

Book review

Submitted: 2020-06-07

Published: 2020-07-17

doi:10.5937/nabepo25-26958

**Dalibor Elezović****Uroš Šuvaković****Branko Rakić***NATO aggression in the light of justice*

Kosovska Mitrovica: University of Pristina, Faculty of Philosophy, 2019, 345 p.

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A book entitled “*NATO aggression in the light of justice: conviction of the perpetrators of the NATO aggression on the FRY with accompanying comments*” was published by the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Priština, temporarily relocated to Kosovska Mitrovica, in 2019, on

the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the NATO bombing of the FRY.

The campaign named “Operation Allied Force” began on March 24, 1999. It was a follow up of the failed negotiations in Rambouillet in February 1999 and in Paris in March of the same year. All

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this was preceded by conflicts between the military and police forces of the FRY and the KLA. The operation was unique in many ways because it was the first major use of NATO's armed force in its fifty-year-long history and the first time a force was used to implement the UN Security Council resolution without the approval of that same Council. This campaign is controversial in international relations precisely because the UN Security Council had not given its consent. In a statement from 23 April 1999, NATO stressed that military actions are directed not at the Serbian people but at the policies of the regime in Belgrade and underlined that they would continue their operation until Milošević accepts their demands. Milošević regime did not crack after a "couple of days" as NATO officials expected. The campaign that lasted for 78 days was ended by signing the Military Technical Agreement in Kumanovo on June 9, 1999. According to the agreement, the military and police forces of the FRY were obliged to withdraw from the territory of the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohia within 11 days; a land security zone between Kosovo and the rest of the FRY was established; it was planned that the newly formed KFOR forces disarm the KLA members which was eventually done. A day after the signing of the agreement, the United Nations Security Council adopted Resolution 1244.

The authors of the book, Dalibor Elezović, PhD, Associate Professor at the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Priština, Uroš Šuvaković, PhD, Full Professor at the Teacher Education Faculty, University of Belgrade, and Branko Rakić, PhD, Full Professor at the Faculty of Law, University of Belgrade, prepared judicial documents and wrote the preface and additional texts on marking the anniversary

of NATO bombing on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Considering the publication of monographic editions of critical material as an important contribution to the knowledge of scientific truth, the authors presented to the readers the Verdict of the District Court in Belgrade K. No. 381/2000 from September 21, 2000, by which the leaders of the member states of the North Atlantic Alliance and the leaders of NATO itself were sentenced to 20 years in prison each for crimes committed during the NATO aggression on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The Decision of the Supreme Court of Serbia Kž I 696/01 from July 31, 2001, on revoking that Verdict and returning for retrial is also published, as well as the following three decisions of the District Court in Belgrade: The Decision K. No. 449/2001 Kv. 1772/01 from September 10, 2001, on termination of detention and revocation of the order for issuing a warrant, the Decision K. No. 449/2001 Kv. 1788/01 from September 12, 2001 on suspending the proceedings due to the withdrawal of the District Public Prosecutor in Belgrade from the indictment, and the Decision K. No. 449/2001 Kv. 1819/01 from September 17, 2001, on actual incompetence for the criminal offense of violation of the territorial sovereignty of the state.

By publishing these documents, the authors wanted to present an authentic historical source primarily to the scientific public in order to refute the thesis that it is not known how many people were killed, how many were injured, what was destroyed, etc. Since the Verdict was passed at the time when all the data had not been summarized yet, the listed data are minimalistic, but precise and exact. The conclusion that the listed data are correct stems from the fact that from 2000 until today no one has disputed the facts stated in the Verdict, but



it has been revoked for formal reasons. Bearing in mind the fate of the archives in Serbia, both due to the negligent attitude towards the preservation of historical documents and the lack of understanding of their value as a guardian of memories, and due to the devastation committed by the enemy in our country during the two world wars, the significance of publishing historical sources is crystal clear. In addition, instead of interpreting the documents, where even if it comes from the scientific community, the danger of subjectivism has not been completely eliminated, it gives everyone the opportunity to draw their own conclusions about the relevant events by directly inspecting the documents.

As it is usual for this type of scientific publication, each author wrote a chapter in which he commented the Verdict from the aspect of the science and the profession he deals with – historical, socio-political and international law. Professor Dalibor Elezović pointed out the impor-

tance of the Verdict as an immediate, i.e. first-class historical source for studying the NATO aggression on the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in 1999. Professor Uroš Šuvaković writes about the significance of the Verdict in the context of the immutability of the facts presented in it, which cannot be changed even under the influence of political circumstances, i.e. at the request of the authorities. Finally, Professor Rakić comments on the Verdict through the prism of international public law, focusing on the crime of aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in a situation where justice has failed.

Recommending this book both to the scientific and professional community, as well as to the public in general, we join the authors' hope that the published Verdict will encourage critical consideration of crimes committed during the NATO aggression and the application of justice on its perpetrators instead of gathering dust in the court depot.



