



Address by First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic at the launch of an exhibition marking the 140th anniversary since the establishment of the Legation of the Principality of Serbia in the Russian Empire:

"Dear Mr. Borisov,
Dear Mr. Timchenko,
Distinguished deputies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to thank you for being here with you at this reception marking a very important anniversary – 140 years since the establishment of the Legation of the Principality of Serbia in the Russian Empire.

{youtube}4G3Xe-mkDMM{/youtube}

Our diplomatic and political relations, relations between our two states and peoples, date far back to the past. Last year we formally observed the 180th anniversary since the establishment of diplomatic relations, but our political relations date even as far back as the medieval times.

{youtube}MhHbBbpaLSU{/youtube}

I will remind you that the opening of the Legation of the Principality of Serbia in St. Petersburg took place at a defining moment for the Serbian people – in the years of huge clashes and a decisive battle for the independence and international recognition of Serbia. At the time, a significant portion of Serbia was under Turkish occupation, and it was no other than the legations and consulates of the Russian Empire that were the hubs offering protection to the Serbian people.

{youtube}1pFPwTk25zE{/youtube}

Furthermore, I would like to remind you that many prominent figures in Serbian politics as well as in art and culture served as Ambassadors in the Russian Empire. Serbia appointed renowned intellectuals to this post in the Russian capital, namely one Laza Kostic, Nikola Pasic, Sava Grujic, Stojan Novakovic and others.

May I also remind you of the great solidarity shown by the Russian Empire in the early 20th century when Austria-Hungary attacked Serbia, starting World War I. The Russian Empire headed by Nicholas II of Russia entered World War I as a token of solidarity with Serbia. When the Serbian army was compelled to retreat via Albania, and when hundreds of thousands of Serbian soldiers led by King Peter I and Regent Alexander reached the sea waiting for the Allied fleet to transport them to Greece as their lives were in peril, it was Emperor Nicholas II of Russia who addressed letters to his allies in France and Britain requesting that immediate help be provided to Serbia or else he would be forced to take unilateral action as regards the unity of the Allied front.

After the October Revolution many Russian immigrants found home in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.

As we come back to the present, we see that Serbia and Russia are today two brotherly and friendly countries. Such bonds of history can be severed or destroyed by no-one.

We are most grateful to the Russian Federation, President Putin and my colleagues the Ministers for their unequivocal support to Serbia, the Serbian people and the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Serbia.

For its part, Serbia has acted in a responsible way and despite being an EU candidate country has not joined and will not join sanctions being imposed on Russia.

{youtube}fCLxoHq_U6Y{/youtube}

Mr. Yury Borisov and I have been co-chairing the Serbia-Russia Intergovernmental Committee on Trade, Economic and Scientific-Technological Cooperation and I am pleased to say that our foreign trade has been on the rise, amounting to over USD 3 billion the previous year, yet I am confident in its potential to grow far above this figure.

Serbia is willing to continue cooperation at the political and economic levels, but also in culture, education, science or any other field.

My counterpart Mr. Lavrov informed me today that the Russian Federation had allocated a further USD 20 million for the demining process in Serbia. He also informed me that Gazprom

had secured USD 6 million for further interior works on St. Sava's Church in Belgrade. This is the biggest temple of its kind in our part of Europe and I am very glad that it is a result of joint Serbia-Russia efforts.

I hope that we will soon have an opportunity for top-level political meetings. In the days ahead, we are expecting a new meeting between President Vucic and President Putin at the Summit in China. This is very important, as Serbia is willing to work in consultation and act together with Russia regarding the pressures being exerted over Kosovo. Finally, we are most grateful for the support Russia has offered to us in the UN Security Council concerning our territorial integrity.

The friendship we first forged centuries ago is an unbreakable one and I would like to thank you once again for all the love and respect you have shown to Serbia and its people.

Thank you."