

Never Forget! 1999-2024. “From Aggression to a New, Fairer World Order”. Belgrade International Conference

Interview with Zivadin Jovanovic, President of the Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals

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24 March 2024 marked the 25th anniversary of the start of the NATO war against the former Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY). To mark the occasion, the Belgrade Forum and other organisations organised a major international conference under your leadership.

Current Concerns (CC): What were the most important results for you?

Živadin Jovanović (ZJ): We are really proud that about 200 friends from all the continents have gathered in Belgrade to once again condemn the illegal 1999 military aggression of NATO on Yugoslavia and pay their respects to more than 4,000 killed people including children. Participants of the Conference have sent strong appeal for ending of ongoing wars and defuse escalation before the whole humanity is absorbed into global nuclear conflict. In my opinion the most important result is Conference's appeal to the world leaders to start strategic dialogue on stopping the conflicts and massive killings of people, concentrate on the roots and causes of ongoing wars. The other result is strong support to the new inclusive World Order based on sovereign equality of all countries and non-interference in internal affairs. This position is paired with firm opposition to the policy of expansion, domination and neo-colonialism. Our friends came from different cultures, races, religions, ideologies,

even from different civilisations, but there were no difficulties in reaching mutual understanding and consensus about the issues which were discussed.

CC: Numerous foreign guests from all continents of the world took part or delivered lectures at the conference. What does their participation in your conference mean for Serbia and your concerns?

ZJ: It means a lot. NATO armed aggression ended 25 years ago, but aggression by other means of political, economic, financial and propaganda character – continued throughout this period and since recently have been even intensified. Using UNSC's mandate, NATO practically keeps Serbian province of Kosovo and Metohija under occupation. Using the EU, international financial organisations, mass-media and other instruments, leading NATO member countries – USA, GB, Germany and France – exert tremendous pressures, to oblige Serbia to recognize illegal, unilateral secession of its autonomous province of Kosovo and Metohija. They want to create another Albanian state beside Albania itself, unite them in so called Greater Albania, thus expanding NATO. It is quite clear that behind rhetoric of defending democracy and human rights, stands NATO strategy of expansion. So, the participants of the Belgrade Conference have expressed their support and solidarity to Serbia to resist continued aggression, stay independent, neutral and pursue defending own sovereignty and territorial integrity based on the UN Charter, OSCE Helsinki Final Document, particularly, on the UN SC resolution 1244 (1999). Law, truth and justice make firm common ground.

CC: We had the impression that your conference was more strongly supported by official Serbia than ever before in the past 25 years. Is this the case? How can this be explained and what does this support mean for the work of the Belgrade Forum?

ZJ: Openness has been and remains one of the basic principles of the Belgrade Forum for a World of Equals as independent, non- profit, non-partisan, voluntary association. Forum always keeps the public and the state institutions informed of our work and views on essential national and international issues. We are very satisfied that this time three Government ministers – defense Miloš Vučević, interior Bratislav Gašić and employment Nikola Selaković – have participated at our conference.

One of them Mr. Milos Vucevic, in the meantime, has been nominated to be next Prime minister of Serbia.

Some 15 years ago even the local government would hardly notice that the Belgrade Forum exists. We are satisfied with positive evolution showing that the present Government values what we have been doing over the past 25 years. Our program centered on truth, justice and morality, our principles of voluntary engagement, equality, freedom and independence, as well as our worldwide friendship with so many organizations and renown persons, I believe, will be even better valued.

CC: What support does your conference have among the Serbian population?

ZJ: I think the Conference and the whole program of commemorative events – exhibitions, international review of the documentary films, international memorial marathon Belgrade Thessaloniki and other activities – have been widely supported in the public of Serbia.

Similar commemoration events have been taking place all over the country. Belgrade Forum has been pioneer of these activities from the time when previous governments would not dare to pronounce "NATO aggression". Members of our associations – Belgrade Forum, Serbian Generals and Admirals Club, Veterans Association SUBNOR and others – have been invited to public meetings, to holding lectures at schools and universities, talking on radio and TV stations. Serbian Diaspora all over the world has also been organising commemorations recalling thousands of innocent victims of NATO aggression. These activities will, most likely, continue, probably, until the end of the year.

In general, we stick to the principle – do what you think is right to do for your country and people, do it the best way you can and do not feel discouraged if it is not sufficient to meet all the needs. Also, doing this do not harm anybody else, always respect equality.

CC: What was the feedback from the participants of the conference from abroad? Is there an international echo?

