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AT THE 1221st MEETING OF THE OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

28 March 2019

**On the 20th anniversary of the NATO bombing of the  
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia**

Mr. Chairperson,

A few days ago the world recalled a tragic anniversary. On 24 March 1999, NATO began its bombing of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. For the first time since the Second World War, an act of aggression was committed on the territory of a peaceful Europe against a sovereign independent State, an active participant in the anti-Hitler coalition, one of the founders of the United Nations and the post-war international security system, and a member of the Non-Aligned Movement. This was a gross violation of the fundamental principles of international law enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and the CSCE Helsinki Final Act and of the international commitments of the NATO Member States.

Twenty years on, there is increasing evidence that the war was necessary above all for the “hawks” in Washington. What is more, it was needed not only to achieve the complete break-up of Yugoslavia, which was in the throes of a fraught internal conflict, but also to demonstrate their military might in a unipolar world. As usual, a pretext was quickly found.

First of all, the peaceful settlement of the situation in Kosovo was torpedoed. They forced Belgrade to pull out of the Rambouillet negotiations, imposing conditions on the Serbs that were known to be unacceptable. According to the seasoned former Secretary of State of the United States of America, Henry Kissinger: “The Rambouillet text, which called on Serbia to admit NATO troops throughout Yugoslavia, was a provocation, an excuse to start bombing.”

The grounds for this act of intimidation were also quite simply falsified, based on a lie by the Head of the OSCE Mission, US diplomat William Walker, disseminated in the leading Western media about the events in the village of Račak in January 1999, in which terrorists killed in battle were passed off as peaceable Albanian victims of a pseudo-genocide. These events have unfortunately left a permanent shameful blemish on the OSCE’s history.

Thus, false grounds were created for NATO’s illegitimate intervention, bypassing the UN Security Council. Moreover, the North Atlantic Alliance openly sided with the Kosovo Liberation Army, which terrorized Serbs and moderate fellow Albanians for the purpose of dismembering the territory. There is

evidence that special forces from some NATO countries came to Kosovo to train the Kosovo Albanians. The NATO operation was not even consistent with the purposes of the Alliance's founding document, the Treaty of Washington. And after this, they continue to foist on the international community the myth that NATO is a defence alliance. From whom was the Alliance "defending" itself in 1999 if Yugoslavia was not threatening any of the NATO countries?

For purportedly humanitarian purposes, during a period of 78 days of ruthless bombing of Yugoslavia over 35,000 combat sorties were flown, around 3,000 cruise missiles fired, and 14,000 aerial bombs dropped. The bombing was carried out in flagrant violation of all the principles of international humanitarian law. Cluster bombs and high-explosive aerial bombs were widely used. The messages "Do you still want to be Serbs?" or "Happy Easter!" scrawled by pilots from NATO countries on bombs and missiles were examples of a particularly inhumane mockery of the Serbian people.

Civilian objects were the main targets. In other words, force was used against the civilian population, and what is more – from the air, where the Alliance had the absolute advantage.

As a result, 48 hospitals, 70 schools, 18 kindergartens, 9 colleges, 35 churches and 29 monasteries were destroyed or damaged. In the town of Surdulica in southern Serbia, 600 houses were destroyed as a result of air strikes. A cluster bomb was dropped on a crowded market in the same town. A 27-year-old woman was killed in an attack on a hospital in Niš. She was seven months pregnant.

The television centre in Belgrade was bombed in order to silence any alternative opinion (this tactic was later employed by NATO in Libya). Contrary to all diplomatic norms, even the Chinese embassy was hit. China had spoken out in the UN Security Council against the NATO aggression.

Shells from NATO countries claimed the lives of over 2,000 Serbs, 89 of them children. A passenger train was destroyed near Grdelica during Orthodox Easter (11 April), resulting in the deaths of 14 civilians, including children. On 17 April, three-year-old Milica Rakić was killed in Batanjica, a small town near Belgrade. Cluster bomb shrapnel had struck the girl on the head in the bathroom of her own home. Serbian newspapers wrote at the time that the NATO bombing "had killed an angel". Six years later, a fresco with the image of little Milica appeared at Tvrdoš monastery next to the images of other Serbian martyrs. It bears the inscription: "The new holy martyr thanks to NATO". Is it really possible to forget or forgive this?

