

Igazi európaiakként kell cselekednünk

Vuk Jeremić szerb külügyminiszter előadása a Közgázon

Szerbia külügyminisztere, Vuk Jeremić 2009. február 9-én előadást tartott egyetemünkön. Az előadás teljes szövegét közöljük a következőkben. Az előadás a szerb-magyar közös történelemből kiindulva a két ország összefonódó sorsát mutatja be, amely napjainkban a közös európai értékek elfogadásában és Európa építésében nyilvánul meg. Európai integrációs törekvéseiben Szerbia számára fontos partner Magyarország, és ennek fényében a külügyminiszter úr kifejezi reményét, hogy 2009-ben Szerbia és az EU kapcsolataiban áttörés következik be.

Excellencies,
Dear Friends,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by expressing my thanks to Corvinus University for the invitation to address you this afternoon. This institution embodies the spirit of learned, practical inquiry—a spirit whose aim is to encourage policies that open up this country to the region, and to the world-policies that are, in my opinion, essential to the long-term prosperity of a small yet vibrant European nation such as this one, and such as my own.

I feel very much at home in Budapest. No visitor fails to be captured by the beauty of this remarkable city. Peaceful and bustling, this is a grand yet intimate metropolis that treasures the past while capturing the dynamism of the 21st century. It is a place of distinct, truly European harmony and achievement.

It is also an often-forgotten symbol of shared Serbian-Hungarian history. In the 19th century, for example, the first

Serbian theatre was founded in Budapest, followed a few years later, in 1826, by the establishment of our greatest cultural institution, the Matica Srpska.

About a decade after that, the founding of the Tekeljanum took place. Its mission was to act as an educational and cultural institution for gifted Serbian students. The world-famous physicist Nikola Tesla lived there for close to three years, as did great poets such as Jovan Jovanović Zmaj and Laza Kostić. The Tekeljanum was nationalized in 1952, suffering a similar fate as that of Hungarian private foundations. Yet in 1996, it was returned to the Serbian Orthodox Church—and acts today as an important cultural, spiritual and educational center.

This should come as no surprise to any of us. Sharing a common border and common values, the destinies of our nations have intertwined for centuries.

“We are foster brothers fed by the same breast,” the Hungarian writer László Németh once said, referring to the relationship between Hungarians and Serbs, that one could say began to be formalized in the 12th century, when King Béla II married Jelena of Raška, the Serbian Duchess in 1129. This extraordinary woman, who ruled as Regent Dowager Queen for seven years, gave birth to three sons, all of whom went on to become Hungarian kings: Géza II, Ladislaus II, and Stephen IV.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our ties were solidified some three hundred years later when János Hunyadi led an army against the Ottomans, liberating Belgrade and reaching Niš in 1443. His

death in 1455, after successfully repulsing an Ottoman siege against-once more-Belgrade, is commemorated in a number of Serbian epic poems, in which he is known as Sibirjanin Janko.

His son, the celebrated King Matthias Corvinus, after whom this great university is named, ruled parts of Serbia from the 1450s. This arrangement lasted until 1521 when Belgrade fell to the Ottomans, opening the way for the 1526 Battle of Mohács and the period that ensued.

This sense of shared destiny remained even when we confronted each other. During the Second World War, entire Yugoslav Partisan units struggling against fascism were made up of ethnic-Hungarians, for example.

I would like to single out another hero on this occasion, Endre Bajči-Žilinski. This great Hungarian politician opposed from the beginning the invasion of my country in 1941.

He spoke out defiantly against the mass murder of Serbs, Jews and Roma in occupied northern Serbia, most notably the infamous January 1942 Raid in Novi Sad.

Let me quote his words, written at around that time: "I look to the future, where we will have to find common ground again with the Serbs. Mark what I say, the Serbian nation will stand on its own two feet again, and it will once more regain its freedom. And we will have to blind the agents of hatred who have pitted two honorable and mutually-dependent nations, Hungarian and Serbian. This must start today. Our two nations have to begin to grow closer again."

Decades have passed, regimes have come and gone, and our two nations have grown closer, as Bajči-Žilinski envisioned. We have found common ground

in the European construction and the values that form its basis, our peoples live together, not just side by side, in a number of cities and towns across our countries. As never before, we are working in concert, not at cross-purposes.

That is why I can say with conviction that Serbia considers Hungary a partner in the 21st century.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The central strategic priority of the Government of Serbia is to rapidly move the country toward membership in the European Union. We look forward to the continued strong support of Hungary in our quest. Not only would this bring us closer together, but it would almost certainly bring great material benefits to our nations-on both sides of the border.

Yet there is still much road to travel.

To reach our destination, I believe that European leaders need to approach the region-the last unintegrated part of our continent-with the boldness and vision worthy of those at the helm of one of the grandest peace projects ever undertaken by mankind: the European Union.

Let me put all this more clearly in the Serbian context.

I believe that by re-doubling our efforts, and enhancing the good-will that exists in many quarters of Europe for my country, we can make 2009 Serbia's leap year of European integration.

