



# U.S.—MONTENEGRIN POLICY FORUM

BRIEFING 2  
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## OPEN LETTER FROM MONTENEGRIN PEN CENTER: “THE MONTENEGRINS HAVE A RIGHT TO DECIDE”

On December 11, 2001, the Montenegrin Poetry, Essays, and Novels Center (PEN) sent a letter to the president of the Republic of France, Jacques Chirac, in which they appealed to him, as well as to other European officials, to support the right of Montenegrins to decide on the status of the Montenegrin republic in a democratic referendum. The letter was written following Chirac’s December 7 state visit to Belgrade when he called on Montenegro to put aside its “separatist aspirations and work to renew Yugoslavia.” Excerpts from the letter follow:

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*Unpleasantly surprised by the amount and style of your pressure on the free will of the legitimate representatives of the Republic of Montenegro, we believe that it is our moral and intellectual duty to address you with this letter. The state of Montenegro, Mr. President, was not created yesterday. We would like to remind you that Byzantium acknowledged an independent Montenegro already in 1042; that the Pope presented the Montenegrin king with royal insignia in 1077; that during the reign of the third Montenegrin dynasty of Crnojevici, only two years after the discovery of America, the state press in Cetinje published Montenegrin incunabula; that Montenegro was recognized as the twenty-seventh independent state at the Berlin Congress in 1878.*

*Insisting that Montenegro renounce the intentions to renew its statehood represents an attack on the dignity of all Montenegrins who, as any other nation, have the right to decide about their interests and state-legal status, no matter whether someone likes it or not.*

*We acknowledge that Your Excellency has been speaking in your own name, as a free citizen of the cultural metropolis of the world. On the other side, a publicly declared opinion as a president of France is to have major repercussions on international and regional relations. If you were, during your visit to Belgrade, speaking on behalf of the European Union, then those statements might produce greater and more problematic pressure. Furthermore, this pressure has been negatively reflected among minorities in Montenegro, that is, Muslims, Albanians, and Croatsians, who also want Montenegro to become an independent, multicultural state, which will finally be free from the strong nationalist influence of the Greater Serbia concept.*

*Dear Mr. President, the International PEN Charter obliges all of its members, including the Montenegrin PEN Center, to fight for the preservation of cultural, linguistic and national entities. By fulfilling this duty, the Montenegrin PEN Center has, on a number of occasions, tried to warn the international cultural community that Montenegro was exposed to Serbian assimilatory projects and pretensions, thus, we would like to reiterate this warning on this occasion as well. For decades, the Montenegrin intelligentsia has been resisting projects designed by advocates of Greater Serbia, which are hurting Montenegro and its multicultural society. We think that the renewal of Montenegrin sovereignty, and thereby responsibility, along with further democratization and European integration, will provide the best protection of human and civil rights and will guarantee Montenegro’s stable multinational and multiconfessional coexistence.*

## LETTER TO WESTERN DEMOCRACIES SIGNED BY ONE HUNDRED MONTENEGRIN INTELLECTUALS

On December 13, 2001, one hundred Montenegrin intellectuals sent a letter to Western democracies urging them to support the right of the Montenegrin people to decide on the republic's status in a democratic referendum. Professor Miodrag Perović of the University of Montenegro led the initiative. Following are excerpts from the letter:

*The leaders of Western democracies are not questioning Belgrade's unwillingness to accept the Montenegrin proposal by which Montenegro and Serbia would form an alliance providing the closest possible cooperation of two independent states on the principles of equality and common interests. Yet, they ask of Montenegro to agree to merge with Serbia, thus causing Montenegrins to become a national minority in the Serbian medieval state.*

*We, the undersigned Montenegrin intellectuals, hereby request that the European Union and the United States give back to Montenegro what it was deprived of, that is, the right of existence and self-determination guaranteed by the Charter of the United Nations and by both international covenants on human rights. We also request the respect of Montenegro's historical rights that were confirmed by Badinter's Commission and Lord Carrington's Peace Conference in 1991. Today, after Belgrade has been systematically building its network for colonial rule as well as the colonial state of mind among the citizens of Montenegro for almost one hundred years, and after yet another "Anschluss" in 1989, requiring legal conditions for a referendum that differ from those exercised in other states of Europe and the United States is unjust.*

*Should the majority of Montenegrin citizens vote in favor of independence in order to enhance freedom and democracy and keep their multiethnic and multireligious harmony, the Western democracies, in compliance with their own norms and standards, must respect Montenegro's choice to belong to the community of free nations and states.*

*On behalf of the Signatories,  
Professor Miodrag Perović  
University of Montenegro*

## REFERENDUM UPDATE

*November 19* — The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) has denounced proposals for any boycott of Montenegro's independence referendum by the Together for Yugoslavia opposition coalition. Gerard Studman, the director of the OSCE's Bureau for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, asserted that boycotts were an undemocratic way to express opinions and that they always turned against those who initiated them. He added that the OSCE would not interfere in political discussions in Montenegro but would monitor the debate and alert the public to any party that did not respect democratic rules and standards.

