



First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia Ivica Dacic held a lecture on Serbia-U.S. relations at the opening of the second cycle of the Serbian-American Academy for Leaders.

On that occasion, Minister Dacic underscored the importance of historical contextualization of Serbia-U.S. relations through past alliances which reflected our common values and unity in the fight for the preservation of libertarian principles, so as to anticipate the future direction in the development of relations between our two countries which will celebrate their 140th anniversary in 2021.

Serbia's Minister of Foreign Affairs stated that we should be realistic when observing our relations and recognize the ever-present asymmetry, but despite that Serbia demonstrated that a small country can become America's important friend and ally.

"Accordingly, our relations should be put in a broader perspective and positive examples from our common history should be highlighted, as this is the best way to change misconceptions that we have about each other ", Minister Dacic pointed out.

The Minister recalled that the greats, such as Nikola Tesla and Mihajlo Pupin, made a great impact on our restrained relations, as well as Woodrow Wilson who advocated the reestablishment of Serbia as a sovereign state with an access to the sea - a request included in his 14 points in 1918.

Minister Dacic highlighted the importance of the most moving moment when the Serbian flag was flown over the White House on 28 July 1918, which demonstrated the extent and significance of our mutual respect.

He added that it was a great honor for him to celebrate this date in the US Congress (Washington) and in Belgrade in 2018.

"Our relations could be characterized as that of a friendly alliance in the history of the Kingdom of Serbia during World War I, as well as owing to the fact that the U.S. was one of the first great

powers to support the idea of creating Yugoslavia", Dacic said.

The period from 1945 to 1948 was marked by the perception ranging from Yugoslavia being "a loyal member of the Communist family with its headquarters in Moscow" to the confrontation between Tito and Stalin which resulted in Yugoslavia being perceived by the U.S. as a key element in "symbolizing difference behind the Iron Curtain".

Referring to the past, the Minister underscored that Serbia, with regard to current relations, was committed to address open issues in a diplomatic and constructive way, taking into consideration stability on a wider scale, and its readiness to strengthen bilateral relations, as such an approach led to establishing positive dynamic in cooperation between Serbia and the U.S.

"The intensifying of high-level dialogue and an open invitation extended to President Trump to visit Serbia testify to this", Minister Dacic concluded.

The Minister highlighted that the issue of Kosovo and Metohija surely represents the most important topic of our political dialogue and thereby we remain open to further discussions on resolving the issue.

He noted that the U.S. was an important partner in achieving a durable solution acceptable to both sides. The Minister also expressed special appreciation for the U.S. continued support to Serbia's path towards the full-fledged EU membership.

In conclusion, Minister Dacic also highlighted the importance of the Serbian diaspora in the U.S., and pointed out the fact that Serbia organized free repatriation flights which brought back home hundreds of U.S. and Serbian citizens with the assistance of Air Serbia.

The full text of the speech is as follows:

Excellencies,
Distinguished professors,
Dear students,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and a pleasure to have the opportunity to address you for the second time within the series of lectures on the Serbian-American Academy for Leaders organized by the Congress of Serbian-American Friendship.

The fact that despite this unconventional way of communication that the COVID-19 pandemic forced us to have, in just three months we have another series of lectures on Serbian-American relations, in itself testifies the desire to improve mutual understanding as a starting point of any further development and strengthening of relations between Serbia and the United States. Such efforts are exactly a kind of initiative that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Government will always welcome, not only because the improvement of Serbian-American cooperation is one of our most important foreign policy priorities, but also because, in a broader regional context, it opens new perspectives for development, prosperity and stability.

As in the previous lecture, it is our wish to better understand our current relations by looking at the historical context of our relations and especially our alliances from the past, but also to predict the future directions of their development.

If we try to make some kind of assessment of the relationship that will turn 140 years in 2021, the fact is that, in addition to the always emphasized war alliances, both the United States and Serbia have shared common values throughout history and fought together to preserve freedom principles and civilizational achievements.

At the same time, in the broader context of perceiving our relations, we should be realistic and admit that there has always been a pronounced asymmetry, both geographical and demographic, asymmetry of political, military and economic power. However, despite that, Serbia and the Serbian people have shown that it is possible for one not so big country to be an American ally and an important friend. At the same time, we must mention that the said asymmetry in relations as well as the challenges at the end of the 20th century brought significant differences which we often have different perceptions about even today. That is why I believe that our relations should be viewed in a broader perspective and we should strive to always emphasize the positive examples from our common past. It's the best way to change certain misperceptions we've created about each other.

