

CENTRAL AND EAST EUROPEAN COALITION

1612 K Street, N.W., Suite 410
Washington, D.C. 20006

June 10, 2008

The Honorable Charles Schumer
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Schumer:

The Central and East European Coalition ("CEEC") comprises 18 national membership organizations representing more than 22 million Americans who trace their heritage to Central and Eastern Europe. We write to express our deep concern about your recent column in The Wall Street Journal entitled, "Russia Can Be Part of the Answer on Iran," (June 3). As a supporter of democracy for the nations of Central and Eastern Europe, which suffered greatly under "Russian hegemony over Eastern Europe," your suggestion that these nations be used as bargaining chips in order to appease Russia is troubling, inexplicable and unacceptable.

For decades Central and East Europeans had been oppressed by Russia, whose "greatness" you suggest that Mr. Putin restore. The 1932-1933 genocide in Ukraine, the incorporation of the Baltic countries into the Soviet Union, the brutal crushing of the Hungarian Revolution of 1956, the suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968, the imposition of martial law in Poland in 1981, the blatant and continuing denials of fundamental freedoms in Belarus are all examples of the tragedies that ruined millions of lives in the countries of a region which had been ill-advisedly relegated to the Russian sphere of influence in the twentieth century.

After untold suffering, these nations have regained their freedom and sovereignty. And now you suggest that Russia once again be allowed to dominate the countries of Central and East Europe in order to pursue policies whose effectiveness is a matter of conjecture at best.

Your recommendations are especially distressing, considering the disturbing trends in Russia, including the intimidation used to silence the press and critics of the government, rising anti-Semitism and intolerance toward minorities and attempts to use energy as a means to divide Europe and unduly influence Central and East European governments. Your proposal, in effect would validate these disturbing trends in the eyes of Moscow and pander to Russian nostalgia for imperialism. Clearly these trends are contrary to U.S. geo-strategic interests in the region. Please Senator Schumer, no more Yaltas!

We respectfully call upon you to meet with us and clarify your statements in The Wall Street Journal column.

Sincerely,

Frank Koszorus, Jr.
Co-President
American Hungarian Federation

Juris Mezinskis
President
American Latvian Association

Bryan Ardouny
Executive Director
Armenian Assembly of America

Walter Stankievich
President
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Radi Slavoff
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Marju Rink-Abel
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Vytas Maciunas
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Laszlo Pasztor
National President Emeritus and Member of
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Frank J. Spula
President
Polish American Congress

John Karch, Ph.D.
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