## PODGORICA-BELGRADE RELATIONS

*January 22* — Peter Sidder, the newly elected president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, stated to the press that Yugoslavia, or even Serbia and Montenegro alone, should be members of this Council. Because of the unresolved relations within the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY), Sidder said that Yugoslavia is unlikely to be admitted as a member of the Council of Europe at the summer session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, adding that it was not the Council's duty to tell the two republics whether they should stay together or not.

*January 18* — After his talks with U.S. ambassador William Montgomery, Montenegrin president Milo Djukanović issued a statement on the inevitability of a referendum on independence, that the most important steps in the process were to eliminate tensions, secure the participation of all relevant actors, and to provide maximum transparency and concord of regulations in organizing a national ballot.

*January 11* — All three expert teams formed by the Montenegrin and Serbian governments to redefine their relations, concluded a plenary session at which joint reports were issued. Participants at the meetings did not want to reveal any details of these reports, stating that it was up to politicians to state their opinions. The expert group for constitutional-legal issues was the only one to pass two separate reports, one from Montenegro and one from the FRY and Serbia. The passage of a joint document was not possible. According to Slobodan Samardžić, adviser to Yugoslav president Vojislav Koštunica, experts who dealt with the issues of economy, foreign policy, and security did reach agreement and made mutual reports. On the other hand, experts who dealt with constitutional issues reached

no agreement and issued separate reports. Montenegrin foreign minister Branko Lukovac believes that the reports are a good foundation for political talks, which are to be held at the end of January with the presence of EU representative Javier Solana.

**January 11** — During his visit to Belgrade and Podgorica at the end of December, Helmut Lipelt, special envoy of the office for legal businesses and human rights of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, said that it was not up to the Council of Europe to arrange relations between Montenegro and Serbia. He emphasized that one of the obstacles to admission to the Council is the FRY's unsatisfactory cooperation with The Hague Tribunal. In his talks in Podgorica, Lipelt stated that he found no objection to Djukanovic's idea to have a union of two states with joint outer borders, currency, and market. Furthermore, Lipelt maintained that the government's project could fulfill international expectations for a "democratic Montenegro in a democratic Yugoslavia" even if Yugoslavia was not a federation but a union of two states.

**January 11** — Dusan Janjic, a Belgrade expert in politics and the coordinator of the Forum for Ethnic Relations, estimated that relations between Montenegro and Serbia will become completely clear by March, and will constitute a union of two independent states with a number of joint functions. He stated that the expert negotiators should disregard the veiled EU ultimatum—federation or nothing. Two independent states could be a precondition for European integration. According to Janjic, a loose federation is unrealistic. He expects Serbia to reach a political decision this spring, one that the international community would support.

**December 20** — The Montenegrin government formed several expert teams to participate in discussions about the redefinition of the republic's relations with Serbia. The teams were to deal with such issues as the economy, the constitutional-legal system, security, education, and health care. The teams include ministers and specialists in domestic and European law, European integration, finance, and economic relations. The leaders of the two republics and Koštunica agreed on the expert dialogue during talks in Belgrade. Javier Solana, the European Union's senior foreign policy representative, mediated the talks. The experts are to draft a report on the outcome of their discussions by the end of February, when political leaders will meet to examine the possibilities for joint institutions and continued dialogue on the basis of the committees' findings.

**November 29** — Javier Solana stated that the best solution for future relations between Montenegro and Serbia would be a loose federation. Following discussions with Montenegrin officials and opposition leaders, the EU's

senior foreign policy representative stated that the Montenegrin people and their leaders should make the final decision on Montenegro's legal status. Solana also emphasized that the EU would not force any solution on Montenegro and would recognize any referendum held under democratic conditions. However, those who organized the poll must assume responsibility for the results.

