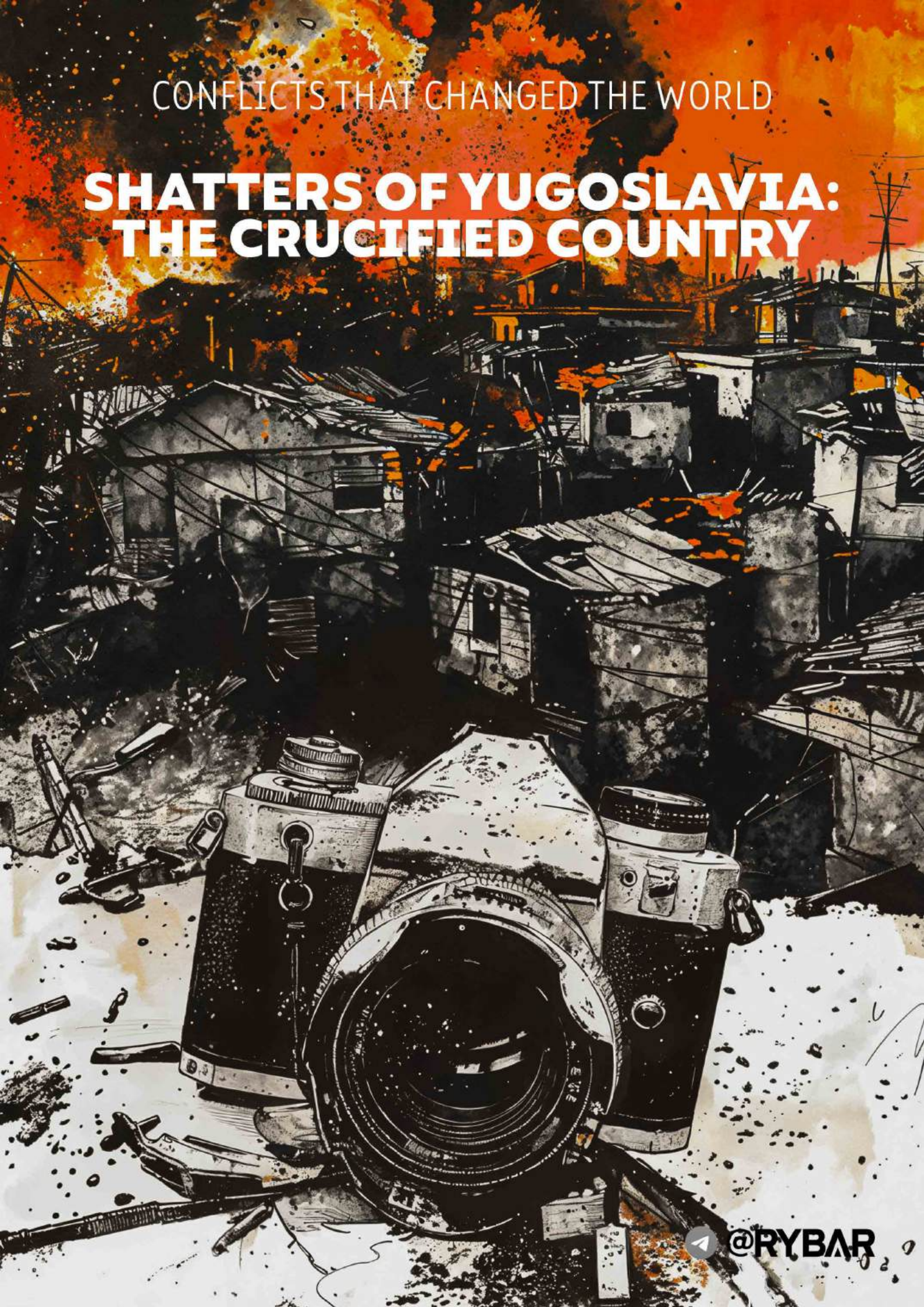


CONFLICTS THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

SHATTERS OF YUGOSLAVIA: THE CRUCIFIED COUNTRY

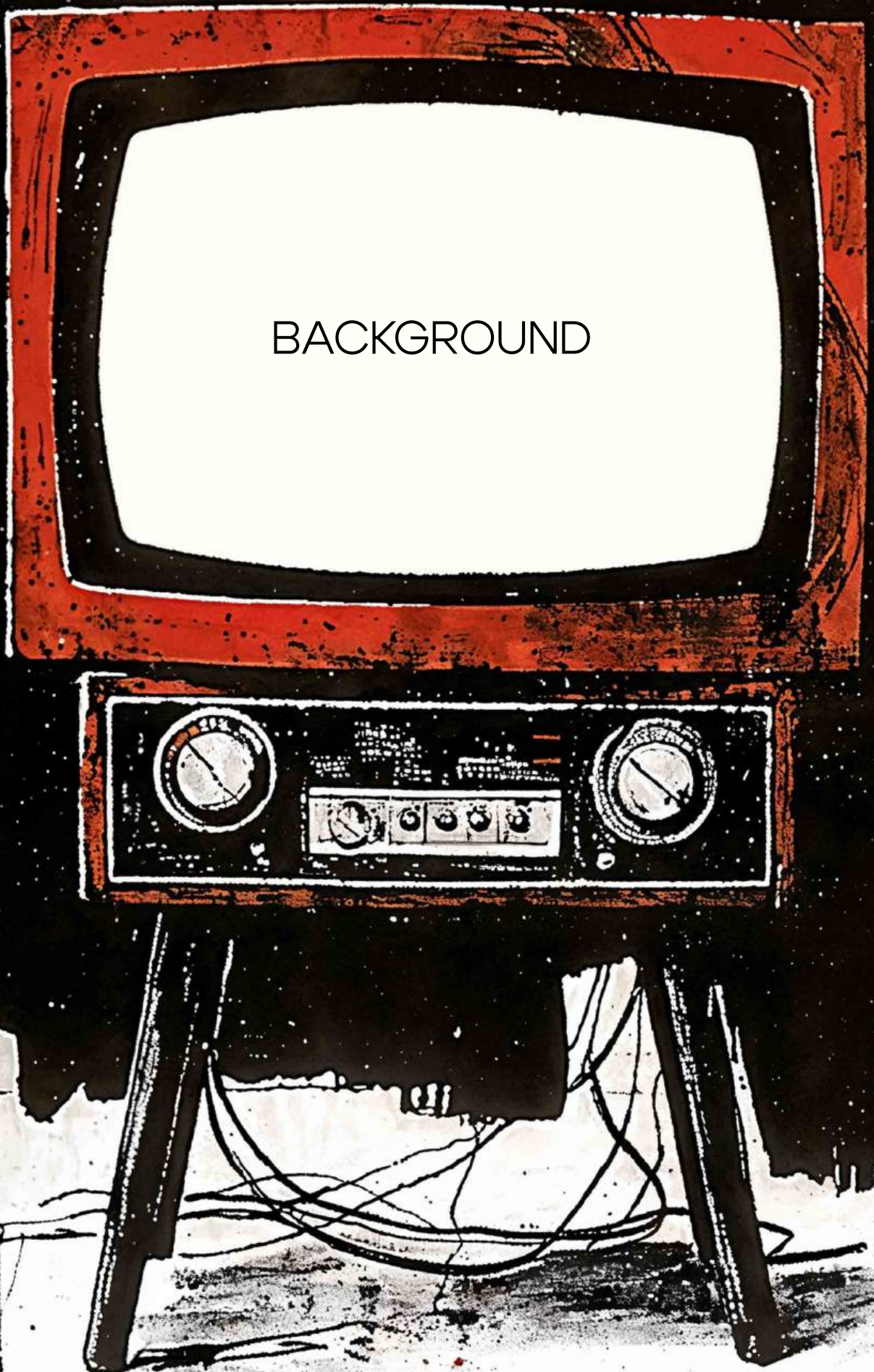


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BACKGROUND

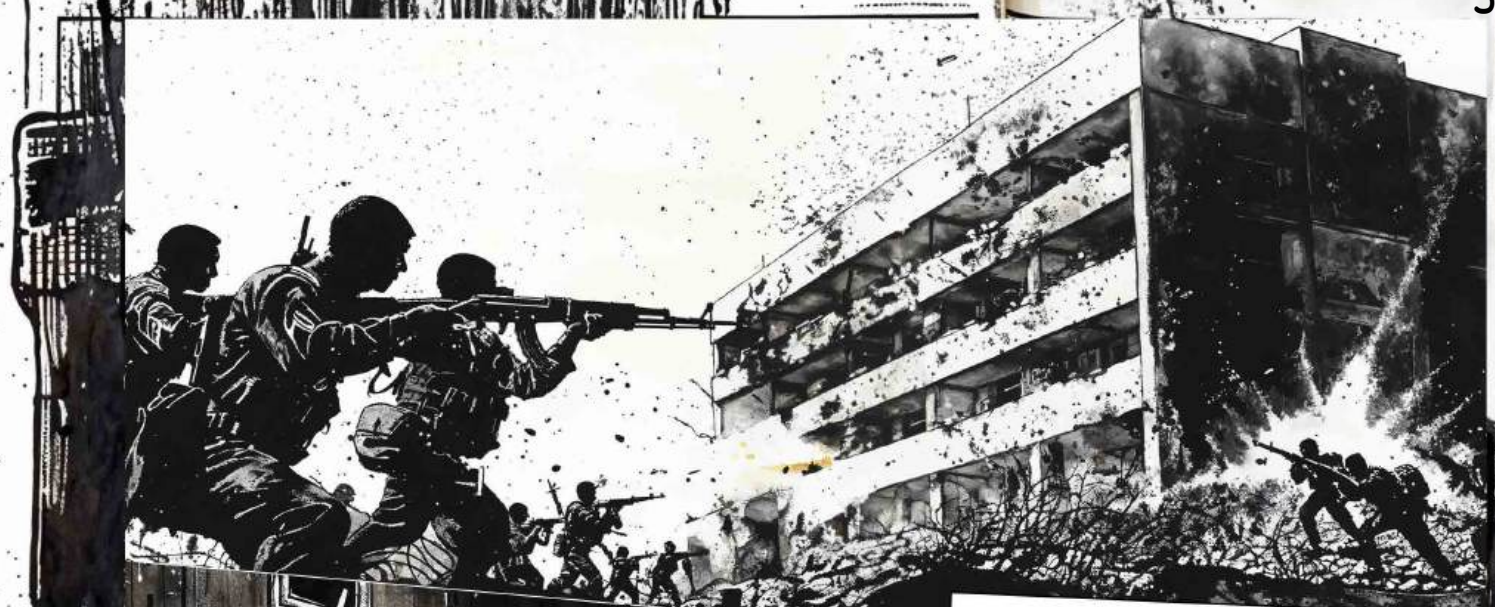




It all started in Kosovo. This place is the origin of Serbian statehood, a national sanctuary. The first monasteries were built there, the Serbs fought the Turkish invaders there, and the legend of the wild peony was born there, with flowers blooming where Serbian blood was spilled. It was this territory that started being settled by Albanians. Initially, it was gradual, little by little, on their own initiative, but as the 20th century approached, it became more active and with considerable outside help. After some time, conflicts between Albanians and the local Serbian population in Kosovo inevitably arose, and the first "harbingers" of separatism appeared.

