

**Ambassador Gillian Milovanovic interview w/ Dnevnik**  
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Republic of Macedonia on June 1 will conduct the very first early elections in the country. Surprisingly, from the very beginning, opposition SDSM said that election will not be fair, nor will they be free, because of the issue regarding the head of the State Election Commission. But, also animosity between DUI and DPA add dangerous flavor to the whole process. Are you worried Ambassador after violent attacks in Tetovo and Kumanovo?

**Ambassador Milovanovic:** First of all, I think it is obvious that there's no place for violence in elections and it's important that political parties do take control of their own followers. It is also important to avoid incidents and provocations. I am not going to say who did what in the incidents of violence that recently took place but what's important is there should be no violence in the elections. I think over all, our goal, and it's not just that of the U.S. but it's the whole international community is to see that there are free, fair and non-violent elections. You did very well in 2006. ODIHR gave you a good report. Yes there were some incidents and problems but overall you had a good report, and that is something that you need to at least equal, and preferably needs to be better because now you are a country that *did* meet NATO's criteria. No, unfortunately you were not able to actually receive the invitation in Bucharest, but you met NATO's criteria and everyone acknowledged that. So that means the standards by which your country is going to be judged at this stage of the game are even higher than previously and you need to live up to that. And, of course, you need to live up to it for your own citizens. I am happy to say that we have been talking with political party leaders, we have been talking with important institutions and will be talking with others, and I think that the message is very well understood, that it is important to have good elections. I will say that the international community met with the Minister of Interior and also with the Deputy Minister of Interior at the same time. We talked about how well the MOI and the police had performed their duties professionally and in a non-partisan manner in 2006, and that we wanted to see that record equaled if not excelled. And both said that was their intention, that was their plan; that is how they expected their own people to perform their jobs. I am sure that when we start to talk to other institutions, Broadcasting Council, Electoral Commission and others, that we will find the same degree of responsiveness. Political parties also have indicated very strongly that they want to do the right thing and indeed pretty much widespread intention to sign on to the Code of Conduct which is expected to be signed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of May. So, am I sorry to see that there are incidents of violence? Yes. But on the other hand, I think that there is a commitment and there needs to be a continued commitment by political parties and especially by government institutions to do things fairly. We're not just talking about issues of violence, we're also talking about the entire campaign period where such things as intimidation will be very important to avoid. Things like misuse of the powers of government for example, even if it is not the intention, for example benefits should not be promised to people, or there should be no suggestions that there will not receive benefits, let's take employment for

instance, depending on how they vote. Those are things that, the benefits that the government can confer should be given transparently and equitably to all citizens, irrespective of who they are and irrespective of how they vote and that will be also something that is very important.

Ambassador, late Macedonian President Boris Trajkovski once stated that we are in favor of ballots over bullets. Can this election turn out vice-versa: bullets over ballots? Do you have such information from the terrain? You know the situation very well.

**Ambassador Milovanovic:** I really don't believe that. And I will go further, I think that there is—of course when you see some violent incidents, you start to worry, people start to worry—but I think that what's very important is that the public in general, whether ethnic Albanian, ethnic Macedonian, other ethnicities, they really need not to fall into the trap of suspecting their neighbor and having these fears which maybe some think will help them get elected. Maybe some people think just they don't like the other guy so they promote these fears. I don't think that Macedonians, and by that I mean the citizens of Macedonia, have anything to fear objectively about developments in this country. I think they do have to fear, if you want to call it fear, falling prey to those who induce them to be afraid and to have suspicions about each other. I think when you start to have suspicions about each other, you make the other guy live down to your suspicions. I don't see any single party in this country, irrespective of ethnicity, any leader of any substance in this country, who is saying "if we don't get what we want we are going to take it by force." On the contrary, I see people who are ready to use the democratic process and get their authority through that means and I think that's what you are going to have.

DUI says that the will of the voters should be respected, meaning the party which gets majority of the popular vote amongst the ethnic Albanians should be in the Government. It is not a new issue, but what do you think for that idea now, 7 years after signing of the Ohrid Framework Agreement? Do you have any plans how to block any possible post-election crises if for example Gruevski chooses Thachi as a partner, and DUI boycotts the Parliament?

**Ambassador Milovanovic:** My first and quickest answer is a lot of that is hypothetical and I wouldn't presume to get into it. The second short answer is, we as a government are not for or against any political party, not for or against any individual and we have no views on how a government should be composed. This is something that is provided for in your own laws and in your own constitution and we are not going to vary from that position. The slightly longer answer is, I think what has been seen here in Macedonia, and what has been seen in a number of other democracies in the world is that if the aim is to have an efficient and effective government, one that works smoothly, one that is able to work with all branches of government, what you need is inclusiveness, what you need is respect for all points of view, and for the views of, and the existence of, all of your citizens, irrespective of how they voted. I think that it would probably be beneficial, when the time comes, for a new government to be formed, that those kinds of concepts and experiences be in the forefront of the minds of those forming a government. With

that said, that would be true- those are the kinds of things you need- dialogue, inclusiveness, respect for your own citizens and their views. And it doesn't matter which political parties wind up in there, those are the things that we hope will be taken into account.

