

Your Excellency...,

Esteemed...,

Respected...,

Dear friends,

First of all, on the behalf of the Government of the Republic of Serbia, allow me to congratulate the authors of the book “Serbian Military Cemetery”, the Society of Serbian-Algerian Friendship and all of us on a beautiful, beneficial and successful publishing endeavour which resulted in this publication, and to personally thank you for the opportunity to participate in it by writing the Foreword to the book.

The significance of this publication is manifold: firstly, it reminds us of a magnificent period in the history of Serbian and Algerian people; then, it is a testimony that our two peoples have respected and appreciated one another in the decades since the First World War; and thirdly, but not the least, the contents of this book may serve as a guiding light in the turbulent present times, or as a magnet of the compass of correct and judicious consideration in the moments when we are flooded by doubts and dejection, pressured by the great challenges we are facing.

As I have mentioned in the Foreword, the book entitled “Serbian Military Cemetery” was published on the occasion of centenary of existence and maintenance of the Serbian military cemetery in Algeria, commemorating all fallen soldiers of the Serbian Army in First World War, whose remains rest in numerous cemeteries throughout Algeria and the Maghreb. Although the Serbian public is more familiar with the fact that Serbian soldiers are buried at Zeitenlik in Greece, and Bizerta and Menzel Bourguiba in Tunisia, as well as many other places throughout Europe and the world, it is not known enough that there is a Serbian military cemetery in friendly Algeria, near the capital city, in the municipality of Dely Ibrahim, where 324 soldiers are laid to rest.

These 324 soldiers formed part of powerful armed forces, which, following the crush of the mother state, continued to fight for the freedom of the homeland, and the right of the European peoples to self-determination and life in peace, freedom and democracy. Serbian armed forces contributed greatly to the victory of the Allies over German militarism and imperialism, which threatened to enslave the whole humanity a century ago; and this was not because the might of the Serbian army “resided in the mace”, as the famous poet and important Serbian statesman Petar Petrović II Njegoš said, but because the mighty combat morale of the Serbian

soldiers and its devastating effects were grounded in unrelenting insubordinate spirit of the Serbian people, which is exemplified by a large number of our civilian casualties, one of the highest in First World War.

Following the principle of self-determination of the peoples which resulted from the triumph over the Central Powers in First World War, the conditions were made for subsequent successful decolonization of the African continent, for which the Algerian people still had to fight and lay significant sacrifice. This fight of the Algerian people was observed with sympathy by the Serbian people, and we greeted the independence and autonomy of Algeria.

The Serbian state and people never believed in imperialism. Despite being the majority in a relatively big and strong state which was created owing to impressive victories of Serbian weapons in First World War and enormous sacrifices of the Serbia people which lost a third of its population – Yugoslavia, Serbs held steadfastly to their traditional ethics of heroics and bravery, the meaning of which was succinctly expressed in one clear definition by another Serbian writer and leader, Marko Miljanov: “Bravery is when I defend myself from the other, heroism is when I defend the other from myself”. While it defended others from itself, unfortunately, the Serbian people happened to have an entire province, the cradle of the Serbian state, Kosovo and Metohija, colonized by the population of a neighbouring country.

Dear friends,

Today, too, there are two forces at odds in the world: one, whose power resides in the international law and justice, and the other, which demonstrates its power through fulfilling its intentions by gross violation of the international law and justice. All the efforts of the latter power are in fact a proof of powerlessness, because they stem from despair and cannot be sustained since they do not have a foundation in values; and they will certainly be completely crushed and defeated in the end, just as German militarism was defeated in First World War, and monstrous fascist ideology in Second World War, and colonial empires which held nations captive all around the world.

We are firmly committed to respecting the Resolutions adopted by the relevant bodies of the United Nations, and we are resolved to act only in accordance with them, because, as Njegoš reminds us: “the one who holds his law in the mace, leaves behind the stench of inhumanity”. We are grateful to the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria for not recognizing the unilaterally declared independence of

the so-called Republic of Kosovo, and I am certain that our two peoples, Algerian and Serbian, will continue to stand united in the defence of the values which keep alive the sliver of a hope for a more just and better world.

Thank you.