ZJ: First, it is noteworthy to remind that many of our friends and associations all over the world, particularly in Europe, have been organising commemorative events of their own. Some of them came to Belgrade first, and then returned to their capitals to carry on own programs.

The feedback has been so far very positive. Our friends have been expressing their satisfaction with the framework of the Conference "From Aggression to a New, Fairer World Order", by democratic atmosphere, by what they have learned from the others and by constructive, principled content of the Belgrade Declaration. To many of participants Belgrade Conference looked like the world assembly of independent academicians, concentrated to identify the roots of the ongoing conflicts, of the looming danger of global catastrophe and to shed the light on the way out of the present European and global situation. The most of them were happy to have had opportunity to strengthen old friendships and establish new ones. Many of our guests had the possibility to pass their messages and ideas to Belgrade based national and international mass media, many of the domestic organisers to pass their views to the foreign mass media. We are still receiving comments, letters of thanks, gathering articles, interviews from China to Portugal and from Tierra del Fuego to Petersburg. I think the main, general, feedback that we keep getting is the will and readiness of all to engage in building peace, equality and prosperity for everybody, to avoid catastrophe of humanity.

CC: What plans do you have for the future?

ZJ: We plan to publish several books, including collection of speeches from the recent International Conference. We will continue projects on bibliography and collection of the books and publications on NATO aggression in as many languages as possible. Conferences, round tables, seminars for young researchers, international exchange will also be on our agenda.

Generally, we follow developments; make our assessments and try to find the way to air our views. We pay particular attention to strengthen cooperation with our partner associations from all the continents.

We are very happy with our decades long, fruitful cooperation with “Mut zur Ethik” which we will continue to mutual benefit.

CC: Thank You for this interview.

The Global Majority Opts for Multipolarity and an Inclusive World Order

Speech of Živadin Jovanović at the International Conference “From Aggression to a New, Fairer World Order”, held on the occasion of the 25th anniversary of NATO's armed aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) (excerpt)



Thank you all for responding to the invitation to attend the International Conference whose theme is “From Aggression to a New, Fairer World Order” and other events of the program marking the 25th anniversary of the beginning of NATO's armed aggression against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. We are extremely honoured and grateful to all our friends who, by their presence here, express their solidarity with Serbia and the Serbian people, as they have done all the past decades. This gives us strength and strengthens the belief that we are on the right path, both in the defence of our legitimate interests and in the fight for peace, equality and a fairer European and world order.

Today we are gathered here in a kind of global people's assembly, with friends from all parts of the world. We belong to different nations, religions, political orientations and civilisations, but we are united in honouring the human victims of a rampaging power, in condemning NATO's aggression and its expansionism. At the same time, we are united in our efforts to contribute to peace, freedom and progress for all countries and peoples. We are here also because we preserve the truth, strengthen the value of law and justice, and to search for a more humane and safer future for everyone.

Today we pay tribute to the defenders of a freedom-loving and independent country that was attacked even though it did not pose a danger to any other country, least of all NATO members. Armed aggression ended two and a half decades ago, but its initiators continue it by other means until today. That is why we condemn all forms of aggression and say that we will resolutely oppose it, regardless of the “tools” that are used.

The people of Serbia will not and cannot forget the human sacrifices and suffering for which the aggressor is responsible. The crimes committed against the Serbian people must never and anywhere be repeated. Peace, equal security, equal cooperation and progress are our universal right and we do not allow anyone to trample on or steal that right from us. Our aspirations are aimed at building a new world order centered on people, their equality, security and progress. We are committed to an order of freedom, understanding and openness without imposing other people's interests, values and understandings. We ask that historical, cultural and spiritual specificities be respected, that differences be treated as wealth and not as an occasion for new divisions, confrontation and wars. We are fighting for a new, more original order based on the universal principles of equality, coexistence and non-interference in internal affairs.

The global majority of humanity does not accept an order based on force, privileges and "rules" in the interests of the minority. The time has passed when it was possible for a minority to mask its hegemony and neo-colonialism with the garb of democracy and human rights, to impose it on the global majority through aggression and colour revolutions. The trap of division into "democracies" and "autocracies" does not pass. The global majority opts for multipolarity and an inclusive world order in which the interests of humanity and not the interests of the "golden billion" are at the centre.

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Featured image: "May the memory of the victims of aggression, consequences thereof, and our struggle, light up the way ahead of us so to help us follow the footsteps of our ancestors with dignity." from the foreword by Aleksander Skakić in "1999-2024 - We remember ..." (picture Media Center "Odbrana", 2024)

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