

REMEMBERING THE AMERICAN HEROES FROM 1915

Dear Secretary of Culture, Ms Milošević, respected provincial secretaries, Your Excellency, Mr Scott, dear guests from the US Embassy, dear directors from cultural institutions, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr Ambassador, thank you for joining us here today and for accepting our request and honoring me by saying a few words about the book, that was published by the Archives of Vojvodina, about the war memories of Douglas Dold, called *Adventure in the Balkans 1915*, which is a unique testimony of humaneness, responsibility, fraternal aid and the ultimate triumph of Good over Evil, that encompassed the entire world, in the greatest war history has ever known back then.

Allow me, if you will, a quick reminder.

In 2018, archives in the Republic of Serbia, as part of the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War, presented to the general and informed public several exhibitions of documents that they store and professionally maintain, that reveal great admiration that the Americans had toward the Serbian people and that testify not only about the close ties between the two nations but also that the roots of friendship and mutual understanding that Serbia and the USA share are very deep.

In 1918, high ranking state officials and intellectual circles in the USA spoke about how the Serbian people, in 1389 on Kosovo, while defending their country and liberty, also defended Europe, and so during the First World War, both Serbia and the USA defended the rest of civilization in a war never before seen in the history of humanity. That historical moral capital, binds us all, even today a hundred years later.

I would like to remind everyone that on the **28th of July 1918**, in honor of the **Serbian Day**, the Serbian flag was raised over the White House, which was the second time ever that a flag of a different country was raised over the house of the president of the USA.

Robert Lansing, US Secretary of State, in Congress in 1918 spoke as such: "When the history of this war is written down, its most glorious chapter will bear the title: **Serbia**. The Serbian Army showed miraculous courage, while the Serbian people suffered greatly, such sacrifice and persistence can not go unnoticed – they must be rewarded..."

I would like to remind us of the lesser known event, among the public, in our mutual history but rather unique in diplomacy. As it turns out, **13 years** before diplomatic relations were established between Serbia and the USA, Louis Czapkay, US consul in Bucharest, way back in **1868**, entrusted the Serbian representative in Bucharest **Konstantin (Kosta) Magazinović**, a Serb from Ruma, **with the duties of the US consul and to represent American interests in this part of Europe** while he was away.

Numerous documents that are stored in the Archive of Serbia and other archives in Serbia, testify to the humanitarian missions and medical expeditions that were deployed to Serbia at the beginning of the war. Apart from that, the archival holdings testify about the friendship, cooperation and alliances between Serbia and the US, that was built through all kinds of **diplomatic, economic and cultural connections**, but also by achieving common historical goals during the First World War. The mission by the American Red Cross headed by Dr. Edward Ryan, was sent to Serbia soon after the war broke out, to which the original letter of Mihajlo Pupin, Serbian consul in New York, sent to the Serbian Government on the 8th of September 1914, gives testimony. As of this year, a copy of this letter will be stored in the National Archive in New York, thanks to the cooperation between the Archive of

Serbia and the US Embassy in the Republic of Serbia.

By contributing to the national commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the end of the First World War, the Archives of Vojvodina decided to publish archival holdings from its collection, in the form of a monographic **Serbian/English publication**, that we present to you today, and which spontaneously gave rise to an exhibition of archival documents of the same name, that is also available for you to see. Several people, rather than one individual, are responsible for the creation of a book, and their interaction during its production contributes to its uniqueness. [In that sense, I'd like to thank Liljana Dožić who arranged the documents for publication and Ivana Saunderson Đokić who translated the documents to Serbian; also Dragana Katić, Aleksandar Bursać and Aleksandar Dimitrijević, who translated the rest of the texts and image descriptions to English; Tatjana Cavnić, who shaped and formatted the book; Ivana Gojković the proofreader; Darko Vuković who signed the design of the cover, and Vesna Bašić, book editor, who put together all these segments and jobs.](#)

The book covers the humanitarian role of **one of many** American medical and humanitarian missions in Serbia during the First World War. Invited by their respected and famous professor and scientist, a Serb from Idvor, Mihajlo Pupin, twenty four American students, mostly from the Columbia University, answered the call in order to go to war, but not to fight, rather to help, nurture and heal. Lead by the desire to help the Serbian people in their struggle with epidemics, hunger and war atrocities, voluntarily risking their lives, they proved that the fight for humaneness ideals and justice has a higher, universal meaning. One of them was **Douglas Dold**, author of the book, that testifies about man's eternal aspiration toward the Good and progress.

The past century, that this book covers in a segment, was marked by two world wars, during which Serbia and the USA had increasingly friendly relations, but also two different social structure as well as social and other differences. Still, the relationship between the two countries was **enriched** by the most important and the most durable ties, **human relationships**, between Americans and Serbs. The tragedy of the 20th century was outdone by scientific achievements of notable Serbs to whom the whole Earth owes much, **Nikola Tesla** and **Mihajlo Pupin**, but also the Americans that willingly took the test of **humaneness** and passed it.

In the end, I would highlight a few things. This publishing endeavour and exhibition also have an educational purpose, because they will contribute to a new and altered approach of the public toward the *book* and *archival holdings* as a cultural property by which they will recognise the importance of their preservation. Thanks to the work done on documents and their usage, complete and reliable research on the past is being undertaken. **Archives prevent the loss of memories.** By discovering and publishing the inner content of reliable documents, we contribute to the incitement and development of awareness, concerning the importance of archival documents as valid historical sources **that "testify about our human nature"**, as our famous Nobel Prize recipient **Ivo Andrić** always said.

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