The U.S. is a signatory of the Framework Agreement, and the question was in relation to whether the DUI idea would affect the unitary state of Macedonia?

**Ambassador Milovanovic:** OK, here again, I think all of these concerns that whether a unitary state will continue, whether federalism is going to be an issue, these are again, first of all matter that are raised- and I am not saying you are raising it for this reason- but I think they are raised in general in the public out of fear and concern, and I think there is more fear and concern than is justified. The other thing I believe very, very strongly is that if the citizens are treated fairly, equitably, transparently, and with respect, this builds on their already strong commitment to their country and that if that is done, then your country will be even stronger and these issues about concern of unitary versus federal et cetera, will not arise. You don't have to fear, I am absolutely convinced, you do not have to fear those kinds of issues in this country, but what you do need to do is to make sure that your citizens, no matter who they are, really do see that they are respected, appreciated and part of this country. It's all they want.

What do you think about the idea of signing an agreement on free and fair elections amongst political parties since we have a constitution and electoral law?

**Ambassador Milovanovic:** I think- what I am calling a Code of Conduct is what you are referring to... I think these things are done often. It's not so much that it's suggesting that the laws don't function or that the provisions of your regulations don't function. It's more like taking a pledge and saying I remember this is what I am responsible for and I stand up in front of the voter and say I am going to do the right thing, I am going to conduct myself in a professional manner. So it is not so much a criticism, or a suggestion that there is disrespect for the legislation or the constitutional provision, it is an opportunity for the politicians to come forward and say: we commit ourselves to you the public, to you the voter, to behaving in a professional manner as we present our ideas.

According to VMRO-DPMNE, the idea for early elections has come from Ambassador Victoria Nuland. Is that true? Do you have any information on it?

**Ambassador Milovanovic:** It is absolutely not true. Now I will add, I have no idea whether VMRO specifically said that or not, so I am not making a reference to what VMRO may or may not have said. I am answering the question: "did Victoria Nuland say we should have early elections here?" Absolutely not. Number one, the U.S. has no position on domestic politics issues, it would be inappropriate for us to have that, we certainly had no position with respect to early elections. I think that there were clear pros and cons, many of which were debated a great deal in your own media and the political leaders who had the responsibility here to make the decisions looked at those pros and

cons, weighed them up and made the decisions, and that's how it happened and neither Victoria Nuland nor anyone else on that side had any involvement whatsoever.

I am interested to know how you see this situation in Macedonia where the Government asks the Parliament to dissolve. Is it a normal political situation? Usually Parliament would ask the Government to step down, not the opposite.

**Ambassador Milovanovic:** To be honest, I am probably going to give you an unsatisfactory answer. I am not sufficiently knowledgeable about previous experiences in parliamentary systems such as yours. One way or another, a parliament gets dissolved and early elections take place. It is quite possible that in some countries it is very clearly something which results from one party saying OK, we want to do this. I think that by whatever means people agreed to get the votes to dissolve, it was constitutionally correct and it was perfectly fine.

Ambassador, there is a "verbal agreement" between VMRO-DPMNE and DUI, but also a "March agreement" between VMRO-DPMNE and DPA. Concerning the first one, have you been personally engaged, while the other was result of the will of both parties' leadership. Are these agreements in some correlation and can they be a source of conflict?

**Ambassador Milovanovic:** First of all, of course, the basic issue is the Ohrid Framework Agreement and its implementation. The May 29 Agreement, which indeed was something that was done in the presence of U.S. and EU local representatives, is something that was intended to bring together VMRO and DUI so that they could fruitfully work together on some of these issues that are related to the implementation, I would say, of the Framework Agreement, and to get results, get clear results that would be practical and would move things along. I think in that sense it worked quite well. As you mentioned, there was- at least from what I understand- and intra-coalition discussion and some forms of agreement on issues between DPA and VMRO, on sometimes similar, sometimes other issues. Mainly, I would go back to something I said earlier, what we believe is most important is not how you arrive at an agreement or whose agreement it is. What's important is that the goal be to genuinely, not declaratively, not just to look good but genuinely, to work to improve the conditions, social conditions, economic conditions, expression of one's identity conditions, of your citizens. And, so long as any of these contribute and result in practical, concrete effects, this is a good thing for Macedonia and for Macedonians as citizens, and I think it should be seen in that light. What's important is, no matter what, that parties, that people who are in a position to lead this country no matter which party they belong to and which ethnicity, work together collaboratively.

