

Mr. Aleksandar ERDELIANOVIC, director of the Yugoslav Cinémathèque
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

First of all, allow me to welcome you to the opening of the Days of Algerian Historical movies, organized in the framework of the 71st anniversary of the Algerian Revolution of November 1st, 1954.

Allow me also to express my heartfelt gratitude to the National Audio-visual Archives of Serbia-the Yugoslav Cinematheque for its continuous support in promoting Algerian cinema through almost regular annual film reviews.

The Yugoslav Cinematheque is the right place to recall the assistance provided by former Yugoslavia to the liberation war of my country in the field of cinema as well, and the precious contribution of Zdravko Pecar and Stevan Labudovic to the just Algerian cause. The latter bears also a merit in laying the ground for nurturing a new generation of filmmakers of free Algeria.

Stevan Labudovic was sent by late President Tito to a three-month mission in Algeria, in 1959 but he stayed for three years, following ALN fighters in the maquis at the price of his own life. During his stay he took 274 photographs, recorded 83 kilometers of reel and made 27 documentaries which, as much as Pecar's reports, gradually changed the worldwide public opinion on the Algerian people's fight for justice, dignity and independence.

Both of them were armed just with their pen and their camera.

Following the signing of an agreement on film training between Yugoslavia and the GPRA (Provisional Government of the Algerian Republic), Stevan Labudovic was charged to lead a team of trainers to mentor young trainees with twofold objective: to provide technicians to film the Algerian resistance and to prepare film executives for the post-independence era. It was within this strategy that young Algerian filmmakers were sent to film schools in Prague and Berlin among whom Mohamed Lakhdar Hamina.

Finally, I invite you to pay tribute to the great filmmaker he was. Fifty years ago, he was awarded with the Palme d'Or at the Cannes film festival for his movie "The Chronicle of the Years of Fire" that will be shown tonight. So far, it remains the only Palme d'Or that went to Africa and to the Arab world.

By fate or by coincidence Mohamed Lakhdar Hamina passed away in May this year in Algiers, the very day the restored copy of his masterpiece was screened in Cannes within the Festival program "Cannes classics".

Thank you.