To further this aim, I believe that the following three, mutually-reinforcing components constitute the basis of a very realistic, concrete and deliverable package for 2009.

We must begin to act now, because time will not stand still while we dither about-for especially in times like this, the politicians must set the pace for the

bureaucrats, and not the other way around.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The first part of the package to which I just referred involves working closely with one another to ensure visa liberalization becomes a reality for the citizens of Serbia.

We are grateful that Budapest has been such a strong advocate of visa-free travel for all the citizens of Serbia.

With your help and that of other EU countries, we can eliminate the visa lines in front of European embassies in Belgrade by the end of the year.

I turn to the second part of the proposed package to advance Serbia's European perspective in 2009. It centers on synergizing our efforts to overcome the recalcitrance of few on un-freezing the Interim Agreement between Serbia and the EU. Together with the vast majority of other EU member States, Hungary is in no doubt that Serbia is fully cooperating with the ICTY.

The full consensus is still not before us, and that means that European accession process feels like it's in neutral gear. Serbia has proposed the following constructive approach to overcome the impasse. Let the European Union send a fact-finding mission to Belgrade with the task of getting a more complete picture of our full cooperation-one that would complement the one provided by the ICTY's Prosecutor's Office. In this way, the EU would be able to directly inform itself of the comprehensive efforts Serbia has undertaken to complete its obligations to the Hague Tribunal.

Once this last obstacle is overcome, we will be able to focus all our efforts on fulfilling the remaining Copenhagen Criteria as fast as we can. This

would contribute to the establishment of a feeling in Serbia of imminent belonging to the EU-the achievement of which I strongly believe is in the interest of all.

The third part of the proposed package to deliver tangible results in 2009 revolves around Serbia's upcoming application for membership in the European Union. We have to make sure it is swiftly forwarded to the European Commission with an indication that it promptly provides the Council with an avis on its merits. With the strong support of dedicated partners like Hungary, Serbia could still achieve Official Candidate Status by the end of the year.

Should this package for hands-on engagement with Serbia become a reality in 2009, our society would be released from the uncertainty of the transitional limbo, replacing it with a clarity of purpose so important in times of international political and economic uncertainty that has affected us all.

By bringing us within sight of the Gates of Europe, the point of no return would be finally crossed. We would get down to business, and complete our preparations for walking through those beckoning gates with our heads held high, our institutions reformed, and our expectations fulfilled.

And we would be able to echo with pride the words of one of the founders of Europe who said, in 1950, "I do not see myself as special-I am a European, just like all the others."

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Serbia has proven beyond any doubt how dedicated we are to the enhancement of regional cooperation. We have done so despite the regrettable choices some of our neighbors made to recognize the unilateral declaration of inde-

pendence-or UDI-of Serbia's southern province of Kosovo and Metohija.

There is no reason to deny that the Kosovo issue has created new regional fissures. And notwithstanding the fact that these unfortunate choices struck at the heart of Serbia's constitutional order, Belgrade has continued to act responsibly-as befits a regional leader.

Our carefully measured response to UDI recognitions by some of the countries in the Western Balkans ensured that the political fallout which naturally resulted was largely contained, ensuring that overall relations in the Western Balkans did not suffer.

As a result, an issue of such fundamental importance and complexity-passionately involving all at once identity, boundaries, communal rights, opposing historical narratives-was steered clear of resorting to the force of arms, for the first time in the history of the region.

Serbia's strategic decision to respond to Pristina's ethnically-motivated attempt at secession peacefully and within the rules of the international system, constitutes a paradigm shift in favor of peace in the Western Balkans. It is having a transformative effect on the politics of all the countries in the region, and is helping to consolidate our position as an indispensable anchor of democratic stability and security in the Western Balkans.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The clear task still before us all is to work in concert and complete the construction of an edifice of regional peace on a solid, European foundation-a foundation constructed with the tools of premeditation, creativity, patience, consensus, and compromise.

We must take to this task with all deliberate speed. We must not waiver, we must not delay, and we must not put obstacles in our path. Instead, we must re-double our efforts. We must look to the end and think of the best means to accomplish it as quickly as we can.

Standing here before you-having spoken of the achievements we have made, the cooperation we have fostered, the challenges before us, and the progress still to come-I am reminded of what Danilo Kiš, the great Serbian writer of Hungarian Jewish ancestry, once told an interviewer: "don't look down at your feet, and don't look up at the sky. Just look straight ahead, at the horizon that beckons and the human world that you can change for the better. As the sun rises, don't contemplate the receding shadows. Just focus on the light that grows stronger by the minute. Feel its warmth on your face, and watch how the flowers bloom under its strength. If you can do that, you can create your own destiny-one that does not forget the past, but is no longer deterministically bound to it."

To fulfill the promise of these words, I say we need not only to think like true Europeans, but to act like true Europeans. For in the 21st century, victory for all the nations of the Old Continent can only be achieved if we act like visionaries, and work together to consolidate a shared future.

And that means we have to start walking towards the horizon, instead of just waiting for the future to happen.

It is up to us, and no one else.

This is it, my friends. The time to act is now.

I thank you for your attention and stand ready to take your questions.