

Aleksandar Popov, co-president of Igman Initiative in Serbia

COMMEMORATIVE SPEECH FOR ZIVORAD KOVACEVIC

We have gathered here today to pay tribute and say goodbye to Zika.

We are here because he was very special and dear to each and everyone of us. On behalf of his friends from Igman Initiative, let me part with a man who lived his life and passed away in his own manner. For me and for my friends from Igman Initiative who came from all around the region to part with him, he meant much more than just a partner in realization of an idea, he meant more than a friend. Simply, he was our Zika, our role model and inspiration. He was a remarkable man of high moral principles which often cost him much in his life. He was also a perfectionist in all things he took up working, but at the same time he was full of understanding for human weaknesses and flaws he also shared with any next man. He used to get angry if something wasn't done right, but he also praised everything that was done right. He used to jokingly apologize for arriving on time when we were tardy, as well as for having a carefully prepared speech when we were unprepared, in keeping with typical Balkan rules.

My intention is not to speak about his rich life's work that we all know about, as well as many people outside of this hall. I wish to speak about Zika who made a mark on all of us who worked with him through Igman Initiative and other organizations. As a convinced antifascist, he was our intellectual and moral fulcrum who made us all feel like a family, regardless of our place of residence: Novi Sad, Tuzla, Zagreb, Pula, Podgorica or any other place in the region. Surely, deepest is the sorrow his Jelena, Radovan and his grandchildren, but I believe they won't mind the fact that we, honored by his friendship, also feel this as a family loss.

Now, when Zika is gone, I cherish the memories on all our travels in a raked old car trotting around Balkan wilderness that he endured as stoic, in spite of fragile health common for people of his age. He made it all the way to Pristina, Srebrenica, Dubrovnik, Sarajevo, Vukovar and other places throughout our misfortunate region, in order to offer human word and heal wounds of war.

I cherish the memory of a particular charm and wit that radiated around him and colored all our joint activities, especially during informal moments. Now, when Zika is no longer with us, memory of this remarkable man's friendship, humanity and wit will forever keep our hearts warm.

Great men are not only remembered by their great deeds, but also by ordinary human behavior. Beside his intellectual and moral superiority, Zika managed to remain an ordinary man, close to everyone of us and that's why we loved him so much. That is why we'll miss him so much and cherish the memory of him as a highlight in these dark times.

Zika, rest in peace, You'll never be forgotten and our work that we started together will be continued.