

Speech of H.E. Mr. H. van den Dool, Dutch ambassador for Serbia, at the presentation of the „Serbian soldiers who died in WWI in the Netherlands“ by Tatjana and Fabian Vendrig and John Stienen, honouring the Culture of Remembrance on Victims of WWI and Arius van Tienhoven, member of Dutch Medical Mission to Serbia in WWI at Museum of Serbian Diplomacy, on Thursday, November 2nd 2017

Your Excellences, dear descendants of brave Serbian soldiers, dear guests,

I am thankful for the initiative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the authors of the brochure “Serbian soldiers of World War I who died in the Netherlands” for initiating this event. The timing is really appropriate, one week before marking of the Armistice Day.

Earlier this week I spoke at a similar event – promotion of the book by Professor Radovanovic about the Dutch help to Serbia in the Great War. There I mentioned the great Dutch surgeon Arius van Tienhoven, whose diaries were translated by Jelica Novakovic-Lopusina, and this is the place to dedicate few words to him as well.

Arius van Tienhoven provided care to the wounded and sick soldiers in Serbia during the Balkan Wars at first. Later, during the First World War, he led the surgery department of the Military Hospital of Valjevo. He and his medical team left an indelible memory of dedication and humanity with their patients. In addition to his humanism and great achievements as a medical surgeon on Serbian grounds, he left valuable records, diaries and photographs that depict life in war-struck Serbia.

At the same time, on the other side of Europe in the neutral Netherlands, a small number of Serbs found refuge and help in the Netherlands. Not all of them were lucky to return home and this brochure before us paints a personal picture about these soldiers. Their stories and destiny are

documented by letters, photos, diaries, but also by getting in contact with the family members of the victims.

When we speak about wars, we often talk about important battles, conquered and liberated cities, great leaders and heroes. This publication tells a story about less known participants of the war - war prisoners, their life and destiny. It also offers a humanitarian law perspective, it draws attention to the importance of legal framework dealing with war and consequences it had on people's lives.

This brochure, along with the already mentioned publications of Professor Radovanovic and Professor Novakovic-Lopusina, is a testimony to Dutch-Serbian relations over the past century. They present our shared history and I am happy to see that our good relations continue to strengthen over the years.

I would like to finish by thanking the authors John Stienen, Tatjana Vendrig and Fabian Vendrig for revealing part of our shared past.

Hvala!