

Vuk Draskovic

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear friends,

I am honoured by the opportunity to open this meeting and I hope that it will initiate, generate a whole range of similar meetings around Serbia. I have never been the lecturer so you do not need to fear of 40 minutes of speech.

The national and state interests of Serbia, rather than any kind of emotions, imply the accession of Serbia to NATO Alliance. I will list only some of the reasons:

NATO is on the borders of Serbia and we can by no means remain neutral towards the reality on the borders of our own state and all we can do is choose one of the two:

Either to be a part of the Alliance so that the Alliance becomes our and we become its allies, or to be against NATO Alliance. There is no neighbour of Serbia that is in favour of the European Union and against NATO Alliance.

On the contrary, NATO used to be or it will be the entrance ticket to the European Union for all of them. Serbian official politics says that Serbia wants to access the European Union, but not NATO because NATO bombed us ten years ago. This is the policy of wooden iron. If we leave out the United States, the striking force of NATO Alliance is embodied in the leading countries of the European Union: France, Great Britain, Germany, Italy, Spain and so on, just not to continue listing. Therefore, if we cannot join NATO because of the bombardment, this means that we cannot join the European Union out of the same reason. If NATO is a criminal and anti-Serbian organisation, as it is more and more often heard and written in Serbia, the European Union is also the criminal and anti-Serbian organisation and there is nothing for us in such a criminal and anti-Serbian organisation. If NATO is a criminal and anti-Serbian organisation and if it has been standing for years now on the borders of our country what is the point of neutrality. In that case neutrality is equal to cowardness and national treason. We have to be the enemies to someone who is a criminal and enemy of the Serbs. Serbian state strategy claims one more thing – that we will become the enemies of Russia if we join NATO, and this is something that Serbia can never allow itself. This is another false statement, and selling horns for candles. With our accession into NATO we will become neither smaller Serbia than we currently are, nor we will become less of the Serbs than we currently are, and none of us will demand or be able to demand the denial of historical, special connections and relations towards Russia. On the other hand, Russia and NATO are not enemies, but partners and allies in the struggle against global terrorism and they fight together to defend the world against the global catastrophe. Finally, as a member of NATO, Serbia will have the sovereign right to refuse to participate in any potential action of the Alliance if such action was not previously approved by the UN Security Council, and as we all know that it is not possible to obtain it without Russia's approval because of their right to declare veto. If we want into NATO this means that we will find ourselves in front of the gates, of the very gates of the European Union that same moment. If we do not want into NATO let us say it openly, let us not deceive the Serbian people as it means that we do not want into the European Union. If we want into NATO this means that we want to renew and enhance the traditional allies, which existed before the communist Serbia and that we, as the state and nation, do not want to be the hostages of the anti-state and anti-national politics of Slobodan Milosevic. The Serbs are the nation that boasts too much with its history while, actually, there is no other nation that forgets it so easily as we do. At the beginning of the last century, when some other people were leading the Kingdom of Serbia after three wars – two Balkan and one World War – it seems as if the Serbs have forgotten it. The state borders at the Balkans have changed three times dramatically and it was always to the benefit of the Serbs and to the benefit of Serbia thanks to the support coming from great allies of ours from those times: France, imperial Russia, Great Britain, United States of America and Italy. Today, to the regret and shame of the Serbian people, the so-called Serbian patriots say that we should demolish the monument of gratitude to France at Kalemegdan. That is how much those patriots know and care for history of their own people. We do not want into the European Union because we are defending Kosovo, and this is the peak of hypocrisy, not to say anything graver. All of us, including those who claim such a thing, that there has been no Serbia at Kosovo for ten years now, and I want us to join NATO so that Serbia could join the European Union and become a strong state. There is no other way for Serbia to become a strong state. Strong economically, democratically and strong by its strong alliances. Only such Serbia can return to its Kosovo as a state. When I say that it can return to its Kosovo as a state I think of the return in accordance with the current European legislation and rules, and to set at its Kosovo the sovereignty of

Serbian culture, Serbian tradition, Serbian economy, property over assets as the EU and NATO Alliance Member State. Thanks to membership in NATO Alliance, it will return to Kosovo where NATO will be the guarantor of security and protection principles of united Europe and where Serbian soldiers will be among NATO soldiers. The facts are, therefore, merciless. NATO is a new opportunity for Serbia. However, unfortunately, for the last twenty years those who did not miss any opportunity to miss the opportunity have been the most appreciated in Serbia. Regretfully, the anti-NATO atmosphere is stronger today than it was ten years ago, when the regime of Slobodan Milosevic was thrown down. Euro-Atlantic integrations as a strategic commitment of the state until three years ago, as a strategic commitment that was set before that when I was the Minister of foreign affairs, has now been transformed into European and anti-Atlantic integrations. Serbian "muckalica" (minced meat) should be eaten in restaurants and it should be left out of politics and running the country. We cannot be in favour of Europe and against Europe and United States at the same time. I do not know where will this road take us, but I am certain that it does not lead towards Brussels and that it is not in our state and national interest.

Thank you.