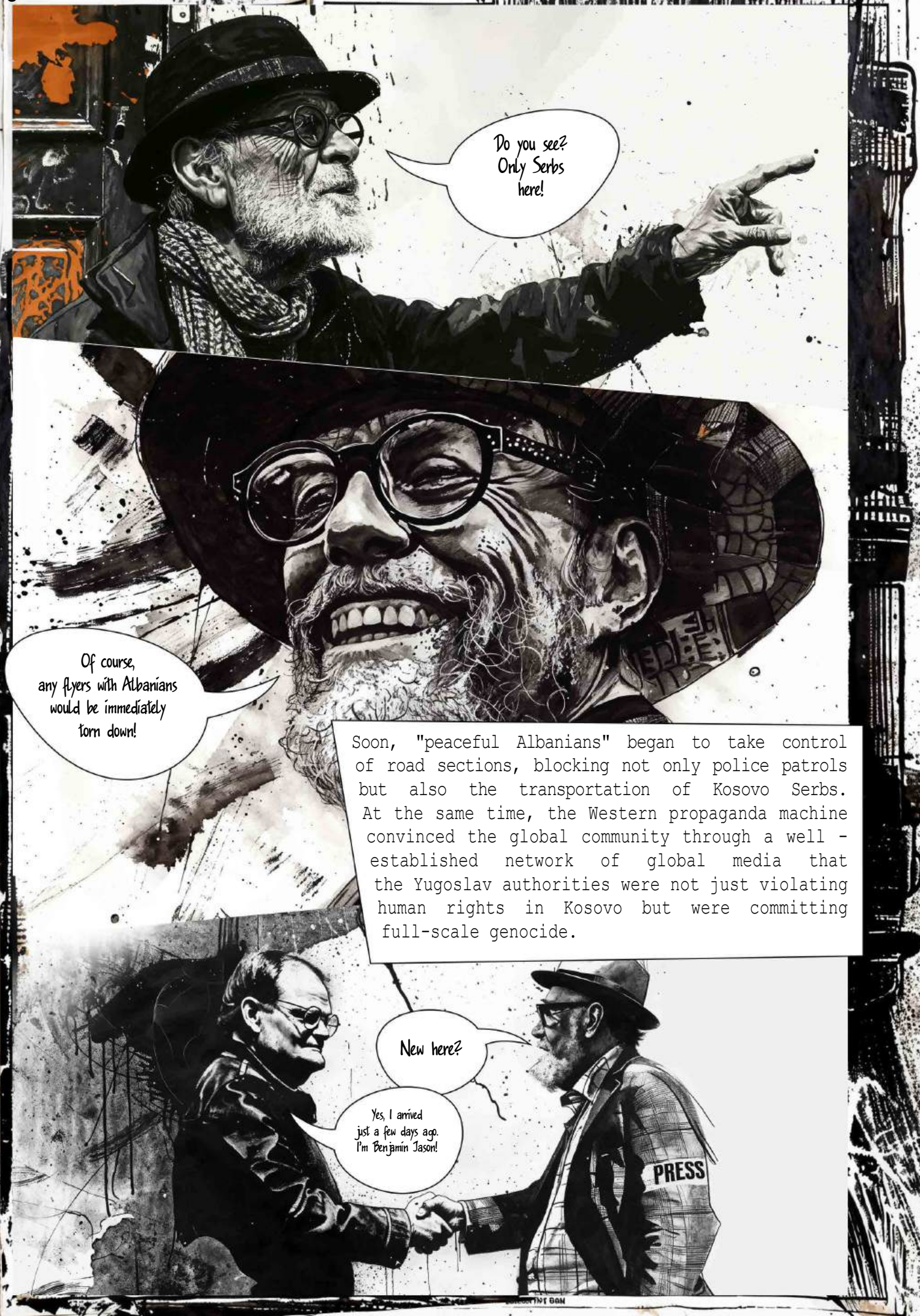


Yugoslav politicians, especially Slobodan Milošević, who came to power as a protector of the Kosovo Serbs, took measures to keep Kosovo within the country. However, things were getting worse: despite the limited autonomous rights of the region, they held their own "alternative elections," formed a "government in exile," and then the "Kosovo Liberation Army" (KLA) emerged.



When armed Albanians started attacking Serbian police patrols, Serbs responded with "cleansings" in Kosovo's settlements. People were disappearing and dying on both sides, and Western media reported all cases of Albanian deaths as civilian casualties. Somehow, these civilians managed to engage in fierce battles with the police using automatic weapons and grenades. The KLA benefited from the practice of placing their headquarters in villages. From there, leaders directed terrorist operations and armed the local population while blending in with civilians and disguising themselves as them. So, it was extremely difficult for Serbian police forces to distinguish between civilians and fighters.





Do you see?
Only Serbs
here!

Of course,
any flyers with Albanians
would be immediately
torn down!

Soon, "peaceful Albanians" began to take control of road sections, blocking not only police patrols but also the transportation of Kosovo Serbs. At the same time, the Western propaganda machine convinced the global community through a well-established network of global media that the Yugoslav authorities were not just violating human rights in Kosovo but were committing full-scale genocide.

New here?

Yes, I arrived
just a few days ago.
I'm Benjamin Jason!

PRESS

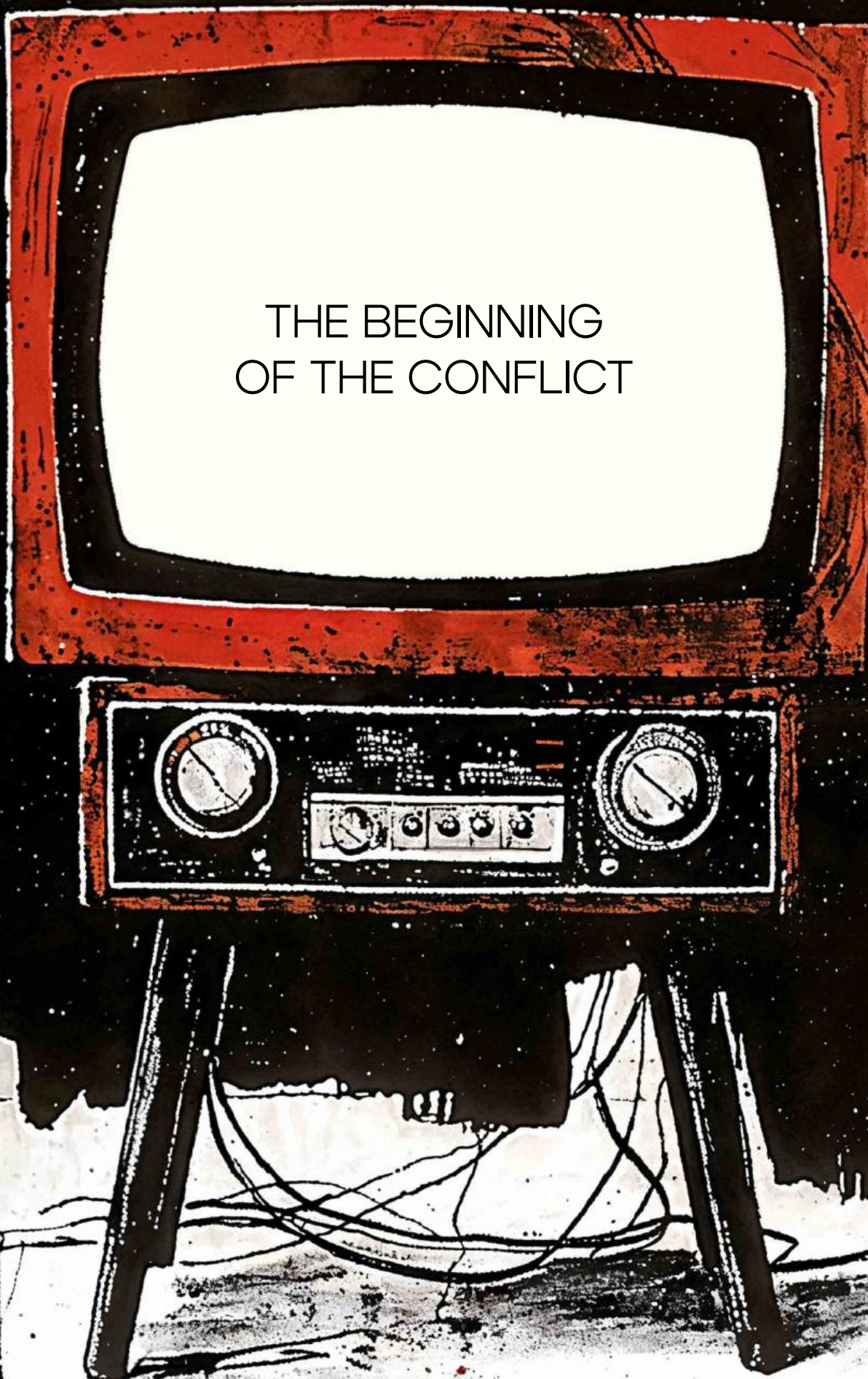


I assure you,
Mr Clark....

As a result, the military-police presence in the region was "balanced" by a mission imposed on the Yugoslav authorities by the OSCE, led by an American diplomat and general, William Walker. The head of the mission immediately continued the line of US Secretary of State Richard Holbrooke: he engaged in contacts with KLA commanders and even went further, ensuring the personal safety of armed separatist leaders.