Diplomatic relations between the Principality of Serbia and the United States were formally established on 14 October 1881, with the conclusion of the Trade Agreement and the Consular Convention, which entered into force on 27 December 1882. A kind of curiosity is that these agreements remained in force for more than a century, because they were accepted by the Council of Ministers of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in 1919 and the Government of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia in 1946. A kind of introduction to the establishment of relations is a letter from the American Consul in Romania Louis J. Czapkay, addressed to the State Department, who in May 1867 proposed the establishment of diplomatic relations so that the United States, like Russia, France, England, Austria, Prussia and Italy, would appoint its Consul General to Serbia. However, the assassination of Prince Mihailo, as well as the fact that Serbia's independence had not yet been formalized at the time, postponed this initiative until after the Berlin Congress of 1878, when, at the suggestion of U.S. Ambassador to Vienna John Cason, the United States began to establish relations with all countries that gained independence at this Congress.

The period from the establishment of relations to the Balkan Wars in 1912-1913 is characterized by the reticence on the part of the United States, so that with relatively modest trade volume, our greats like Nikola Tesla and Mihajlo Pupin give the main note to the generally restrained relations. This situation changed with the beginning of the Balkan wars, when a Serb from the then Austro-Hungarian Banat, as an already famous and extremely well-established inventor, played an important role in creating narratives about a small, independent Balkan kingdom in the freedom struggle against an empire. It is, of course, about Mihajlo Pupin. This created a clear historical parallel with the American struggle for independence, which the American press accepted and disseminated with affection. As a result, during the July crisis of 1914, the American public and political circles supported Serbia in its position before the Austro-Hungarian war threats. Although the United States entered the war only in 1917, the need for more comprehensive cooperation between the two countries led to the opening of the

Serbian Embassy in Washington at the end of 1916. When the United States declared war on Germany in April 1917 and approved a war loan to Serbia at the end of the same year, relations between the two countries acquired all the features of a war alliance.

It is interesting that for a very long time President Woodrow Wilson advocated for the renewal of Serbia as an independent state and its access to the sea, which was a request that became part of his famous 14 points from 1918. Mission of the Serbian Government was on a visit to the United States from 20 December 2017 until mid-February the following year. The U.S. side insisted on referring to the mission as a "Serbian" instead of "Yugoslav" one. The extent of President Woodrow Wilson's sympathies for Serbia was made apparent in the 1918 telegram he addressed to the then Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Serbia Nikola Pasic where he wrote that he was "sure that justice to Serbia stands at the very top of any programme of justice in the thoughts of every thinking and patriotic man in the United States."

The importance and scope of mutual respect is best illustrated by recalling probably the most moving occasion in Serbia-U.S. relations when on 28 July 1918 the Serbian flag flew over the White House and all U.S. public buildings. On this very day a statement of U.S. President Woodrow Wilson was read out in the churches around the country and published in all major daily papers in which he, touched by their colossal losses and heroic acts, expressed his admiration of the "gallant people of Serbia" who had due to "their love of freedom", he said, "opposed a vastly superior enemy". The only flag of a foreign country ever flown over the White House other than the Serbian one was the French flag to mark the 131st anniversary of the Fall of the Bastille in 1920.

I often say how deeply honored I was to be able to take part in the observation of this anniversary of ours in 2018, both in Washington, D.C. in the U.S. Congress and here in Belgrade, recalling with our U.S. partners the alliance existing between our two peoples.

On the whole, the relationship between the United States and the Kingdom of Serbia during World War I can be characterized as one of alliance and friendship with many examples of humanitarian, political, financial and military assistance. We must not forget that, despite a strong fondness for Serbia, the United States was the first major power to accept and endorse the establishment of a Yugoslav state, recognizing the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes as early as February 1919 and supporting our side in many ensuing border disputes, as yet another piece of legacy left by President Woodrow Wilson for us to remember him by.

In the interim between the World Wars, the United States' relations with the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, i.e., the Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which Serbia selflessly supported through sacrifice and by embedding its statehood, were characterized by a friendly cooperation, even though the United States, having withdrawn its delegation from the Versailles Peace Conference, and especially in the 1920s and 1930s took a more passive approach as regards the international relations. This changed with the outbreak of World War II and especially after the United States entered the war in December 1941.

Speaking about the period of the Second World War, I would like to remind you of the Operation Halyard, when the largest air bridge in enslaved Europe was established, which saved almost

500 downed American pilots and air personnel. This operation, as a kind of paradigm of our relations the best elements of which were often pushed to the background, was shrouded in secrecy for decades. Last September in Pranjani, we have finally observed the 75th anniversary since this operation in attendance of President Aleksandar Vucic, the then U.S. Ambassador to Serbia Kyle Scott and descendants of the rescued allied pilots.