Under the cover of the NATO bombing campaign, Kosovo Liberation Army terrorists intensified their ethnic cleansing in Kosovo, expelling over 200,000 Serbs from the province.

Those whom the Alliance volunteered to protect were also dying under the NATO bombardment. For example, 87 villagers were left dead after the bombing of the Albanian village of Koriša (near Prizren) in Kosovo. At the very start of the bombing campaign, 18 infants died in two days at a medical centre in Priština because of a shortage of medicaments for newborn babies. The fact that the Serbian armed forces were practically unaffected by the military campaign, maintaining 90 per cent of their combat capability, testifies to the degree of cynicism shown by the NATO military strategists who planned and carried out the operation.

In Yugoslavia NATO adhered to the "scorched earth" tactics that had been tested during the Vietnam War. I am referring to the US Army's Operation Ranch Hand to destroy jungle in Laos and South Vietnam. I would remind you that such tactics are prohibited by Protocol I Additional to the Geneva Conventions. Depleted uranium ammunition was used during the barbaric bombing of Yugoslavia. As a result, soil and water was contaminated in many areas, which led to a significant increase in oncological diseases.

Civilian infrastructure and the economic and industrial potential of present-day Serbia were deliberately destroyed, including oil refineries and petrochemical plants, storage tanks, roads and railways, energy facilities, and telecommunications. The total material damage caused by NATO's intervention is estimated at 100 billion US dollars.

The most serious consequences for the environment resulted from the bombing of petrochemical facilities and chemical plants in Pančevo, when almost 200 tonnes of toxic tetraethyl lead were released into the environment. The scale of the environmental disaster was augmented by the destruction of the oil refinery in Novi Sad, as a result of which more than 5,300 cubic metres of oil found their way into the Danube. At the Petrohemija petrochemical plant almost 8 tonnes of mercury and its compounds ended up in the soil and groundwater due to the destruction of a processing line for a chlorine production plant. The pollution spread and affected the territory of Serbia's neighbours, including future members of NATO at that time – Hungary, Bulgaria and Romania. We recall that even Hitler did not dare to bomb the chemical plants in the Balkans during the Second World War.

It is perfectly clear today that the declared "humanitarian" goals of the operation were merely a cover. Military action was needed by the Alliance itself, which, by the time of its 50th anniversary, had lost the unifying purpose of its existence – a common enemy. Evidently, there was an urgent need to "seal" the ranks of NATO "with blood" and give impetus to the further expansion of the bloc towards Russia's borders at the expense of the States of the Western Balkans.

Initially, many members of the Alliance had not wanted to be complicit in the crime, but under unprecedented pressure from the United States they were forced to show "Euro-Atlantic solidarity". Only one country refused to take part in the affair. Thousands of pilots, who carried out practical combat training over Serbian towns, were part of the operation in Yugoslavia. In other words, the country was used as a military training ground with live targets in the form of civilians, including women and children. Inexperienced pilots simply practised their craft on people. Ammunition, especially cruise missiles containing depleted uranium that were earmarked for decommissioning needed to be disposed of, and the United States and their allies did this on Serbian soil. There is a Serbian saying "for some it is war, for some it is a brother", which is similar to the Russian saying "for some people war is hell, for others it is a dear mother" (in other words, some people suffer and some people profit).

Thousands of civilians, cynically referred to as "collateral damage", were not the only victims of the US Government and NATO's domination complex. Millions of people in Europe have had their environment contaminated for hundreds of years to come. In addition, an irreparable blow was dealt to the international mechanisms maintaining post-war peace and security in Europe. The very possibility of ensuring collective security through co-operation has been called into question. The course was set for the breakdown of international law and its replacement with some unapproved rules on which order should be based. The gradual legitimization of so-called "humanitarian interventions" and the "exporting of stability", which we have since seen in Iraq, Libya and Syria, had begun.

The NATO operation did not bring peace to the Western Balkans. On the contrary, military support from the Alliance merely helped to strengthen Priština's radical stance, contributing as a result to the current impasse in the negotiations, which threatens a repeated outbreak of violence in the region. No lessons have been learnt from the past. And after this, you call NATO "the most successful alliance in history".

Thank you for your attention.