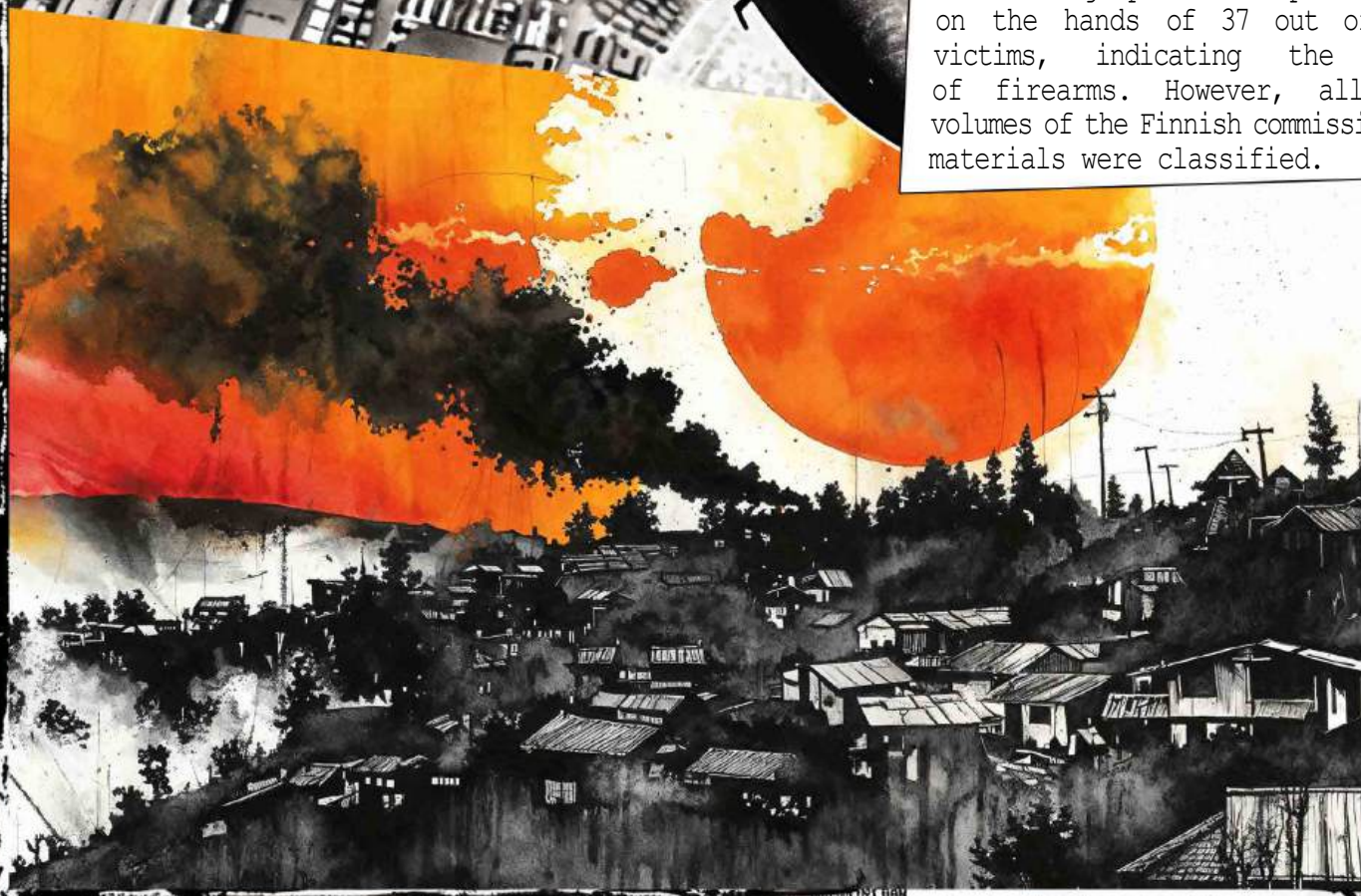
OSCE observers under the competent control of General Walker noted all locations of the Yugoslav army in Kosovo. There is a version that they set up locators there—for the convenience of targeting NATO cruise missiles. However, back in the autumn of 1998, Milošević and Holbrooke reached an agreement on reconnaissance flights by NATO aircraft over Yugoslav territory, so there was no shortage of information for the Alliance when planning the operation.

THE BEGINNING
OF THE CONFLICT





The formal start of the conflict was marked by the incident in the Kosovo village of Racak in the municipality of Stimlje on January 15, 1999: thanks to Walker's efforts, news spread around the world about the shooting of 45 unarmed civilians by the Serbian police (although OSCE verifiers found 40 bodies). Yugoslav authorities insisted on the arrival of a commission of independent pathologists from Finland. The goal was to confirm or refute the findings of Serbian and Belarusian experts, who had found gunpowder particles on the hands of 37 out of 40 victims, indicating the use of firearms. However, all 20 volumes of the Finnish commission's materials were classified.





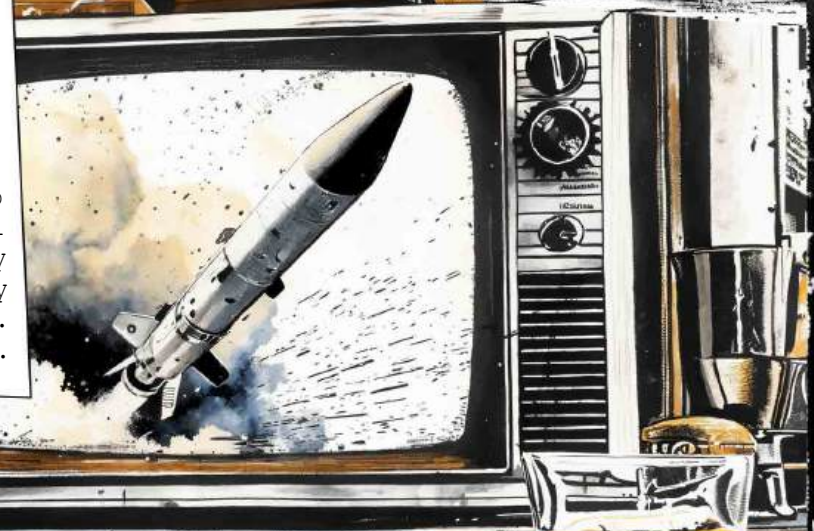
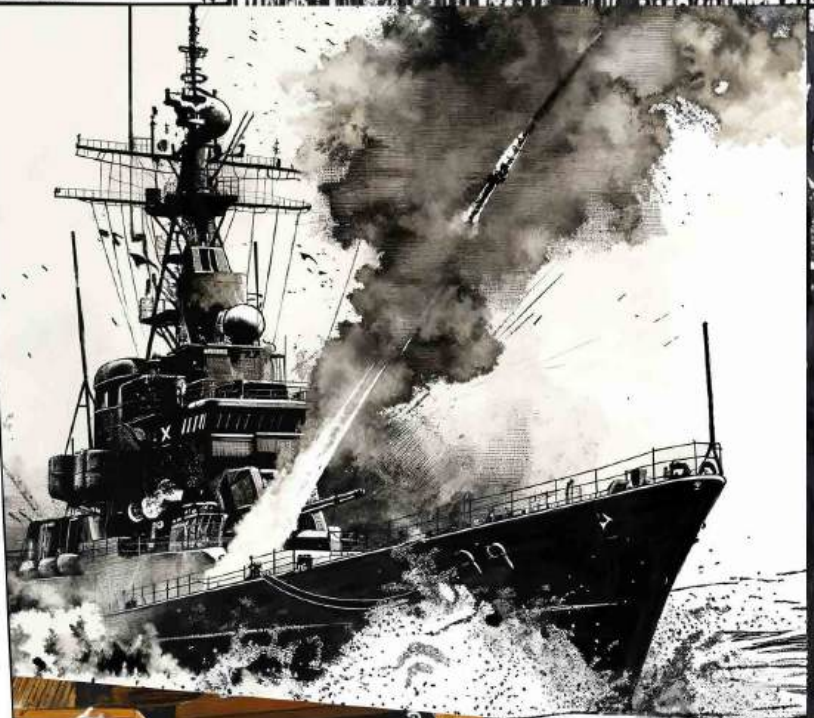
The OSCE mission was evacuated in March 1999, which, combined with the refusal of the President of Yugoslavia to withdraw troops from Kosovo, indicated to everyone who was closely following the situation that an armed invasion by the Alliance was inevitable. Indeed, on March 24, bombers flew for the first time from the Italian base of Aviano. Thus began NATO's aggression against Yugoslavia.



A cruise missile hit a chemical warehouse, we closed the windows...

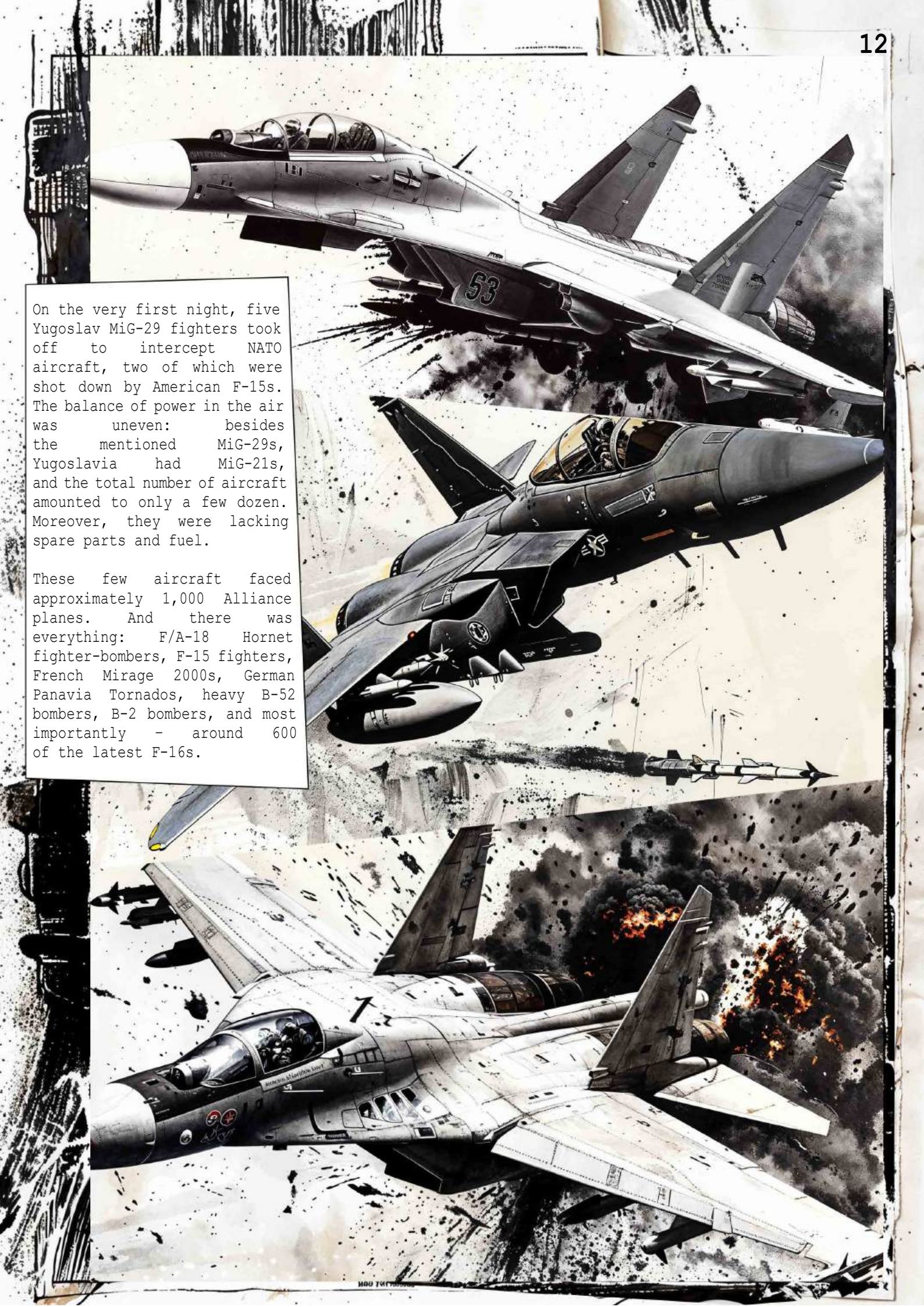
The initial actions of the Alliance were aimed at gaining air superiority, with the goal of suppressing Yugoslavia's air defenses and destroying as many of the country's aircraft as possible. The essence of the operation was not to land, as this would result in casualties among the military contingent and could turn the NATO population against the conflict. Thus, everything was done to conduct the operation from a relatively safe distance, launching cruise missiles from aircraft in the air and from ship decks. On the very first night, it was planned to hit no less than 60 targets on Yugoslav territory.