The Yugoslav-U.S. relations in the post-World War II period can be divided into several periods and stages alternating between ideological clashes and periods dominated by pragmatic cooperation. From 1945 to 1948, Yugoslavia adhered to principles of national development while pursuing a foreign policy in line with Informbiro and thus being perceived as "loyal member of the communist family centered in Moscow". The split between Stalin and Tito crucially changed the relations between the two states. In the ensuing several years, Yugoslavia became to the United States a focal point of efforts in support of its perseverance and becoming a symbol of differentiation behind the Iron Curtain. The United States in those years extended strong military, financial, material and political support to Yugoslavia. A number of historians hold the view that by signing the Balkan Pact of 1953, Yugoslavia had joined NATO or was on the threshold of being admitted into the membership of NATO, at the very least.

Upon Stalin's death in 1953, pressures on Yugoslavia subdued, the process of normalization of relations with the USSR began and Josip Broz Tito embarked on the development of the Non-Aligned Movement, which would naturally only take him further apart from the United States. Despite the cordial relationship between President Tito and President Kennedy, Yugoslav foreign policy from 1955-1968 largely focused on the institutionalization of the "Third Path", Non-Aligned Movement and the strengthening of cooperation with the USSR.

With the outbreak of the Vietnam War, Yugoslav criticism of the U.S. foreign policy was on the rise. However, the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia and their suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968, urged Serbia to focus again on the strengthening of ties with the United States, fearful of facing a similar destiny. The period between the beginning of 1970ies and the passing of Josip Broz Tito in 1980 was characterized by the rising trend in the relations between the two countries, especially after the end of the Vietnam War and the Yugoslav side's efforts to "play down" the radical tendencies within the Non-Aligned Movement. In 1978, Josip Broz Tito visited the United States for the third time during his stay in power. In this period in particular, Yugoslavia enjoyed a kind of a privileged position amid the Cold War division between the two opposing military and political alliances, and it can be said that it managed to capitalize on this amply, engaging skillfully in a balancing act.

After Tito's death, the Yugoslav political elite failed to grasp the developments that were heralded by the successive economic and financial crises in 1980s. In a situation where separatism was revived and the impact of U.S. foreign policy change brought about by the Reagan administration was underestimated, U.S.-Yugoslav relations in the 1980s depended largely on changes in Cold War conflicts and on the collapse of the Eastern Bloc later on.

The last decade of the 20th century also brought about the most difficult period in Serbia-U.S. relations, culminating in and reaching the lowest point in the history of the relations between the two countries through the severance of diplomatic relations on 25 March 1999 due to the NATO

bombing of the then Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The events of the 1990s, the breakup of Yugoslavia, and especially the 1999 bombing, produced a series of negative perceptions that were often reflected in both the way we think and the quality of our relations after being reestablished in November 2000. The most drastic example of this is the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo and Metohija, which is the issue on which Serbia and the U.S. still have fundamentally different positions. Serbia-U.S. political relations in the post-Cold War period can be summed up in the well-known diplomatic phrase "we agree to disagree."

In view of the current state of our relations, Serbia is determined to approach open issues in a diplomatic and constructive manner, taking into account wider stability. At the same time, we are ready to further strengthen bilateral relations in all areas that can provide additional quality and content to our cooperation. This approach has led to the fact that today I can state with satisfaction that the cooperation between Serbia and the United States, despite the real challenges that we do not hide, has a positive dynamics. In recent years, political dialogue has been intensified at all levels and in numerous areas, which has contributed to the creation of a stable basis for the development of overall bilateral relations. Intensifying political dialogue at the highest level and an open invitation to President Donald Trump to visit Serbia remains a topic we always remind our American partners, especially if we keep in mind that the last American president who visited Belgrade was Jimmy Carter in June 1980.

The issue of Kosovo and Metohija is certainly the most important topic of our political dialogue, in connection with which, despite divergent positions, we remain fully open for further talks on resolving this issue. I repeat that our side will do everything to clarify and bring our positions closer to the American partners as much as possible, with the expectation that the United States will also respect Serbian interests. We see the United States as an important partner in the process of achieving a lasting and sustainable solution, acceptable to both parties. The fact that the United States appointed two special envoys - Ambassador Richard Grenell as an envoy of the White House dedicated to the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, and Deputy Assistant Secretary of State Matthew Palmer on behalf of the State Department, as an envoy for our region, speaks of the interest of the American administration. Despite the postponement of the meeting of the delegations of Belgrade and Pristina, which was planned to be held in Washington on 27 June under the auspices of the White House, our side's readiness for dialogue in order to find a compromise and sustainable solution remains unchanged.

