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The Strategic Framework of the Balkan Conflict

“The interests of the United States are obviously different from those of Europe. We are increasingly coming to the conclusion that the events in the Balkans developed in such a way so that Washington could establish a dominant presence in the region, which was not the case after 1945. We should not lose sight of the fact that it was precisely Germany that started this unfortunate game, championing ethnically-based national states in the region. We should remember that Germany was the first to recognize Slovenia and Croatia. What still remains to be solved is why the Americans subsequently took up the German ethnic strategy. I might say that, in the case of Germany, there was a sort of an aggressive laziness to genuinely deal with the situation in Yugoslavia and the Balkans. The cause probably lies in the simple fact that, in this way, without truly delving into the genuine state of affairs, people were able to, quite easily, without much effort, establish who was friend and who was foe. In addition, there is no doubt at all that the United States decided very early on to support the Albanian side. This is also born out by the fact that Washington established its Information Office in Pristina [the provincial capital of Kosovo – trans. note] in 1997, contrary to the will of Belgrade. Here we should also remember the long years of activity on the part of Republican senator Bob Dole....

At the end of April 2000, I personally attended a conference in Bratislava, where the highest American officials discussed their future strategy in the Balkans. The conference organizers were the American State Department and the Republican Party's elite American Enterprise Institute. Among the conference participants were prime ministers, foreign ministers and defense ministers of Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Rumania and Bulgaria, and the personal representative of the NATO commander. Among these was a future American Assistant Secretary of State [Daniel Fried – trans. note]. The following was clearly stated there:

First point. The reason why we are in the Balkans today lies in our missed opportunity after 1945, when General Eisenhower made a mistake and did not station American land troops in that part of Europe. Now we must correct that error at all cost. Why? The reason lies in the very nature of land troops. The complete control of a territory is possible only if our land troops are

present. Full control cannot be established with aircraft or ships alone.

Second point. I am surprised that the American side is discussing issues of European security, as evidenced by the example of Bratislava, in the tone of: “God is with us.” The consequence of such a relationship is that any attempt at a European, autonomous thinking is criticized or even labeled as anti-American. As a European, I must ask myself the following question: am I supposed to accept the Bratislava conclusions as the Laws of Moses or do I still have a right to think about my own interests.

Third point. The Americans see themselves as the successors of the Roman Empire. Their motto is: The Romans saw the Mediterranean as *Mare nostrum*. We Americans see the Atlantic as our own Mediterranean, as our own sea. For this reason we must draw a line of our interests, which is to extend from the Baltic Sea by Leningrad [present-day St. Petersburg – trans. note] to Odessa on the Black Sea, and on to Istanbul and Anatolia. Everything lying east of that line – these are now my own words – does not interest us. We must possess and secure a land communication on our own [*sic* !] territory, extending from Anatolia, i.e. Turkey, to Poland.

There are many indications that, for the Americans, the situation in the Balkans is a sort of compensation for the Middle East. They use the Balkans to compensate for failures in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Washington 's motto goes: the Israeli and the Palestine side will not be able to achieve a peace agreement. And, so as not to ruin chances at accord with the Islamic world, the Americans are now trying to offer concessions to the Muslims in the Balkans, the ones in Bosnia and Kosovo. In a word, to Washington the Balkans are serving as a reserve territory or a testing ground where, they believe, they might still be able to reach agreement with the Islamic world.

Whatever “Big Brother” says must be carried out unconditionally. I took this gathering in Bratislava seriously enough to inform Chancellor Schröder about it in a letter. My main motive was to prevent any future breach of international law. May the case of Serbia be the last such case. For, if I believe that I can ignore international law whenever it stands as an obstacle to my interests, then I am leaving the door wide open to a new war in Europe.

After Serbia, i.e. Kosovo, we had clashes in Macedonia. Until then, we were constantly showering Skoplje [the capital of the FYR Macedonia – trans. note] with praises. They

disciplinedly carried out all our demands. And then the West suddenly changed its policy and extended support to the Albanian armed rebellion. What message were we sending to the Macedonian government? That violence pays off.

Let us return to Kosovo. As both member and Vice President of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, I can claim with full responsibility that, in the summer of 1998, 90% of us were against the use of any kind of military force against Belgrade outside the provisions of the UN. What remains for us after the bombing of Serbia? To choose: either to bring down the edifice that has secured the peace for us in Europe since 1945 – which is precisely what the Americans are doing, either alone or with the help of the British, or to say: my dear good people, we must seek to return to the rules of behavior provided by the UN.

In a word, it occasionally appears to me that the Americans are now acting in the same way that the German statesman Bismarck did. On one occasion he said that Balkan unrest and conflict were in the German interest, as this kept German adversaries in a constant state of tension. Is not Washington 's present aim identical, namely, to interfere with European efforts at creating an autonomous, independent European policy?

Finally, some mention should be made here of the relations between Western Europe and Russia. In the case they are normal and good, then that would raise the question of NATO's continued existence. The Americans invented the conflict in the Balkans in order to prevent the Europeans from thinking that NATO is no longer needed. There are people at important positions in the EU who think that there is a constant in American, and possibly British, policy, that, within the European Union – as well as Turkey – power must never come into the hands of people who might bring into question Washington's direct influence on Europe....”

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