In addition to military facilities such as airfields, bases, headquarters, and barracks of the Yugoslav army, NATO aviation and naval forces targeted oil refineries (there were two: in Pančevo near Belgrade and in the city of Novi Sad), fuel depots, and factories (any kind, regardless of whether they produced weapons or electric stoves). Soon, this list expanded significantly.



Oil Bases -
A Legitimate
Military Target!





On the very first night, five Yugoslav MiG-29 fighters took off to intercept NATO aircraft, two of which were shot down by American F-15s. The balance of power in the air was uneven: besides the mentioned MiG-29s, Yugoslavia had MiG-21s, and the total number of aircraft amounted to only a few dozen. Moreover, they were lacking spare parts and fuel.

These few aircraft faced approximately 1,000 Alliance planes. And there was everything: F/A-18 Hornet fighter-bombers, F-15 fighters, French Mirage 2000s, German Panavia Tornados, heavy B-52 bombers, B-2 bombers, and most importantly - around 600 of the latest F-16s.

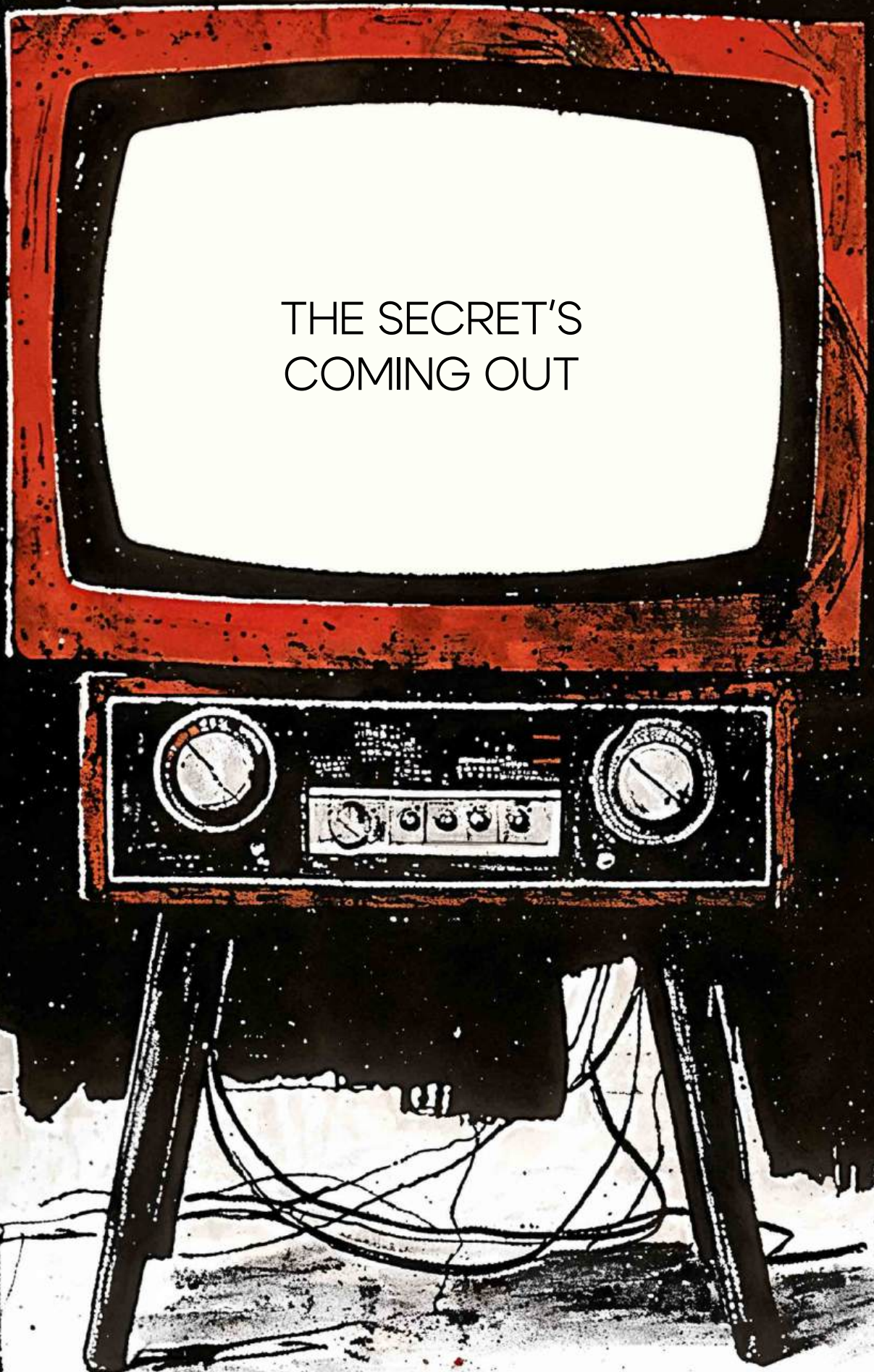
Strikes on fuel depots could cause severe fires: for instance, when destroying a fuel depot in Lipovica, the fire spread to the forest.

Unfortunately, such things happen; it's an accident...

And it's been happening more and more often.



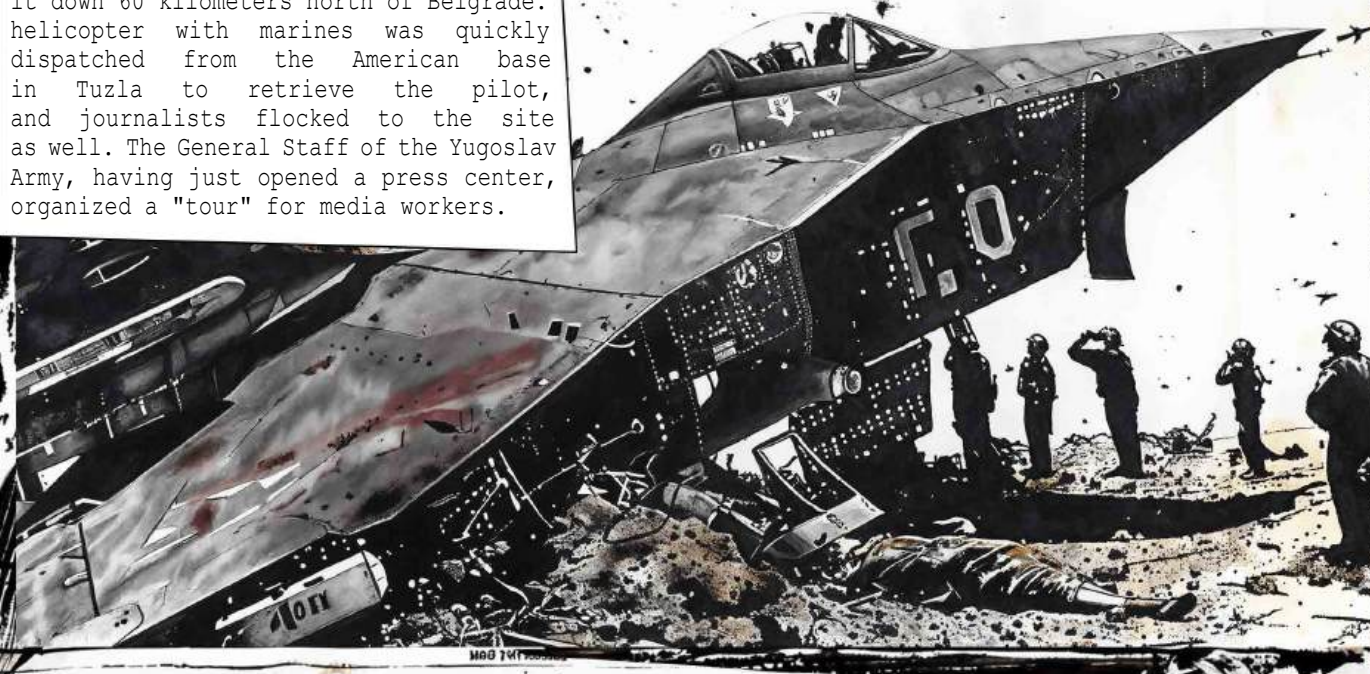
THE SECRET'S
COMING OUT





The NATO air force had its own "ace in the hole": the cutting-edge F-117A stealth bombers, which used stealth technology to evade radar detection. However, as it turned out, this was only temporary: Yugoslavia's air defense consisted of 16 units equipped mainly with Soviet-made anti-aircraft systems and missiles, such as the Kub and S-125 "Neva" from the 1970s.

Ironically, it was with such a missile system that the Serbs managed to shoot down a stealth aircraft on March 27, 1999. The missile troops stationed in Vojvodina brought it down 60 kilometers north of Belgrade. A helicopter with marines was quickly dispatched from the American base in Tuzla to retrieve the pilot, and journalists flocked to the site as well. The General Staff of the Yugoslav Army, having just opened a press center, organized a "tour" for media workers.





The journalists were loaded onto a bus and, accompanied by military vehicles, were taken to the site of Serbian military glory - the outskirts of the village of Buchanovci. There, they brought in an F-117A wing with the recognizable American star using a tractor. Hearing that all other wreckage was about two kilometers away, eager reporters rushed there with their equipment but were stopped and returned under the guard of automatic riflemen.

