

140 Years of Diplomacy between the United States and Serbia

by Milos Rastovic

WASHINGTON, DC – On December 8, 2021, the Embassy of the Republic of Serbia sponsored the celebration of the 140th anniversary of the relationship between the United States and Serbia at Meridian International Center in Washington, D.C. More than 200 members of the Diplomatic Corps, representatives of different organizations, guests, and friends of Serbia were present at the historic event.

Official diplomatic relations between the two countries began on October 14, 1881. The Principality of Serbia and the United States signed a Consular Convention and Trade Agreement. Relations were built throughout the centuries. Both countries were Allies in World War I and World War II, fighting for the same values. One of the central values is the freedom of people and states.

The Serbian Diaspora actively participated in many capacities to help and support their Ancestral Homeland. Mihajlo I. Pupin, who was named Honorary President of the Serb National Federation in 1929, organized almost 20,000 Serbian-American volunteers to fight against Austria-Hungary during World War I. Fifty-five percent of Serbian-American volunteers sacrificed their lives for the freedom of Serbia. Pupin's diplomatic and humanitarian contributions to the relations between the two countries were immeasurable. Draza Mihailovic, General of the Yugoslav Army, with his troops, saved more than 500 American pilots during the famous military Operation Halyard in World War II. The relations between the two countries were challenged during the 1990s, when it was a difficult time for Serbia.

The event in Washington began with the playing of the Serbian and American national anthems performed by Serbian opera singer Biljana Soldo and pianist Milica Sekulic. Then, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic cheered the 140th anniversary of the relations between the United States and Serbia through a video link. He accentuated that "millions of Serbian people because of hardship at home and motivated by freedom made their way to the United States of America. They greatly contributed to society and history. From Nikola Tesla and Mihajlo Pupin to Marina Abramovic and Nikola Jokic, their names as names of many others are in the hallway of the American dream."

His Excellency Marko Djuric, Serbian Ambassador to the United States, invited all guests to cheer for a vision of our ancestors 140 years ago and all statesmen who represented a cultural life and society for sustaining the friendship and partnership. Guests also cheered for the future friendship and collaboration between the two countries. H.E. Djuric concluded his remarks with „Long live friendship.“

Dereck J. Hogan, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, stressed that Serbia has an indispensable role in promo-

ting stability and prosperity in the region and worldwide. He honored the history, work, and contributions of Serbian families who put their lives at risk during operation Halyard and Serbian members of the Serbian Apollo Seven Program. He visualizes both countries in a bright future as friends and partners in Europe and the world.

Laura K. Cooper, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense of Russia, Ukraine, and Eurasia, said that relations between the two countries are growing stronger: "In 1881 as today, Serbia has been playing an incredibly important role in the regional security and stability in the Western Balkans. In September this year, Serbian and U.S. Army troopers jumped together in a significant humanitarian exercise in Serbia. In November,

we had a high level of bilateral defense consultation in Belgrade, solidifying a five-year plan to expand our cooperation in exercising and training. These were the first official defense consultations in over five years. This improvement became possible by a strong foundation established through Serbian excellency and partnership with Ohio."

Major General John C. Harris, Jr., the National Guard of Ohio, emphasized that the partnership between the Serbian Army and National Guard of Ohio has existed for 15 years. He said that future relations between both countries should be based on peace, opportunities for children, and economic prosperity for the next 140 years.

At the end of the ceremony, Luis E. Borunda, Deputy Secretary of the State

of Maryland, presented to the Serbian Ambassador the Governor's Citation to recognize the 140th anniversary of the relations between the United States and Serbia.

As Cultural Outreach Coordinator of the Serb National Federation, I had a chance to speak with representatives of the Serbian Embassy regarding the promotion of Serbian culture in the United States and other guests. All guests had the opportunity to socialize, enjoy Serbian delicacies and drinks, and exchange views on the relations between the two countries.

By remembering the past relations between two countries, we can build better future relations.



Biljana Soldo
with pianist Milica Sekulic



Jovana Nedic, First Counselor
of the Serbian Embassy



Luis E. Borunda, Deputy Secretary
of the State of Maryland,
and Ambassador H.E. Marko Djuric



Dereck J. Hogan,
Principal Deputy
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of European and
Eurasian Affairs



Laura K. Cooper,
Deputy Assistant Secretary
of Defense of Russia,
Ukraine, and Eurasia



Major General John C.
Harris, Jr., of the National
Guard of Ohio



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When Kristina Kokot of SNF Lodge #171, Djurdjevdanski Uranak, Schererville, Indiana, signed to be part of the Women's Rowing team at Indiana University, the entire girl's basketball team from Chesterton High School turned out in support of their teammate. Kristina is the daughter of Nick and Lori Kokot, and sister of Nick. She lives in Chesterton and will attend Indiana University, Bloomington, in the fall. The Kokot family is 100% SNF. Baba Nadyne Kokot signed up both her grandchildren when they were born. Congratulations, Kristina, and good luck in 2022-23.

