



Predsednica Republike Slovenije

**NATAŠA PIRC MUSAR**

**Address by the President of the Republic of Slovenia  
Nataša Pirc Musar  
on the occasion of Slovenian-American Friendship Day**

Andraž nad Polzelo, 11 May 2024

Check against delivery.

*Dear Mayor, Mr. Jože Kužnik*

*Dear Ambassador, H. E. Mrs. Jamie Lindler Harpootlian,*

*Dear representatives of the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs,*

*Dear residents of Andraž,*

*Dear friends from Slovenia and the United States of America,*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

*Slovenia is celebrating several important anniversaries this year, including 20 years of membership in the European Union and NATO, and the 150th anniversary of the birth and the 90th anniversary of the death of General Rudolf Maister. It is also the 80th anniversary of important historical events in Slovenia and around the world, which in 1944, each in their own way, influenced the course of the Second World War. These undoubtedly include Allied air campaigns, such as the one in March 1944 that, unfortunately, ended with the downing of an American bomber nearby and the tragic death of its eight crew members. There were countless events and acts of sacrifice in the Second World War, some more visible today, others less so. Out of respect for all those who fought against Fascism and Nazism, it is important to keep the memory of them alive. For many years, you have been preserving this culture of remembrance in Andraž nad Polzelo, which has become a symbol of friendship and alliance between two peoples and two countries that eighty years ago stood shoulder to shoulder in the fight against Fascism and Nazism.*

*Although these anniversaries differ in terms of time, processes, actions and persons, I would like to stress that they are connected by something unique. First: conscious and courageous choices made for the good of fellow human beings and society at*

large. Second: willingness to sacrifice even the most precious thing – their lives – for the freedom of people and the preservation of the values of civilisation. And third: commitment to cooperation, support and assistance.

On these foundations, partnerships, alliances and coalitions were born, forged and enhanced throughout history as forms of cooperation and agreement between countries and people. It is my firm belief that the most important achievement of these processes has been the multilateralism represented by the United Nations. I am therefore sad and concerned about the difficulties, disrespect and even ignorance that the United Nations is faced with in the current international context when carrying out its mission. Did we not promise each other and enshrine in the Charter when founding the United Nations that we are determined to save future generations from the scourge of war, which has twice in our lifetime brought untold sorrow to humankind, and to reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations? Have we not pledged to maintain international peace and security, to settle international disputes by peaceful means and to refrain from the use of force? To respect international law and to maintain peace and security in the world as the holy grail of humanity? I am saddened and concerned that we cannot fully comprehend or adhere to these fundamental values which, after all, we support and are committed to. Or that, at least so it seems, they do not apply to everyone.

I have said many times that the involvement of all stakeholders, including women, in negotiation and decision-making processes is important for mutual understanding and lasting solutions in crises. Inclusion, respect, trust and understanding are the basic preconditions for lasting stability in the world. Despite many mistakes and dark periods in its history, humankind has, fortunately, time and again managed to find a way out of hell, suffering and injustice. This gives me hope that even now, with more than 50 conflicts around the world, reason, compassion and values will prevail. Too many homes have been destroyed, too much blood has been shed, too many children have lost their parents and too many parents have lost their children; there is too much suffering and hunger. It is high time to say enough is enough.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Commemorations like this one today are thus of great significance. They remind us of our joint effort and fight for freedom, of senseless killing, and the suffering of innocent victims. The culture of remembrance preserved by such commemorations reminds us of what matters most, namely friendships between nations based on equality, cooperation and trust. We fought shoulder to shoulder with American and other Allied forces. Many Slovenians selflessly helped Allied soldiers and pilots, despite the danger to their own families. Their hearts and humanity dictated such acts. We shared with the Allies enormous strength and the realisation that we did not want to live under the foreign yoke of Fascism and Nazism. The realisation that without our national identity,

*our language and our homeland, we simply do not exist. We have weathered the storms for centuries, and achieved statehood. After more than thirty years of independence and twenty years of membership in the European Union and NATO, we should all the more appreciate and be grateful for the efforts and sacrifices of past generations. We do not know whether our path would have been the same without their sacrifice.*

*Ladies and gentlemen,*

*Although thousands of kilometres apart, we have strong historical ties and cooperation in many areas with the United States. Together, we are tackling contemporary challenges such as climate change, hybrid threats, disruptive technologies and respect for the international legal order at the regional and global levels. Good cooperation with partners and allies is of paramount importance. Moreover, regular strategic dialogue on foreign and defence policy and joint efforts to ensure stability in the Western Balkans are important for Slovenia. Slovenia and the United States are partners, allies and friends and will remain so in the future.*

*During the Second World War, we needed and received Allied help in our fight, for which we are eternally grateful. At the same time, Slovenians selflessly helped over 800 downed Allied airmen. Humanity, humanitarianism and solidarity prevailed against the horrors of war. On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the downing of the American bomber and the death of its eight crew members, we should honour their memory and all that they represent, namely joint struggle, alliance between nations, sacrifice, courage and priceless freedom. Their sacrifice, and that of many others in Slovenia and around the world, has made it possible for us to live today on our own soil, in our own country, and to be able to decide our own future. I wish I could add to this that we live in peace. But this is not the case as people in Ukraine, Gaza, Israel, Sudan and elsewhere in the world are suffering. We, the Member States of the United Nations, have a lot to do to uphold international peace and security.*

*Dear residents of Andraž,*

*I would like to thank you and the entire local community for preserving the memory of these historical events and passing it on to the younger generations so that they can be responsible and compassionate citizens of Slovenia, Europe and the world. The memory must never fade. The past mistakes and horrors of the Second World War must never be repeated. Slovenia was built on the foundations of peacefulness, defiance and struggle. These are facts that everyone must always carry in their hearts. The harmonious beating of two million benevolent hearts leads to peaceful coexistence and development. This is what we also wish for in the future for the generations to come.*

*Thank you also to our friends and guests from the United States, to H. E. Madam Ambassador Jamie L. Harpootlian and her team, who each year commemorate this anniversary, demonstrating their aspirations to strengthen the friendship between our two countries and peoples. It means a lot to us.*

*Long live peace and friendship between nations!*