Consider that you are risking Americans might carry out a rocket strike on the place to burn the wreckage!

They won't shoot at journalists!

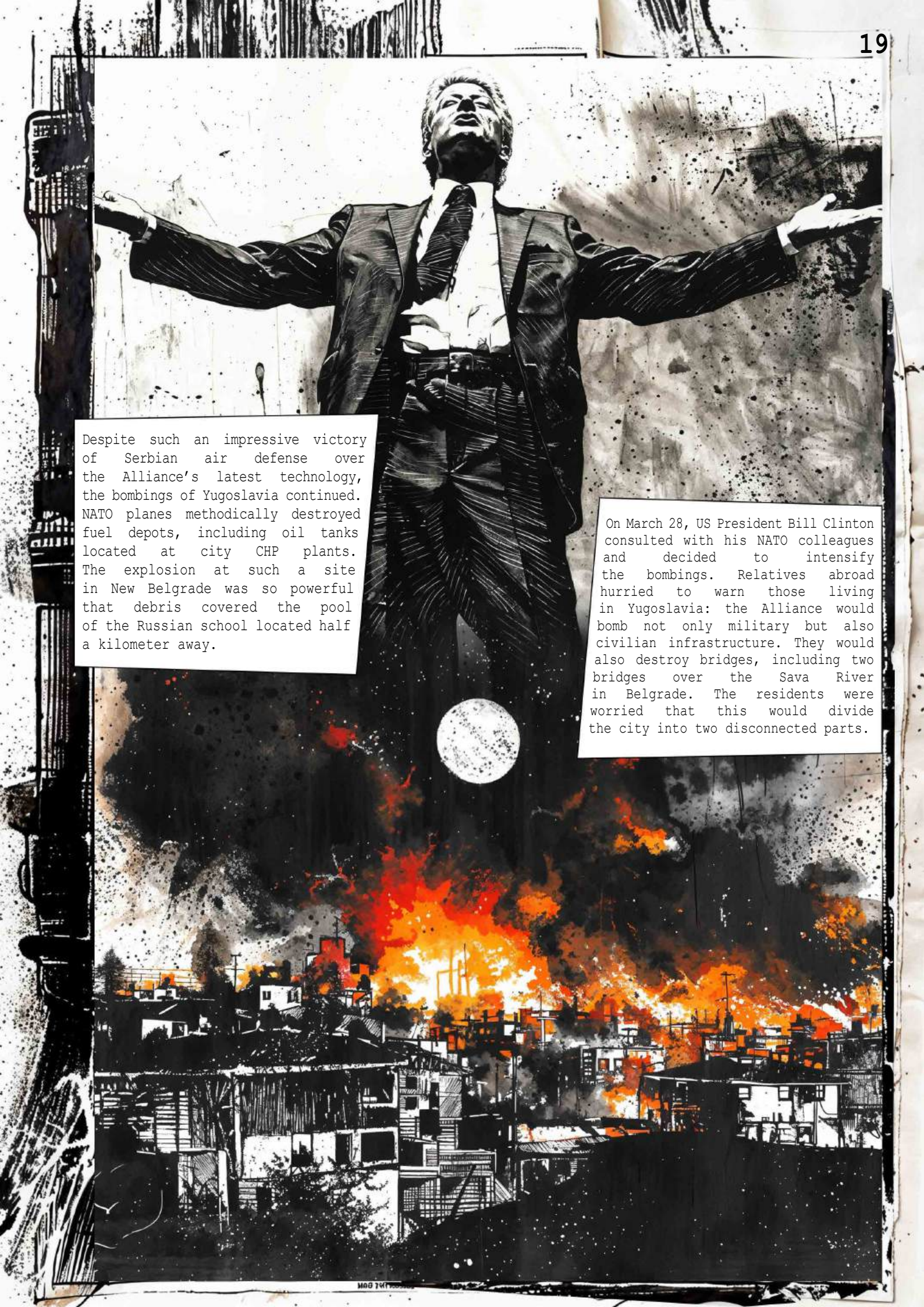
Huh!



Local peasants, who had witnessed the fiery show of anti-aircraft guns and the plane's crash, were happy to share details and treated everyone to rakia. Western journalists grimaced but drank. They remained in Yugoslavia despite the threat of expulsion of media representatives from countries with which Yugoslavia had severed diplomatic relations, namely the USA, the UK, Germany, and France. Fortunately, Vice Prime Minister Vuk Draskovic understood the importance of broadly covering the aggression against Yugoslavia, and the General Staff continued issuing accreditations to foreign journalists.



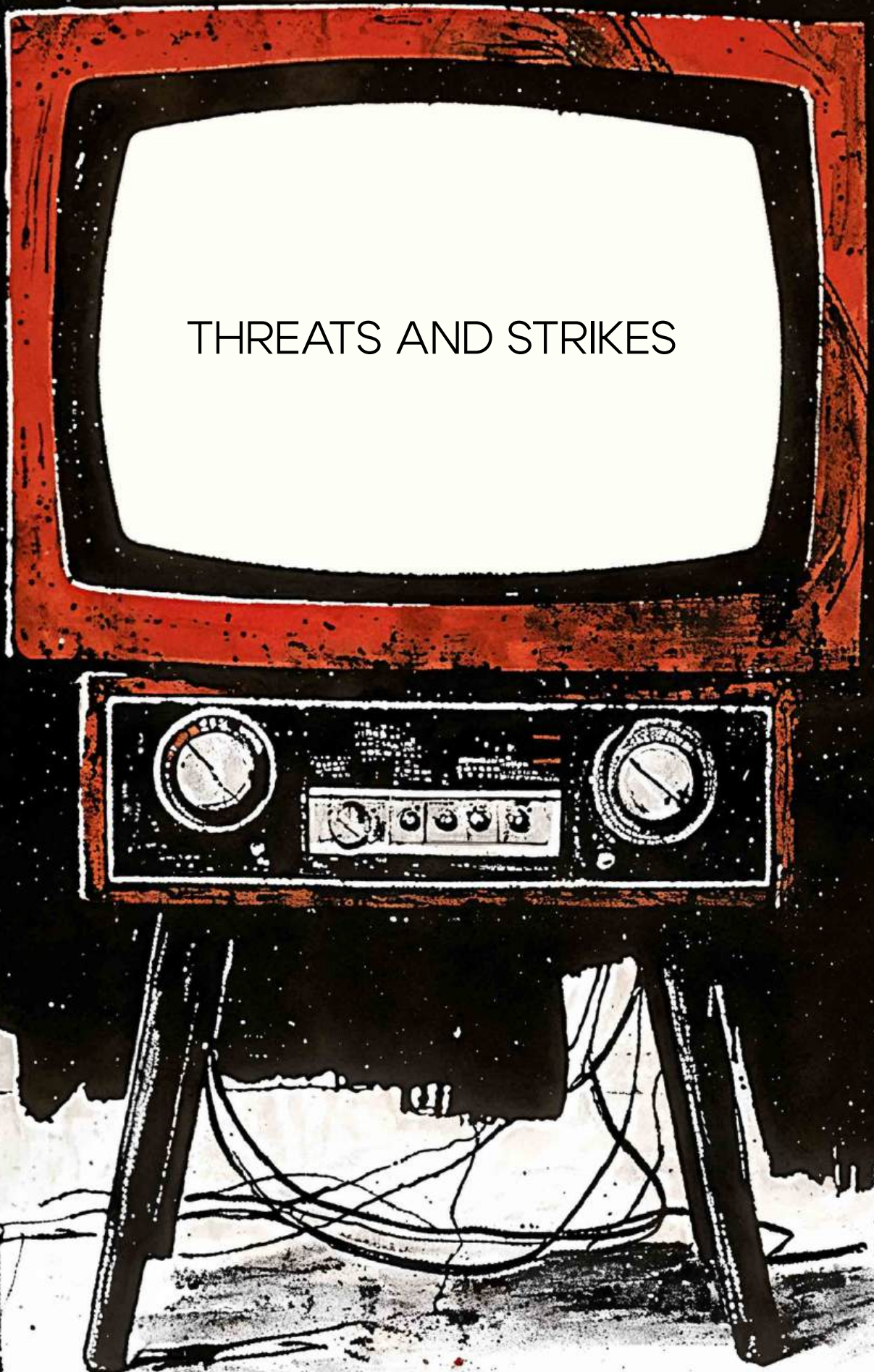




Despite such an impressive victory of Serbian air defense over the Alliance's latest technology, the bombings of Yugoslavia continued. NATO planes methodically destroyed fuel depots, including oil tanks located at city CHP plants. The explosion at such a site in New Belgrade was so powerful that debris covered the pool of the Russian school located half a kilometer away.

On March 28, US President Bill Clinton consulted with his NATO colleagues and decided to intensify the bombings. Relatives abroad hurried to warn those living in Yugoslavia: the Alliance would bomb not only military but also civilian infrastructure. They would also destroy bridges, including two bridges over the Sava River in Belgrade. The residents were worried that this would divide the city into two disconnected parts.

THREATS AND STRIKES





At one of the automobile factories, the thousands-strong workforce refused to leave their shifts, thinking they could serve as a human shield.

Their wives joined them, keeping watch at night...

The factory was a legitimate target if it produced weapons or ammunition, but if it was not related to the defense industry, they were surely safe!

Try telling that to the workers at the household electrical appliance factory in Cacak!

It was recently bombed.

The list of NATO missile targets grew quickly: it included the Sloboda factory in Cacak, which produced household electrical appliances – like electric stoves. The strikes, which were not one-time but systematically repeated, turned numerous workshops into smoking ruins.

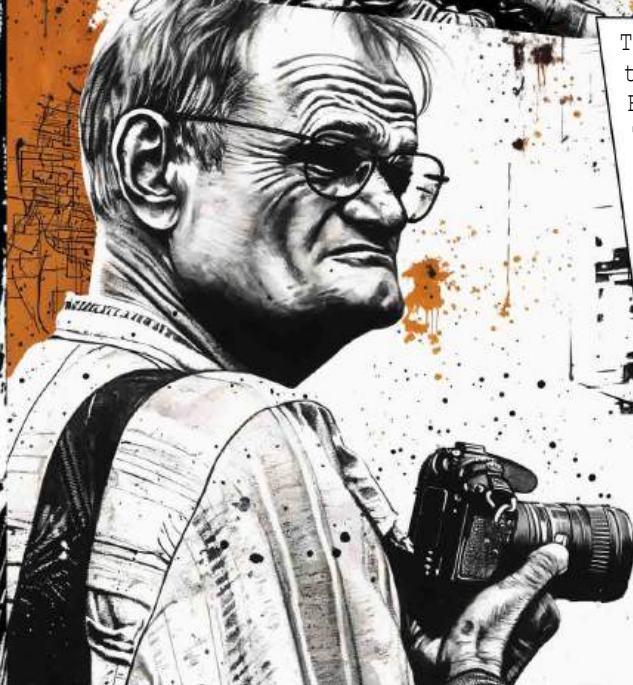
Workers were killed or wounded, and the survivors were left in a small town without jobs. 5,000 people lost their livelihoods. Besides the factory, the local middle school, city hospital, fire station, and homes of civilians were destroyed.

