

Pobjeda

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Dr. Michael Haltzel, Professor at the Foreign Policy Institute, Johns Hopkins University, Washington, DC

Biden would hold at arm's length a government containing a genocide-denier in its cabinet

If the Krivokapić government is unwilling to purge pro-Russian officials from the Ministry of Defense, NATO may be forced to deny Montenegro access to certain Alliance intelligence. Such a step would be regrettable, but it has been taken a few times in the past – the Greek colonels' regime in 1967-74 and the leftist Portuguese government in 1975 come to mind. In both cases when new democratic administrations were voted in, the intelligence sharing within the Alliance resumed.

For the first time in history the President of the United States is a person who knows the Balkans well. President Biden, like all other decent people, was appalled by the Srebrenica genocide in 1995. I am sure that he would hold at arm's length a government containing a genocide-denier in its cabinet - said Dr. Michael Haltzel, a professor at the John Hopkins University Foreign Policy Institute in Washington, DC in an interview for Pobjeda. Haltzel, who was Biden's European policy adviser from 1994 to 2005, also says he is concerned about Serbia's policy in the region.

- **POBJEDA: While new evidence of GRU involvement in covert operations is emerging in Europe, linking the names of Vladimir Popov and Eduard Shishmakov to Unit 29155's "black operations", in Montenegro Russian spies have so far been amnestied from any involvement in the October 2016 terrorist attempt. With the decision to annul the first instance verdict, the Court of Appeals in Montenegro became the only institution of the only European state that suspects the existence of two GRU agents and their connection with the Kremlin. Your comment?**

HALTZEL: It is inconceivable to me that persons involved in the unsuccessful coup attempt in October 2016 could be amnestied. The Kremlin's "black operations" outside of Russia's borders reflect the fragility of Putin's increasingly unsuccessful regime.

- **POBJEDA: In the parliament on March 26, Prime Minister Krivokapić asked the Assembly to dismiss Minister Vladimir Leposavić, due to his scandalous denial of the genocide in Srebrenica. Leposavić refused to resign. Are our partners in the USA aware of where such irresponsible individuals can take Montenegro?**

HALTZEL: The responsible officials in the U.S. Government are certainly aware of the Leposavić case, as are American Balkan specialists. To my knowledge, however, the scandal has not been covered by the mass media. The most important element of Leposavić's denial of the genocide in Srebrenica is, of course, that it is an obscene Big Lie. Moreover, it paints Montenegro in an extremely unfavorable light. Leposavić's remaining in office would, in my opinion, be received especially negatively by the Biden administration, which has put human rights in the forefront of its priorities. For the first time in history the President of the United States is a person who knows the Balkans well. President Biden, like all other decent people, was appalled by the Srebrenica genocide in 1995. I am sure that he would hold at arm's length a government containing a genocide-denier in its cabinet.

- **POBJEDA: How do you see relations in the region? Serbia has openly interfered in the Montenegrin elections and has a great influence on the constituents of the new government. Montenegro is perceived as part of the "Serbian World." Is Washington, as our ally, aware of the risks of these relations because it is not mentioned in any report of European institutions?**

HALTZEL: It is painful for me to see recent developments in Serbia, an ally of the United States in the two world wars of the 20

th century. Serbs are a talented people whose country's future should be as a member of democratic Euro-Atlantic institutions, especially the European Union. The current Serbian government, however, seems to be abandoning this European future in pursuit of a Russia-friendly "Serbian World," a concept dangerously close to the "Greater Serbia" chimera that plunged the Western Balkans into bloody and disastrous wars three decades ago. The recent appearance of several "non-papers" offering ultra-nationalistic pseudo-panaceas to the region's problems have only compounded the difficulties. These "non-papers" recommending a Greater Serbia, Greater Croatia, and Greater Albania should be rejected out of hand.

- **POBJEDA: The security sector has been shaken by numerous scandals. The leak of confidential information at the session of the Security and Defense Committee was the culmination. Have we lost the trust of the Alliance and can anything more than confidential data be shared with Montenegro at all?**

HALTZEL: The security scandals are very serious, but I think it would be premature to say that Montenegro has lost the trust of the Alliance. NATO has sent a security team to attempt to assure the sanctity of top secret information. Officials shown to have leaked classified documents should be fired. If the Krivokapić government is unwilling to purge pro-Russian officials from the Ministry of Defense, NATO may be forced to deny Montenegro access to certain Alliance intelligence. Such a step would be regrettable, but it has been taken a few times in the past – the Greek colonels' regime in 1967-74 and the leftist Portuguese government in 1975 come to mind. In both cases when new democratic administrations were voted in, the intelligence sharing within the Alliance resumed.

M. JOVIĆEVIĆ