Do you believe that Macedonia has the will, the capacity and maturity, so that the final outcome of these elections is actually the free will of the voters?

**Ambassador Milovanovic:** I absolutely believe you have the capacity. We have heard from political leaders that they have the will to see that this happens. We as the international community, not just the U.S., will of course be watching this at the time of

the actual elections and in the run up. There will of course be also ODIHR monitors and observers who will be watching things. I think that it would be foolish of me to say that there are no difficulties or no challenges. And also at a time of a political campaign, there are always excesses of one sort or another, people who see the goal as more important than the means by which they get to it. Sometimes, they are encouraged by their systems. But overall, I'd say that Macedonia has a steady record from recent times of progress from one election to the next. Certainly the last elections went quite well. So, as to the capacity, I think you absolutely have the capacity. It's one of the things that we said when we went for example to the MOI: You proved – MOI, you proved- average policeman on the street dealing with this, that you had the capacity to handle this objectively, fairly and in a non-partisan manner. And I might add, people responsible for security in the political parties also proved that, because they worked collaboratively to make sure that rallies would be peaceful, that things were organized, that the voters had an opportunity to listen to their leaders and to do so in peace and security. So I think that's entirely possible. What is important, I believe, is that the leaders make absolutely clear, not just by declarations but by their behavior, if there is anything that goes wrong during their course of the campaign, that they will not tolerate people associated with them, people acting in their name, or people who can even be in some way attributed to their party doing the wrong thing. Then I think the voters do have a good chance. And I would encourage everyone to go out and vote. The right to vote is something that so many people around the world have fought so long, and often at an enormous risk to themselves, to obtain it. People in this country have that right and have that possibility, and it's very important that everyone goes out and votes.

It was announced that American-Macedonian friendship will be deepened with a new agreement due to be signed in Washington DC in May. Can you tell us what will be the nature and the spirit of this agreement? Can this agreement become one of the themes in the electoral campaign?

**Ambassador Milovanovic:** Well, to answer the last part of your question first. Anything that is done between the U.S. and the Republic of Macedonia, concerns the Republic of Macedonia. It does not concern a political party, it does not concern specific individuals, it is the expression- whatever form it takes- it is the expression of a partnership between one nation, my own, and another nation, yours. So, any time that you get to the point where you already have a good working partnership that you want to enhance and deepen, that means it's a partnership that has gone on for a long, long time, consistently getting better and that implies a partnership which is not exclusively of one period but goes back through probably a whole lot of different governments in this country, all different complexions of political life. As to what will happen in Washington, these things are under discussion at the moment. There has been in fact, although I have seen a lot of stuff in the press here, there has been to my knowledge absolutely no indication from Washington that there will be an official signing of anything or an official agreement that requires signature. What we have said consistently, and what is the case, is that we want to deepen and enhance the partnership that we already have with Macedonia in a variety of areas and I am sure that that will ultimately be the outcome when Minister Miloshoski goes to Washington for the 7<sup>th</sup> of

May. We said very clearly, our own President said very clearly that he feels strongly about deepening and enhancing our partnership. Our Secretary of State will carry out that message but the details of that are being worked out in Washington and we'll just see what happens on the 7<sup>th</sup> of May.

We know that you have been personally involved in many political issues. What is your personal feeling after the Bucharest Summit?

**Ambassador Milovanovic:** Obviously, there isn't anyone who has worked on the issue of Macedonian entry into NATO, invitation to NATO, that did not feel disappointment when it was impossible for the invitation to actually be extended in Bucharest. We all felt disappointed. At the same time, I consider it truly a major achievement of Macedonia, and particularly in the months from, say November of last year until the point where you got to the Bucharest Summit. A major achievement by Macedonia, in working together, all political parties finally setting aside their disputes and working for the good of the country, making the reforms, passing the legislation, starting to implement things that were necessary in order for you to meet the criteria. It was a huge success, every country agreed that you had met the criteria. That is a huge success. So, sorry that because there remains the issue of the name that will have to be worked out, which of course we are trying to help out on as facilitators. Because of that you did not get the actual invitation, but it is very clear that on every criterion you were in and once this final hurdle is overcome, the invitation is sitting there waiting for you, and you will get it. That's a great achievement and it's something that people need to bear in mind as they go forward because you have achieved a lot and you have now a lot of respect for that, you need to continue building on that, not focus on the aspect which was the disappointment or the concerns but rather focus on the achievements and resolve to continue to go forward in that manner.