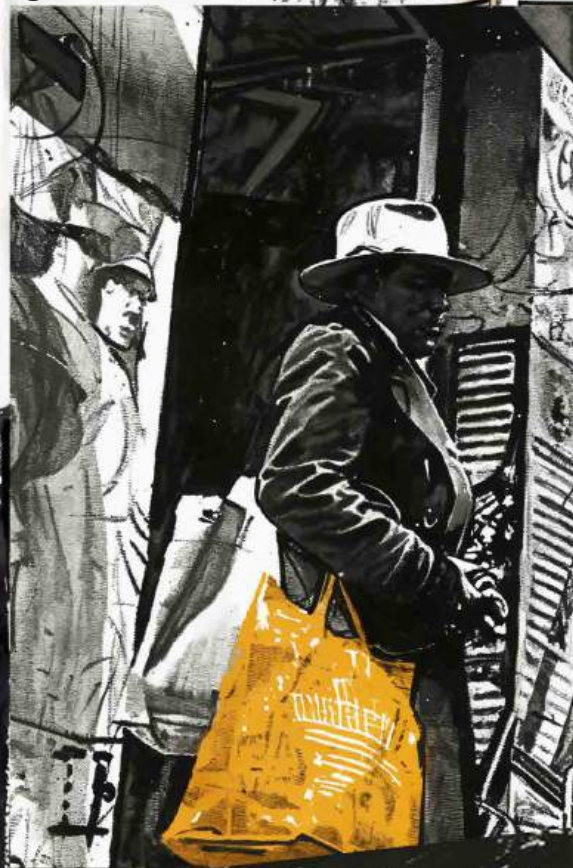


On April 2, NATO aviation bombed the bridge over the Danube in Novi Sad. The city's water supply crossed this bridge, and due to the destruction of the structure, part of Novi Sad (about 300,000 people) was left without drinking water. Parts of the bridge obstructed the river, and navigation on the Danube stopped. Upon learning of this, Belgraders began to form human chains at night, hoping to protect the bridges with their bodies.



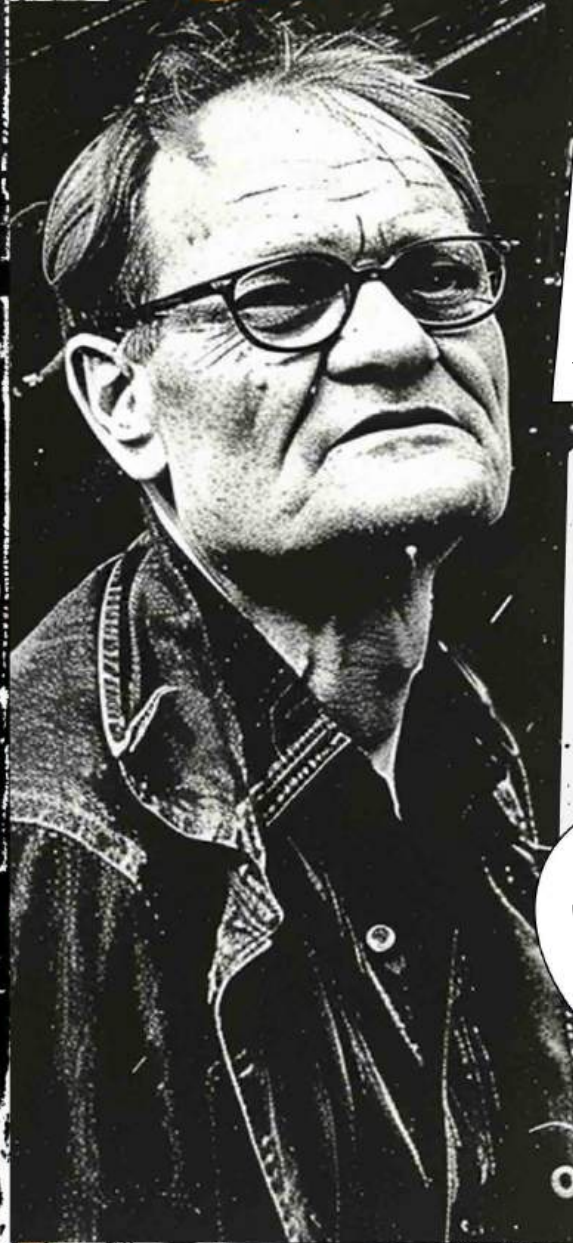
There are several bridges in Belgrade: the Pancevo Bridge over the Danube, the Gazelle Bridge, and the Branko Bridge over the Sava. The city's architect, Danilo Dragovic, also came out with other residents to the Branko Bridge. **"Bridges also have a soul," he said, "and they connect not only two shores but also people."** On the Pancevo Bridge, Russian monks prayed during the day, having brought an icon of the Kazan Mother of God, the protector against invasions, to Belgrade with the blessing of the Patriarch of All Russia.





On April 3, around 1 a.m., those Belgraders who were asleep woke up to three powerful explosions. Until that moment, two buildings of the Ministry of Internal Affairs stood on opposite sides of Knez Milos Street: one federal, the other republican. After the strike, they turned into two torches, engulfed in flames from the first to the last floor. In institutions like the Ministry of Internal Affairs, there were, of course, night security teams and phone operators, all of whom perished without a chance to escape.

That is how the bombing of the city began. No date could have been more ambiguous: in April 1941, German Nazi aircraft also struck Belgrade without warning. On that night, Serbs absorbed this historical parallel along with the smoke of the fire, cementing the association of the NATO abbreviation with the fascist swastika.



All that will remain of us are these packages... We go to supermarkets because that's one of the few remnants of our former, normal life.





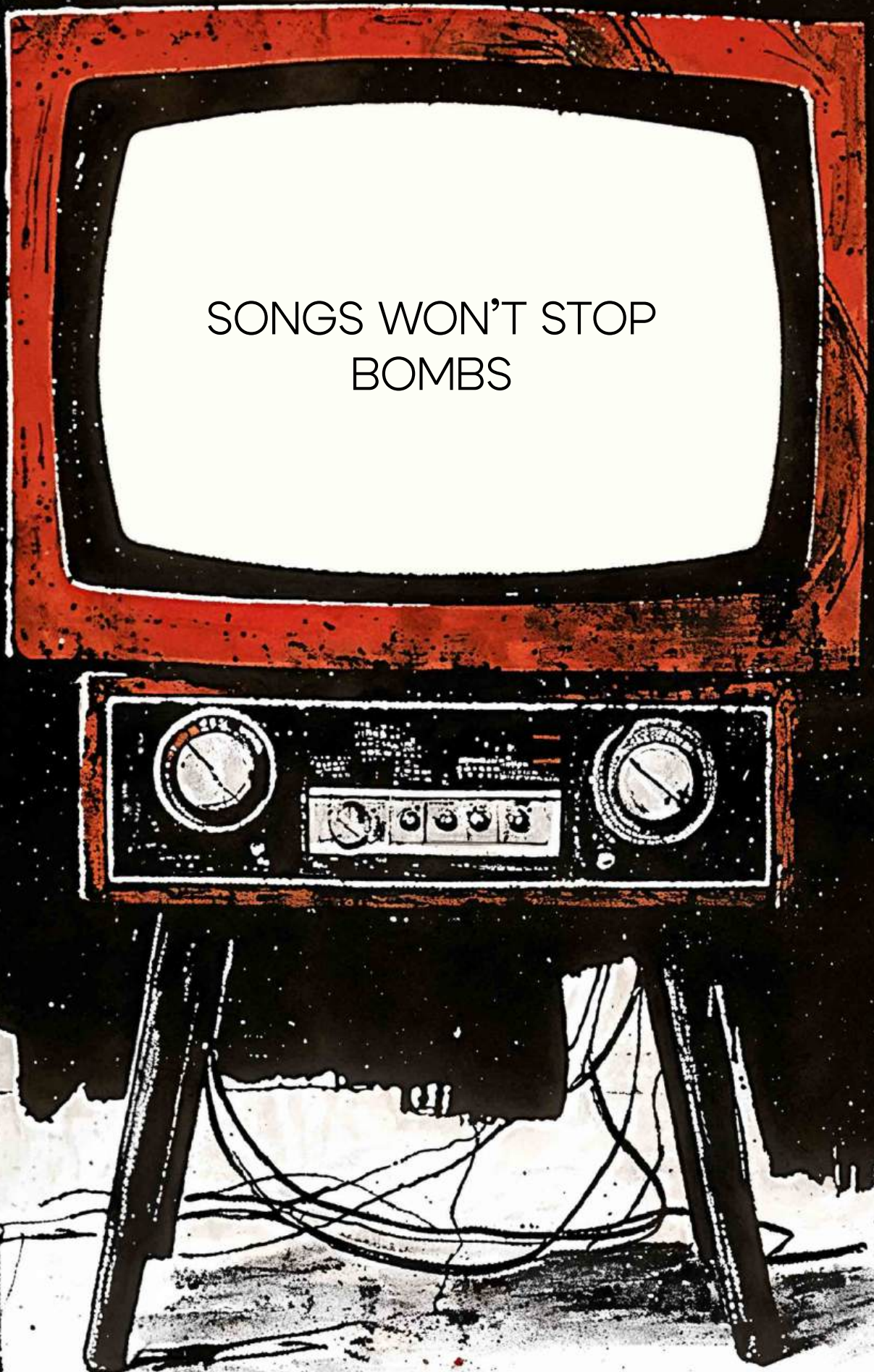
Just 100 meters from the burning buildings was a maternity hospital. Flames licked the neighboring building as medical staff escorted pregnant women out. Many descended into the bomb shelter with tears in their eyes but without panic. Women in labor were carried on stretchers. Babies, who were the first to be evacuated, already lay in rows, sound asleep in the relative safety of the shelter.

