

**Alija Izetbegović's address on the occasion of the Victory Day**

**Sarajevo, 9<sup>th</sup> May 1995**

“Dear citizens,

I address you on the occasion of tomorrow's Victory Day.

Many responsible people worldwide do not claim that this was a victory over fascism, since it is obvious that it was not. A major and significant battle against fascism was won, but the war against fascism, unfortunately, was not. Bosnia today is the living and tragic witness to that fact.

History does not begin with us. For this reason we should remember all that was good, but we should not forget any of what was bad. The world that emerged from the victory of 50 years ago was not much better than the old. In large areas of the world, societies without freedom continued to exist or were newly established, responsible for the suffering and deaths of millions of people, and the so-called free world continued as before with its own interests, hypocrisy and indifference. In the Soviet Union we had Stalinism and the gulags, and in Yugoslavia a one-party system with Goli Otok, a large Communist prison for political detainees on a deserted island in the Adriatic, and many other *otoks*.

The army that ravaged Vukovar and Dubrovnik, and that is now ravaging Bosnian towns and killing civilians, is both materially and psychologically the product of the system that ruled over the past 40 years. Had there been freedom, and the freedom to criticise, that army would not have been what it is, and would not have committed the evils that it has committed.

So we have no reason to idealise the past and to disseminate illusions.

Our current protest against fascism, therefore, does not mean that we wish to return to a society without freedom. Some of those being feted forget this. After everything they have endured, our people have the right to both – peace and freedom. Unfortunately, evil will never be wholly defeated. Mankind is faced with a continual struggle against evil. We believe that this is where the meaning of our lives and of human history lies.

In sending you my message of good wishes for Victory Day, the victory over fascism 50 long years ago, I wish you also another victory, over the evil of these days, whatever that evil may be called.”