We have regularly communicated with you regarding the UN-administered Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija, counseling balance, prudence and justice. Now it appears the United States is poised to recognize an imminent move of the Kosovo Albanian leaders to unilaterally and illegally declare independence. You elaborated and defended that decision two days ago at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hearings with statements that we believe merit a response:

“We want a Serbia that is looking to its future and that future is in Europe”.

We agree that Serbia should look forward and that Serbia’s future is in Europe. The turmoil in the Balkans of the 1990’s does not change the fact Serbia has been an integral part of Europe for many years. Serbia is the successor to a founding member of the OSCE, and hosted its key post-Helsinki conference 30 years ago. The conference reiterated the Helsinki Final Act which articulated Europe’s position on security, which adopted four main principles: (I) Sovereign equality, respect for rights inherent in sovereignty; (II) Refraining from the threat or the use of force; (III) Inviolability of frontiers; (IV) Territorial integrity of States.

The US should reaffirm its support for these tenets and encourage all of Europe, including Serbia, to embrace them. Given Serbia’s consistent electoral support since 2000 of political leaders that are supportive of the West and entry into the EU, it is troubling that the Administration would encourage a move that overturns the underpinnings of the Helsinki principles.

“And what the U.S. is going to do is offer a hand of friendship, saying that the status of Kosovo and its resolution will allow Serbia to look forward, and to move on then with what it needs to do. We hope to be good partners in exchanges, in economic assistance, in all the ways that could reach out to Serbia.”

The issues of an economic alliance between Serbia and the West and a declaration of independence by Kosovo are not in any way related. America and Serbia must recognize the value of business and economic partnerships between our nations. There is much to be gained by both nations from increased trade and cultural exchanges.

Both America and Serbia should also recognize and respect the importance of the consequences of rejecting the tenant of territorial sovereignty. Serbia has in every election since 2000

demonstrated its repudiation of Milosevic's policies of the 1990's. Kosovo's leaders, sadly, have not. They have regularly insisted on absolute independence with the caveat that if it is not granted, they would not be able to control the actions of their people and that violence could well ensue. Their position garnered the following response from Peter Schieder, President of the Council of Europe, "It is already evident that the Albanian majority in Kosovo - and its political leadership - are failing to demonstrate that they can create a future of Kosovo in which all its people will have a chance to live in peace and stability."

Given President Tadic's recent re-election, it seems to us the perfect time to take a step back and bring the parties together for further negotiations. This time, however, we would urge you to recommend that all sides agree not to take a position on the call for independence in advance of the negotiations. In that way, the playing field will be leveled and substantive conversations will be able to take place.

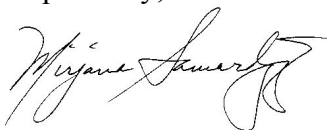
"But it is a great culture and they are great people. I hope they will look to that future, not to the past."

We greatly appreciate your recognition of the Serbian culture and its people. We would also agree with you that it is imperative that Serbia continue to look forward. However, we would submit that from the onset of the Yugoslav dissolution, USA has never taken into consideration legitimate problems of Serbia. She has been treated as a cause of all the problems and her national interest and dignity as fodder for solutions of issues and demands raised by all other ethnic and religious people. Your testimony has once again confirmed these flawed policies which have led to this current Kosovo situation and a foreboding future in the Balkans.

We would further submit that America should also recognize the long-term consequences of ignoring the deeply imbedded concepts of territorial sovereignty and the rule of law. The recognition of a declaration of independence in Kosovo will have profound consequence not just in Serbia, but in many other places around the globe. We do not believe that suggesting that anything short of capitulation by Serbia on the issue of Kosovo is a choice between looking to the future or past. Instead, we believe it is about recognizing the importance of territorial sovereignty and the consequences resulting from ignoring it. America and Serbia can join in an effort to look forward by recommitting themselves to a process that will result in a negotiated rather than an imposed settlement. Anything less would be a failure for all parties concerned.

Dr. Rice, there is still time to change this policy to the benefit of all, but the window of opportunity is closing. We urge you and the President to reassess the Administration's position and seek an outcome that will be fair to all.

Respectfully,



Mirjana Samardzija
President