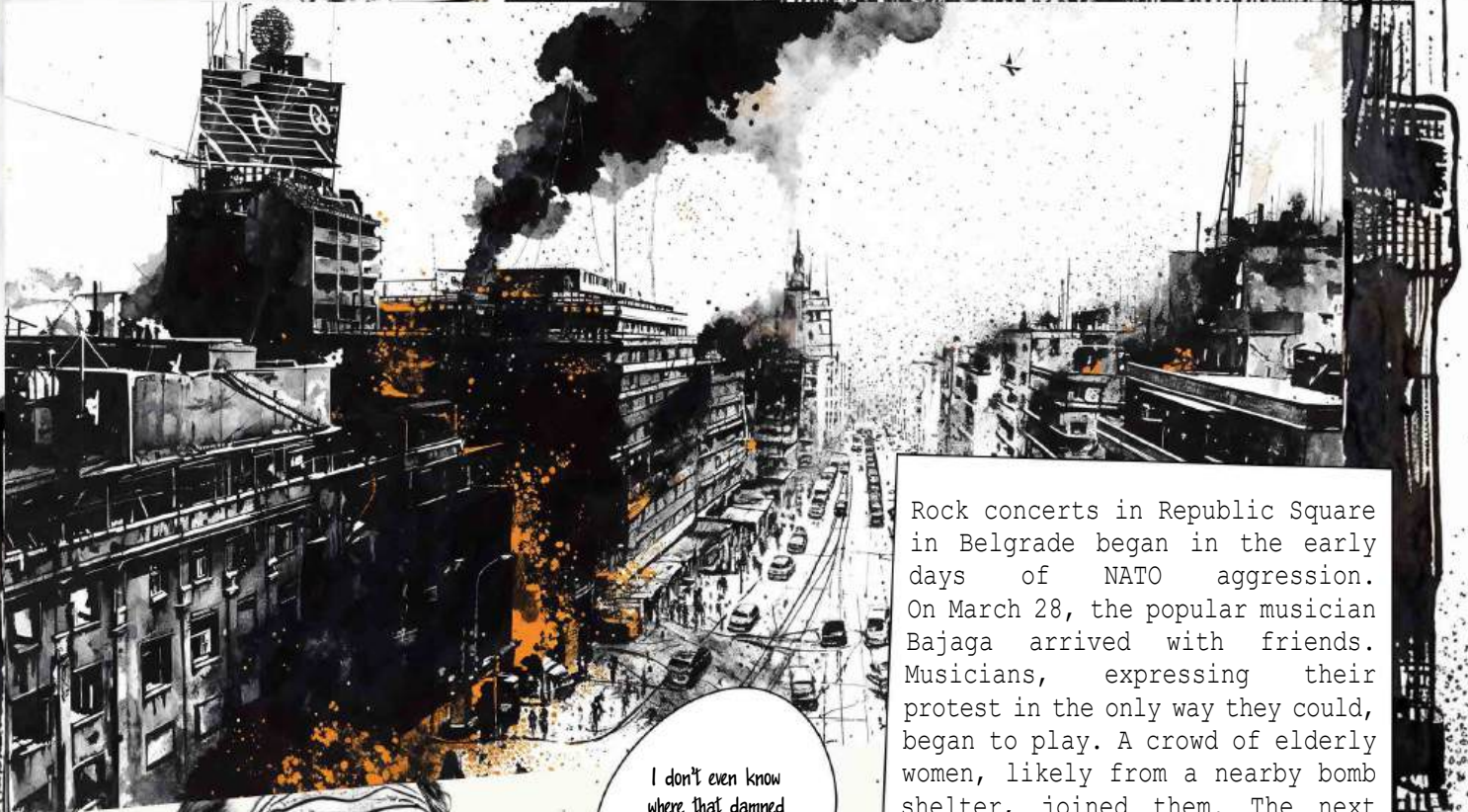
Many journalists, even those experienced in conflict zones, were overwhelmed by the scene. Women were given valerian drops, and men stepped outside to smoke. Against the backdrop of the fire, silhouettes of firefighting teams could be seen, and ambulance lights flickered. Journalists had to make their way home, many crossing bridges that the police tried to close at night due to the high risk of missile strikes.





SONGS WON'T STOP
BOMBS





I don't even know
where that damned
bomb shelter is!

Rock concerts in Republic Square in Belgrade began in the early days of NATO aggression. On March 28, the popular musician Bajaga arrived with friends. Musicians, expressing their protest in the only way they could, began to play. A crowd of elderly women, likely from a nearby bomb shelter, joined them. The next day, thousands of Belgraders gathered, and these daily concerts began spontaneously.

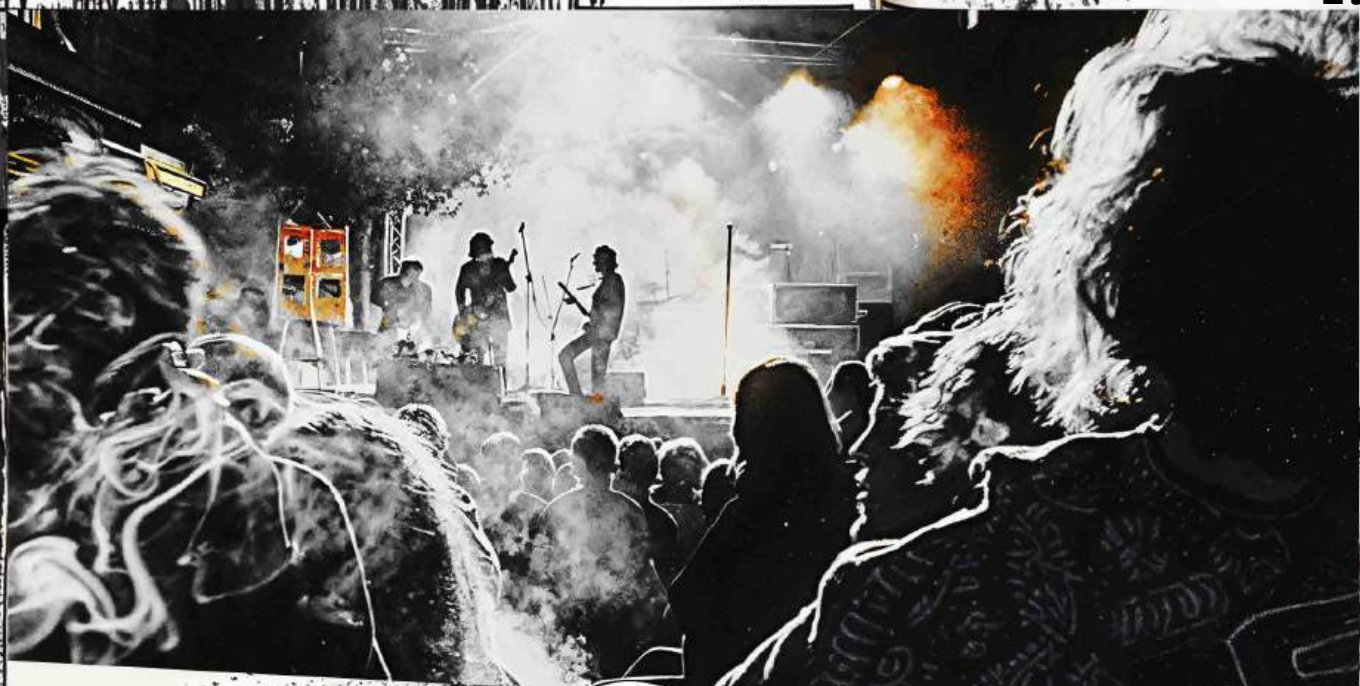
Russian musicians also performed, and from the first days, Danica, the wife of Yugoslav Vice Premier Drašković, attended. Western media covered the events in their own way: CNN presented the concerts as the joy of Serbs over the expulsion of Albanians. Serbs, familiar with these propagandist programs, humorously asked: if 100,000 Albanians are killed here before lunch and 250,000 after lunch, how many executioners are needed?

We, you know,
are used to meeting
missiles modestly,
at the table,
with family.

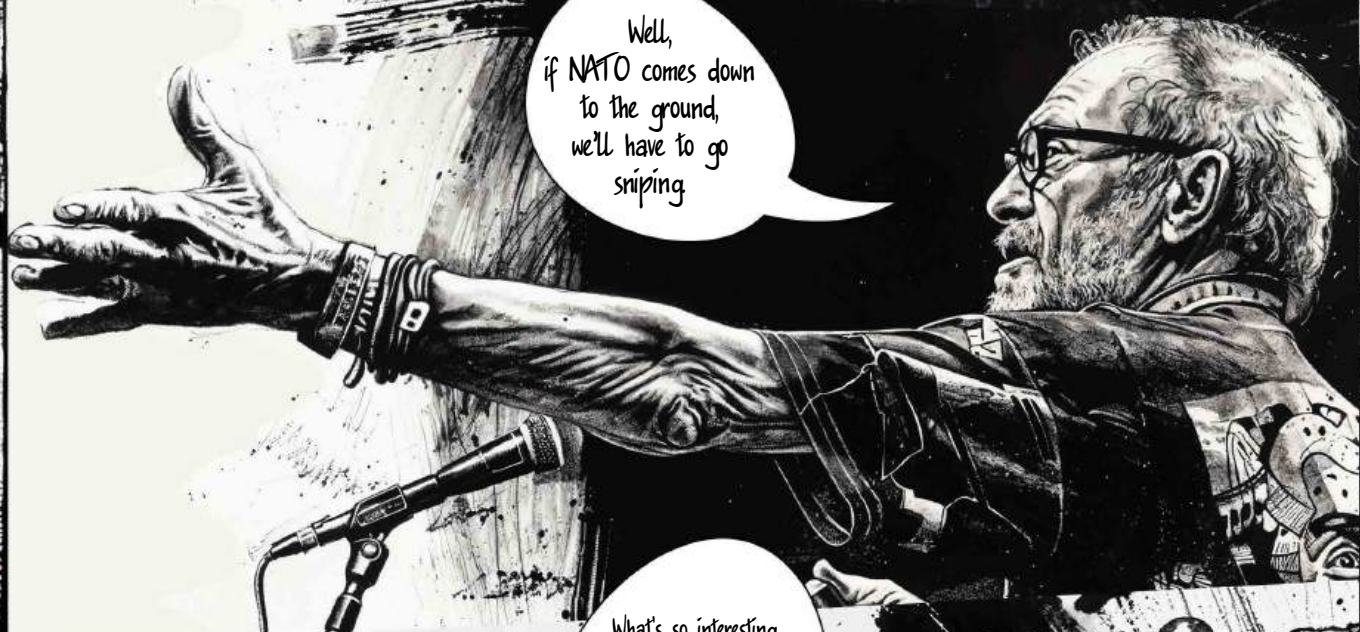


ФРАНСИЈСКА ЈЕ
СЛУГА АМЕРИКЕ





Well,
if NATO comes down
to the ground,
we'll have to go
sniping.



