



Orthodox Bishop
of Raška-Prizren
and Kosovo-Metohija
18.02.2006.
Gračanica Monastery

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, District of Columbia

Dear Mr. President:

I take the opportunity to write to you at the conclusion of my latest visit to your great country. Knowing the numberless pressing responsibilities that weigh upon you, I thank you in advance for taking the time to read this plea on behalf of my flock, the Orthodox Christian people of Kosovo. Since I know you are yourself a Christian, I can only pray that what I relate to you here will find a resonance with you that cannot be attributed solely to the justifications of state policy and global strategy but will be illumined for you by the true Light, which is Christ our God.

Foremost among your duties – and especially since September 11, 2001, – you have carried the heaviest of crosses: the leadership not only of the United States but of the whole civilized world in the global struggle against jihad terrorism, which threatens not just America but peaceful people of all faiths and nationalities. That is why we who live in the Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija find it difficult to understand why so many voices of influence in Washington, including some in your own Administration, support a course of action that would hand to the terrorists a significant victory in Europe. As you know, this month talks are set to begin that will determine the future status of Kosovo, which since 1999 has been administered by the United Nations under NATO military control. While your Administration has taken no formal position on the outcome of the talks, many in the U.S. Congress, in the Executive Branch departments and agencies, and among NGOs believe that independence is the “democratic” outcome for Kosovo in accordance with the demands of Kosovo’s Muslim Albanians, who greatly outnumber the province's Orthodox Christian Serbs. During the years of international control, the violence directed against us had been decreased only by the reduction of the possible targets – fewer Christian Serbs to be attacked or kidnapped, fewer remaining churches and monasteries to be demolished by perpetrators who are never apprehended.

As the archpastor of Kosovo’s Orthodox Serbs, I came to America once again, as on several previous occasions, to bear witness to the agony that has befallen the Christian people of Kosovo and to warn against the path that lies before us. Detaching Kosovo

from democratic Serbia would mean a virtual sentence of extinction for my people in the province – the larger part of my diocese – who continue to face unremitting violence from jihad terrorist and criminal elements that dominate the Albanian Muslim leadership. Even today, while the international community maintains formal control, Kosovo has become a black hole of corruption and organized crime, including trafficking in drugs, weapons, and slaves. All too often these things happen under the noses of NATO soldiers, who fear to confront these criminals directly. (The details are catalogued on the website www.kosovo.com .) Indeed, the sporadic outbreaks of violence are themselves cited as justification for independence, as if appeasing Muslim “frustration” in the form of an ongoing *intifada* will bring peace anywhere. In the midst of the war on terrorism, it is unbelievable, but true, that official Washington regards as legitimate interlocutors – and in the case of independence, the future *de jure* rulers of Kosovo – Albanian Muslim “leaders” whose crimes and terrorist ties are beyond doubt. Indeed, two of them, Hashim Thaci and Ramush Haradinaj, are known to have met with Osama bin Laden in Tirana in 1995 to plan the terrorist campaign that has brought us to this moment.

Nothing I say is to suggest that prior to 1999 all was well in Kosovo, before the initiation of international administration. But now, to empower men of violence with state authority is no solution to problems that go back many years. Forcibly detaching Kosovo from democratic Serbia, contrary to all accepted legal principles, cannot resolve the absence of the rule of law and of elementary standards of human rights. A workable solution for Kosovo must address first of all the fact that Kosovo is part of sovereign Serbia, and that a solution must be found that provides for the human dignity and respect for all people, whether Albanian or Serb or Roma or Turk, whether Muslim or Christian. Viable and balanced plans have been put forward, that can ensure safety for all citizens with a fullest degree of self-rule, in accordance with all accepted standards. The question of Kosovo’s status is one of legality and not of politics.

Kosovo Albanians, on the other side, have engaged all available resources to convince the world, one way or another, through peace or violence, that the independence of Kosovo is a panacea that will solve all of Kosovo's problems and automatically improve all basic standards, and bring peace and stability to the region. I think many Americans would be shocked to learn that key sectors in their government - heeding the pressure of a noisy and well-funded lobby – is pushing for Kosovo independence, which would consign the remaining Christians of Kosovo to the mercies of a violent Islamic jihad movement. At a time when money and radical propaganda pour into Kosovo from around the Islamic world, I ask: does it make sense for America to hand them a great and unnecessary victory? Even aside from what may happen to my people – which is my first responsibility – what can be gained from such an outcome in terms of peace in the Balkans, or in Europe? What can America gain?

I emphasize that the push for independence for Kosovo is neither inevitable nor desirable. Indeed, absent Washington’s support for the perceived imperative of Kosovo independence, – a misguided policy of your predecessor’s Administration, which inexplicably has not been abandoned – this agenda would not be moving forward at all.

At this time, I ask with all urgency that this policy at long last be reevaluated and preferable alternatives given serious consideration.

I know that people in enlightened countries, in democratic countries, do not like to think in terms of winners and losers when it comes to matters of religion and ethnicity. What I have proposed as a preferable solution tries to address everyone's needs and fears within a democratic European country, Serbia. But let me assure you, that is not how the radicals on the Muslim Albanian side and their jihadist supporters around the world see it. The victory of jihad in Kosovo would be a local triumph pointing the way to further victories to come, eventually to a worldwide victory. They would point and say: "Where is their God?"

As Christians, our hope of victory is not an earthly one. "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the Lord our God." With all respect, I remind you that in our part of the world, we suffered centuries under *shari'a* rule, and no man knows the numbers or names of all the martyrs from those times. We do not prefer to repeat that nightmare, but we are prepared for it if it comes. But my plea to you, as the leader of the United States and the Free World, is that the American government would not help hasten that day for the Christian Orthodox people of Kosovo.

I thank you for your attention and pray that my words appear to you in the spirit in which they were written.

**Епископ рашко-призренски
и косовско-метохијски
+ АРТЕМИЈЕ**