**November 28** — President Djukanović asserted that Belgrade has exploited the international community's stance on the future of Yugoslavia. According to him, Belgrade and the Montenegrin opposition have interpreted the international community's repeated backing of a "democratic Montenegro within a democratic Yugoslavia" as "an ultimatum" to the Montenegrin republic, and this has "contributed to the destruction of dialogue by official Belgrade."

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## ECONOMIC REFORMS

**December 10** — Montenegrin TV is to become a public service for citizens of the Montenegrin republic. According to information from the Montenegrin Secretariat of Information, by the end of 2001, the Montenegrin parliament is to pass a new law on radio diffusion that will regulate the transformation of the state media into a public service.

**January 1** — Montenegro introduced the Euro into circulation, as one of six non-European Union political entities to make it their official currency. In 1999, seeking an external anchor for its economy, Montenegro had replaced the dinar as its official currency with the German mark. In the first 10 days of the Euro's introduction, about 30 million DEM were converted to EUR at the windows of the Central Bank of Montenegro; 5.25 million EUR were converted at the windows of the Office for Payment Circulation while 8.5 million EUR were converted at business banks.

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## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

**December 17** — Lord Russell Johnston, president of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, told the Podgorica weekly *Monitor* that the EU is wrong to support one side in the dispute between the Montenegrin and Belgrade authorities. He stressed that the EU's support for a continuation of the Serbian-Montenegrin union is counterproductive because it will alienate many Montenegrins, who have the right to determine their own future. Johnston added that the first thing that the Montenegrins must decide on, before going ahead with a

referendum, is what will constitute a valid majority in a vote for independence. Johnston criticized the views of Chirac, who alleged that the EU would not recognize an independent Montenegro. "If the referendum will be organized, if the referendum's result will be clear, then everybody has to accept it. That's democracy," stated Johnston.

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## REGIONAL AFFAIRS

**January 16** — The United Nations Security Council extended the mandate of a small monitoring mission to the disputed peninsula of Prevlaka, welcoming improved relations between Croatia and Yugoslavia. The council voted unanimously to extend until July 15 the mandate of the 26 military and 10 civilian staff charged with monitoring the demilitarization of the peninsula until agreement is reached on borders. The council welcomed the "continued progress in the normalization of relations" between Croatia and Yugoslavia, particularly the recent establishment of an interstate commission to mark land and sea borders.

**November 28** — Montenegro was represented independently at the second regional forum of Southeast European Internal Affairs Ministers, this year held in Zagreb. The ministers signed a statement concerning mechanisms for information exchange on human trafficking. Minister of Internal Affairs Andrija Jovićević led the Montenegrin delegation.

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## BUSINESS NEWS

**January 14** — Last year, the international community offered significant support to the Montenegrin agricultural sector, which will continue this year. U.S. support was given in two forms. Last year's donation was 12,000 tons of maize, 4,000 tons of soy pellets, and 10,000 tons of wheat. The second form involved the development of milk production and processing, which was accomplished through technical assistance and the training of milk and dairy producers. The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg donated the project "Development of the dairy sector in northern Montenegro," worth 4.54 million Euros. The European Union donated the project "Modernization of dairy equipment in Montenegro," worth 2.3 million Euros, which the European Agency for Reconstruction administers. Two programs will be launched at the beginning of this year, one involving the production of seed potatoes, which the Kingdom of Holland has donated, worth 1 million guildens, and one project for forestry sector

development, which the Duchy of Luxembourg donated, worth about 3 million Euros.

**November 12** — The Austrian finance minister and the general director of the State Agency for Credit and Investment Guarantees have confirmed that Austrian partners are interested in investing in Montenegro, especially in tourism. A Montenegrin delegation led by Minister of Finance Miroslav Ivanišević paid a two-day visit to Austria to discuss investment prospects. The Austrian state agency will ensure a financial guarantee to its investors. The best guarantee for the project's realization is an initiative for forming a common enterprise between the Austrian agency and the Montenegrin government.

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## SPORTS NEWS

**November 7** — Montenegro will host the "World Peace Games" in 2003. Djukanović and representatives of the World Peace Games Committee have signed a protocol on the event in Cetinje. The games will be organized in all Montenegrin cities and 30,000 athletes from around the world will participate.

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## OPINIONS

### "Let the Montenegrins Have Their Say"

Morton Abramowitz

*International Herald Tribune*, December 31, 2001, page 8.

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