

# Workers at Serb car plant bombed by NATO make appeal to world public

13 April 1999

*The World Socialist Web Site received the following message from workers and management at the Zastava factory in Kragujevac, Serbia (located 55 miles south of Belgrade). The Zastava factory was struck by NATO forces late Thursday and early Friday last week. The workers had formed a human shield around the plant to attempt to prevent such an attack; 124 were injured. The plant was hit by NATO again on Monday.*

To the public of all NATO member countries:

Tonight, the 9th of April, the Zastava factory plants in Kragujevac were bombed. The live shield was broken through. This bombardment has inflicted severe damage to factory equipment and almost completely destroyed the energy supply complex that served not only the Zastava factory, but also the heating needs of the entire city of Kragujevac: its residential houses, schools, faculties, hospitals...

We were horror-stricken to see the civilian victims: tens of men had formed a live shield that was safeguarding the factory plants. Among the victims were not only the Zastava workers, but also members of their families and other citizens of the city of Kragujevac. What none of us could assume possible did happen: Kragujevac has re-experienced its WW II tragedy; its citizens have again become the target of a barbarian assault. In the name of what aims did war planes take off from once friendly countries which used to send us the ideas of humanness, freedom, maybe the greatest treasure that we have in the modern civilization? What has happened to all those ideas and have they been just an illusion that dispersed at the first sound of raised arms? We, the small people, that have looked with admiration at all the great things coming from you, could not, or did not, want to accept that this was so. Have we been mistaken?

Has any one from among you given a thought to our future and the future of our children that has become

entirely uncertain due to this insane act. Precisely this future we have been defending at the price of our own lives. Already exhausted by sanctions that have reduced our average monthly salary from DM 870 to DM 5-60, knowing that a destruction of the factory would call into the question the very existence of ourselves and our families, we have made a desperate move: with our bodies we have made a live shield that has been guarding our factory night-and-day. We have been resolute, since the very onset of the attack on our country, and persisted in the realization of that decision every day, not to leave our plants after the expiration of the working hours, not even when the alarms would sound air strikes, thus staying round the clock by our workplaces. By night our family members and citizens of Kragujevac were visiting us, giving us support and making these moments of painful suspense easier. In order to prevent a horrendous catastrophe that may arise due to an insane act of attack on our factory, through the media, we have addressed the local and world public, giving the precise co-ordinates of the factory, and pointing at the potential losses, spiritual and material, that may be inflicted by its destruction. In our addressees we appealed to the public of NATO member countries, to the conscience of the common men in those countries. Our appeal was published and broadcast by numerous local and foreign media: TV networks and news houses.

We, the Zastava workers and citizens of Kragujevac, are afraid of the future standing in front of us. Now we wonder whether we have any future at all. Our children are hungry, and their eyes filled with horror. We have no more answers to their questions.

Kragujevac, 9th April 1999

Employees and management of "Zastava" and citizens of Kragujevac



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