



FOREIGN POLICY ASSOCIATION

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**FPA Annual Dinner
May 7, 2003**

Featuring:

Mircea Geoana, Foreign Minister of Romania

H.E. MIRCEA GEOANA: — Thank you Noel for inviting me to such an intimate dinner. I am very privileged to be here with you and to take part in the FPA celebration of two great statesmen. I would also like to recognize President Zedillo of Mexico – Mr. President I was the envoy of the Romanian government at your inauguration on December 1, 1995. You have done a great job for your country. I also spotted here a great friend of Romania, Ron Lauder, who has invested tremendous effort and passion to the democracy and freedom of expression in my country, and the renewal of Jewish heritage of Central Europe.

Let me share two stories that I lived alongside these two great men that we are celebrating tonight. They both related to Macedonia – a nation frequently mentioned here this evening. The Balkans and the tragedy in the Balkans are also proof of how far Europe has gone in the last decade, and how much the transatlantic link matters to my part of the world. I was invited by Secretary Powell to fly on his plane from Paris to Macedonia in 2001 when I was chairing the Organization for Security and Cooperation (OSCE), after a contact group meeting in Paris on the former Yugoslavia. I was honored to have such a privilege. He invited me into his small cabin in front. I was impressed with the way he treated his staff so cordially, and how he tried to nurture a team spirit that he has probably learnt in his previous incarnations in life.

He was asking me about the Balkans – What are the citizens of this region expecting from us? At that time, no one knew what the new administration in Washington would decide to do about American involvement in the Balkans. We arrived in Macedonia and Secretary Powell went to the meeting with all the foreign ministers of the region. He listened to all of us, asking what were our expectations for American involvement in the region. At the end, I remember that he took away

his notes – probably very well drafted by his staff at the State Department. He started to speak with his heart, and basically saying: Look at me. Look where I am coming from. Look at the humble origins I had. Look at what liberty and freedom can bring to a man like me in a free society. I have to say that it was the most emotional speech I have heard of a leader in that region. I think your presence made a difference in Macedonia.

The same year, a big crisis occurred in Macedonia, with rebels emerging from the mountains, and the country was on the verge of precipice. I had a privilege to be with Javier Solana representing the EU and George Robertson leading NATO, where I was the chairman of the OSCE at the time. I was watching Javier trying to help Macedonia stick together and how he attempted to save lives by avoiding another civil war in the Balkans. He used all his skilled diplomacy, which was sometimes threatening, sometimes cajoling, sometimes whispering, and sometimes shouting. But he always invited the leaders of this troubled nation to choose peace over war. That is what the European Union is all about. I learned during those frequent trips we took together what a great man Javier is, and what Europe can really bring to my region as well.

Let me tell you my dear friends of the FPA. There was no better choice that you could have made in choosing these two great statesmen to be your highly regarded recipients of awards tonight. I only dream of the time when my country will become a member of NATO in the next few months, and a member of the EU in the next few years. I want to be part of an ambitious and global Europe in strong partnership with the U.S; this is what millions of citizens in Central Europe really wish and strive for. I do not think that Secretary Powell and Secretary Solana are coming one from Mars and the other from Venus. I think that even though they may have differences of opinion on the definition of power or the definition of threat, America and Europe have something in common – the definition of liberty and global responsibility. The world is waiting for Europe and America to give a global response to the problems that we have. Romania has lived through tyranny and we know how to appreciate freedom. Let's start with Iraq! Let's continue with the Middle East! Let's prove what the West together can do for this planet! Congratulations for the award. God bless Colin and Javier. Thank you Foreign Policy Association.