

TRUD DAILY

**The U.S. Ambassador: Don't sell your votes**

**Ambassador McEldowney, at your hearing before the Congress the then Senator Obama urged you to work aggressively against corruption and organized crime in Bulgaria. Do you think you have fulfilled that task given that not a day goes by without a corruption scandal breaks up?**

There were many people both in the Bulgarian government and in the U.S. Embassy who worked hard against the issues of organized crime and corruption. Yet we are not judged by how hard we work we are judged by the results we produce. And what we have to focus on is outcomes, on the accomplishments, and on the tangible progress. Yes, efforts have been made but the progress is insufficient. Everyone who cares about Bulgaria and I am one of them – as a friend and an ally - can't wait to see a bigger progress in the fight against organized crime and corruption. The new government that will be formed after the election will have the opportunity and the real responsibility to take on the issue of corruption and OC. It can do that by laying out an explicit strategy of what it plans to do and the timeline in which it will do it. And after that it should be held accountable for fulfilling the goals it plans to accomplish.

**Everyone promises to fight corruption and organized crime.**

That's correct. But promises made are one thing, promises kept are another.

**Can we expect to have a stable government given that there have been numerous reports of vote buying and corporate voting?**

We have always been very clear that the U.S. government does not get involved in partisan issues. We don't promote a specific party and we don't promote a particular candidate. However, as a country which is committed to a better future for Bulgaria - we do care about principles and we do care about process. We were very troubled to see the reports of vote buying and other inappropriate types of voting during the elections for European Parliament. We very much hope that this won't be the case at the national elections. The things you just said are very troubling. They are bad for the people who sell their votes because they give up their voice. They are also bad for the parties who buy the votes because they undermine the legitimacy of everyone who's involved in this process.

**We have seen a lot of criticism about the ethnic model in this country. Does this concern you?**

In the course of the election campaign we've seen some rhetoric and some language that reflects poorly on those who try to drive tension. This is unfortunate. Anytime when you see angry language that appears to drive people apart rather than bring them together the result is negative. And we think this is unfortunate. We have always called for tolerance. Diversity – no matter whether it is racial, or ethnic, or religious - is what makes us strong.

**What are your plans for your new position which you'll take at the Department of State and does it involve energy?**

Frankly speaking I have a lot to learn and I am not in a position of being a teacher about that. I'll be working in the Bureau that is responsible for all European countries, including Russia, as well as NATO,

the EU, and OSCE. To me it will be a fascinating challenge at an interesting time. I'm sad, though, that I have to leave Bulgaria. My family and I felt at home in Bulgaria. I have been pulled out of Bulgaria sooner than I would like. But Bulgaria will be within my portfolio and I'll be keeping an eye on what's going on here. Regarding energy – the question that always comes up here is Russia. Many regard the energy issue as a zero sum equation – you are either “for” America, diversification of sources and against Russia, or visa versa – “against” the U.S. and “for” Russia. This approach is simplistic and wrong. Europe needs Russian energy. We want those supplies to continue but we want to engage Russia on a variety of issues – energy, regional stability, and the democratization of Russia itself. We've started an initiative on transparency in energy. We hope that this process will be carried out with the assistance of EITI, which is run by the person who founded Transparency International – Peter Eigen. We thought – why not expand this energy transparency program from countries that produce energy to countries that transit energy and why not position Bulgaria as a leader in the region. Bulgaria - to be the first country in this region to say – yes we will follow the internationally observed principles of transparency in the transit of energy resources. The Bulgarian government showed interest and willingness to continue the dialogue on this issue.

**Will you be working on a possible visit of President Obama to Bulgaria?**

I certainly can't rule out such a possibility. President Obama's is very intense but his administration is clear – this region is a priority.

**Do you stay in touch with your predecessor – Ambassador Beyrle who is now in Moscow?**

I know John Beyrle for 20 years. He is a friend with whom I stay in touch on the e-mail. We exchange information.

You'll be his boss when you take over your new position...

(Laughing) **I wouldn't say it that way.**

Do you know who'll be your successor in Sofia?

**No one knows. The process of looking is still in progress.**

Do you help in this process?

(Laughing) **Of course.**