Serbia especially appreciates the support that the United States continuously provides us in achieving full membership in the European Union, as our strategic goal. I hope that the United States will continue to actively support our country in achieving this goal, regardless of the challenges currently facing the European Union itself, given that maintaining positive dynamics in the European integration process is extremely important for the stability and development of not only Serbia but the whole region.

We are grateful for the understanding and support that the United States provides for deeper integration of the region, which is embodied in initiatives such as the "Mini Schengen", designed to help achieve goals aimed at the benefit of the entire Western Balkans. Strengthening of mutual relations is supported by the fact that through its contribution and especially its participation in peacekeeping missions Serbia affirms and promotes peace and security in the

region and is an exporter of stability not only in the Western Balkans, but beyond.

I would also like to emphasize the readiness of the Republic of Serbia to continue to work intensively on strengthening economic ties and attracting investments from the United States, after the end of the current crisis. Although trade with the United States has increased in recent years, we will certainly continue to work actively on this issue in the future, especially bearing in mind that the United States is still not among the top 10 trade partners of Serbia. In the period January-April 2020 trade with the United States amounted to over \$ 295 million (exports amounted to \$ 100.3 million and imports to \$ 195.6 million). During 2019, total trade amounted to approximately \$ 854 million (U.S. exports were \$ 303 and imports \$ 551 million).

Areas such as information technology, energy and mining, agriculture, but also other types of cooperation, such as town twinning, university cooperation, tourism, connecting small and medium enterprises, chambers of commerce, etc. they can be a clear confirmation of the efforts to strengthen our relations, both politically and economically, and through the strengthening of scientific, cultural and all other ties that will make our states and peoples closer to each other. Finally, my review of the Serbia-U.S. relations in the past, present and in the future would not be complete without mentioning the Serbian diaspora in the USA being a direct bond between our two countries. Our people went to the United States cyclically, in multiple "waves", from the first half of the 19th century to the present. As a result, in addition to "recognizable" parts of the U.S. for their broad Serbian communities such as Chicago, Milwaukee, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, New York, communities in Florida and California are increasing in number and smaller Serbian communities are scattered throughout the U.S. (e.g., even in Alaska, Montana, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, etc.).

According to U.S. data, 189,671 Americans of Serbian descent were registered, while at the same time, U.S. institutions themselves estimate this number to be significantly higher. Estimates of Serbian associations in the U.S. range from 600,000 to 1,000,000 members of the Serbian community. As diverse as these figures may be, the Serbian diaspora, in whose ranks not only Tesla and Pupin lived and worked, but also people like George Fisher (Djordje Sagic), who more than 200 years ago moved to America as a Serbian revolutionary and participated in the "Texas Revolution," Karl Malden, Pete Maravic, George Vojnovic, Helen Delic Bentley, Peter Bogdanovic, Steve Tesic and many others who have left, or still leave a significant mark in the United States, together make up one of the important ties and added value in building our future relations.

Even in this difficult moment for the whole world, when we are all in the middle of a global crisis caused by the current COVID-19 pandemic, which leaves consequences primarily on the health of our people, but also on the world economy, Serbia and the United States are fighting a common enemy together. I would like to point out that the United States donated 6,000 coronavirus tests to Serbia and that it allocated funds to help Serbia, both within the funds intended for global assistance in the fight against the COVID-19 epidemic and through extra-budgetary donations for laboratory equipment for testing and rapid detection of coronavirus at the Torlak Institute of Virology, Vaccines and Serums.

For its part, in March and April, Serbia, with the help of "Air Serbia", organized repatriation

flights which returned hundreds of American and Serbian citizens to their countries without any compensation.

In that spirit, I would like to remind you of another example from the difficult and glorious common history, when at the beginning of 1915, an American medical mission headed by Dr. Edward Ryan was engaged in the fight against the typhus epidemic on the territory of Serbia. In the heroic fight that was led at that time, three American doctors and nine nurses fell ill with this vicious disease, and one doctor passed away. Such examples of solidarity in times of challenge are another proof that our peoples can and have been allies.

In conclusion, I would like to remain optimistic about the future of relations between Serbia and the United States. I think that a little over 140 years of diplomatic relations reminds and obliges us at the same time. It reminds us that, historically speaking, in similar, crucial moments, Serbia and the United States were together on the right side of history - sharing the same ideals and values. It obliges us not to forget these facts and to use them to build stronger future relations on them.

As a result, I hope that, regardless of all the challenges we face, and the differences we need to overcome, there is a mutual desire to preserve and strengthen our relations in the future on the basis of mutual understanding and respect, based on common interests.

Thank you for your attention!