What's so interesting
about Paris? We have
concerts every night
in Belgrade!





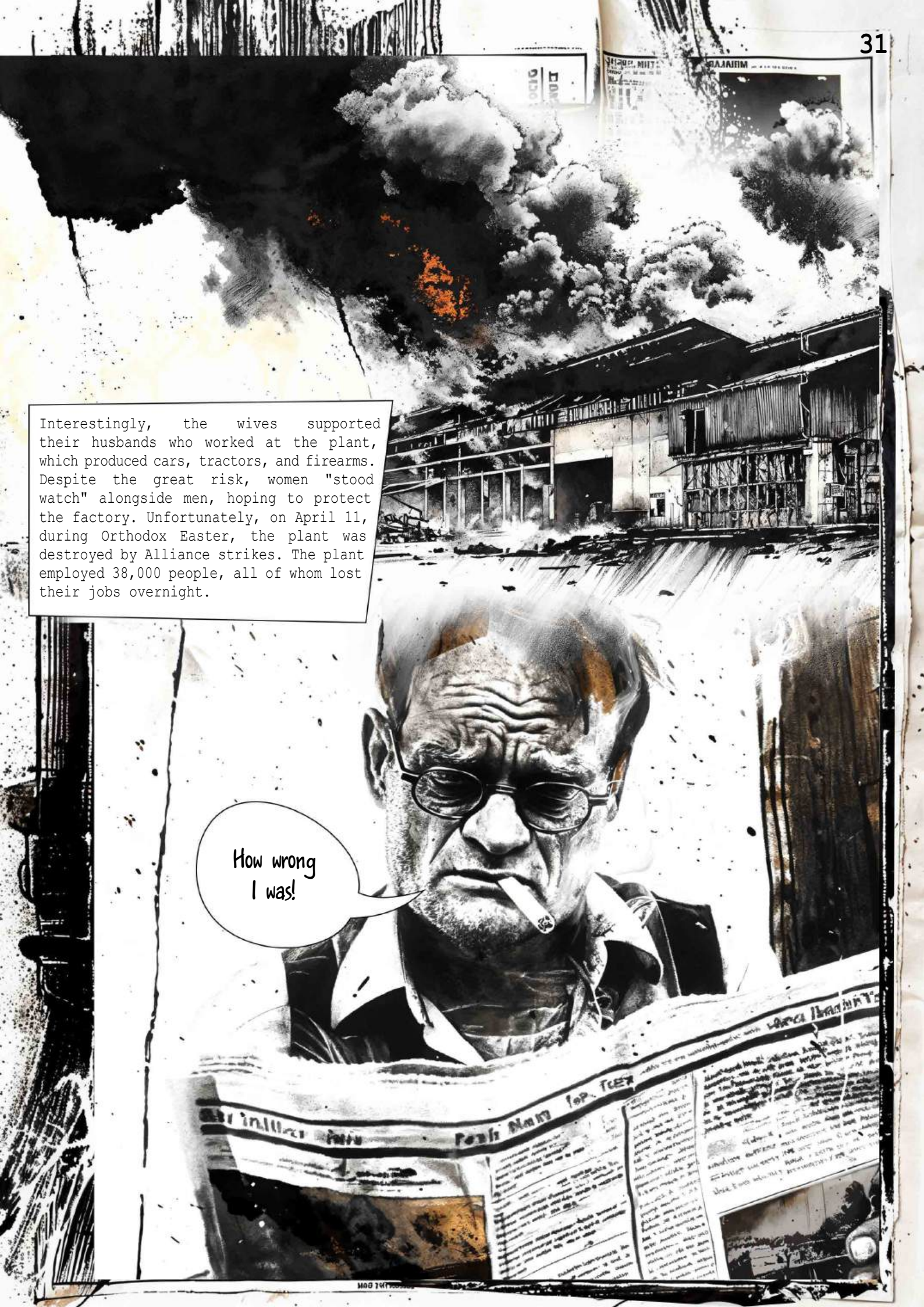
In early April, workers at the Zastava plant in Kragujevac implemented a unique form of a human shield - the third shift. Workers stayed on the factory premises day and night. They hoped that NATO would not dare bomb a site with 10,000 people.



They won't dare to bomb the workshops, there are too many of us here!



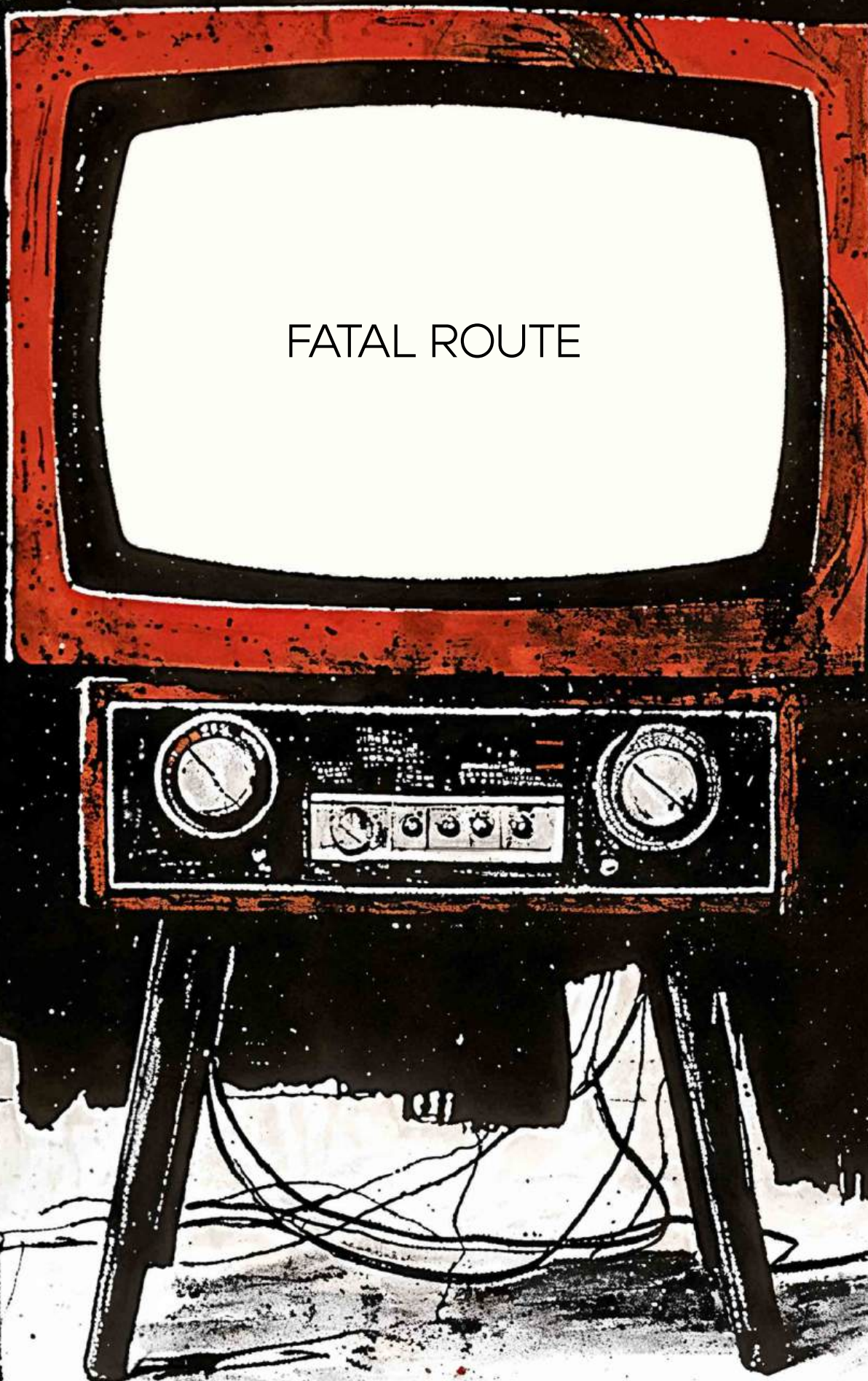
What I realized for myself is that they have too much determination...

A black and white illustration depicting a scene of industrial destruction. In the background, a large factory complex is shown with thick, dark smoke billowing from it, suggesting a major explosion or fire. The smoke is rendered with heavy, expressive brushstrokes. In the foreground, a close-up of an elderly man with glasses and a cigarette in his mouth. He has a somber and weary expression. He is holding a newspaper that is partially visible at the bottom of the frame. The overall style is gritty and expressive, with high contrast and visible texture.

Interestingly, the wives supported their husbands who worked at the plant, which produced cars, tractors, and firearms. Despite the great risk, women "stood watch" alongside men, hoping to protect the factory. Unfortunately, on April 11, during Orthodox Easter, the plant was destroyed by Alliance strikes. The plant employed 38,000 people, all of whom lost their jobs overnight.

How wrong
I was!

FATAL ROUTE





Girls, listen
to your mom and behave
on the train! I'll finish up
here and join you soon!

BYE, DAD!!!

Despite the ongoing bombings, many families stayed in their homes and apartments, and civilian life continued even under shelling. Sometimes, fearing for their children, people decided to send them to relatives in quieter areas, especially during holidays.

In 1999, Easter fell on April 11, and Belgrade was bombed twice on Easter night. On the second day of the holidays, people traveled by train across the country—visiting relatives, taking children away from cities, or simply commuting to work, which, despite the war, continued for some.

My name is Nikola, what's yours?

Branimir.
Want some candy?

Thank you.
Can we be friends?



Among the trains running their routes that day was Train No. 393, which passed through southern Serbia over a small bridge on the South Morava River in the Grdelica Gorge. At 11:40 a.m., on a clear day, the train found itself on the bridge. No one knew that the station in Leskovac would be its last.

At the same time, a NATO F-15E fighter-bomber, armed with air-to-ground missiles, was in the area with a mission to destroy an infrastructure target – the very bridge that Train No. 393 was crossing. The first missile hit the train instead of the bridge.

The explosion severed the train coupling, allowing the locomotive and the first car to continue, while the remaining cars, torn apart and burning, were left on the bridge. The second missile strike did not follow immediately. After the first hit, surviving and mobile passengers tried to escape the burning train onto the bridge.

However, the second missile strike shattered their chances of survival, destroying the train remnants and damaging the bridge, which was the pilots' objective. The civilian casualties were deemed "collateral damage." The exact number of victims remains unknown to this day. The explosion and fire severely damaged the bodies, allowing only 14 to be identified. Additionally, passenger records were not kept as meticulously as they are now.

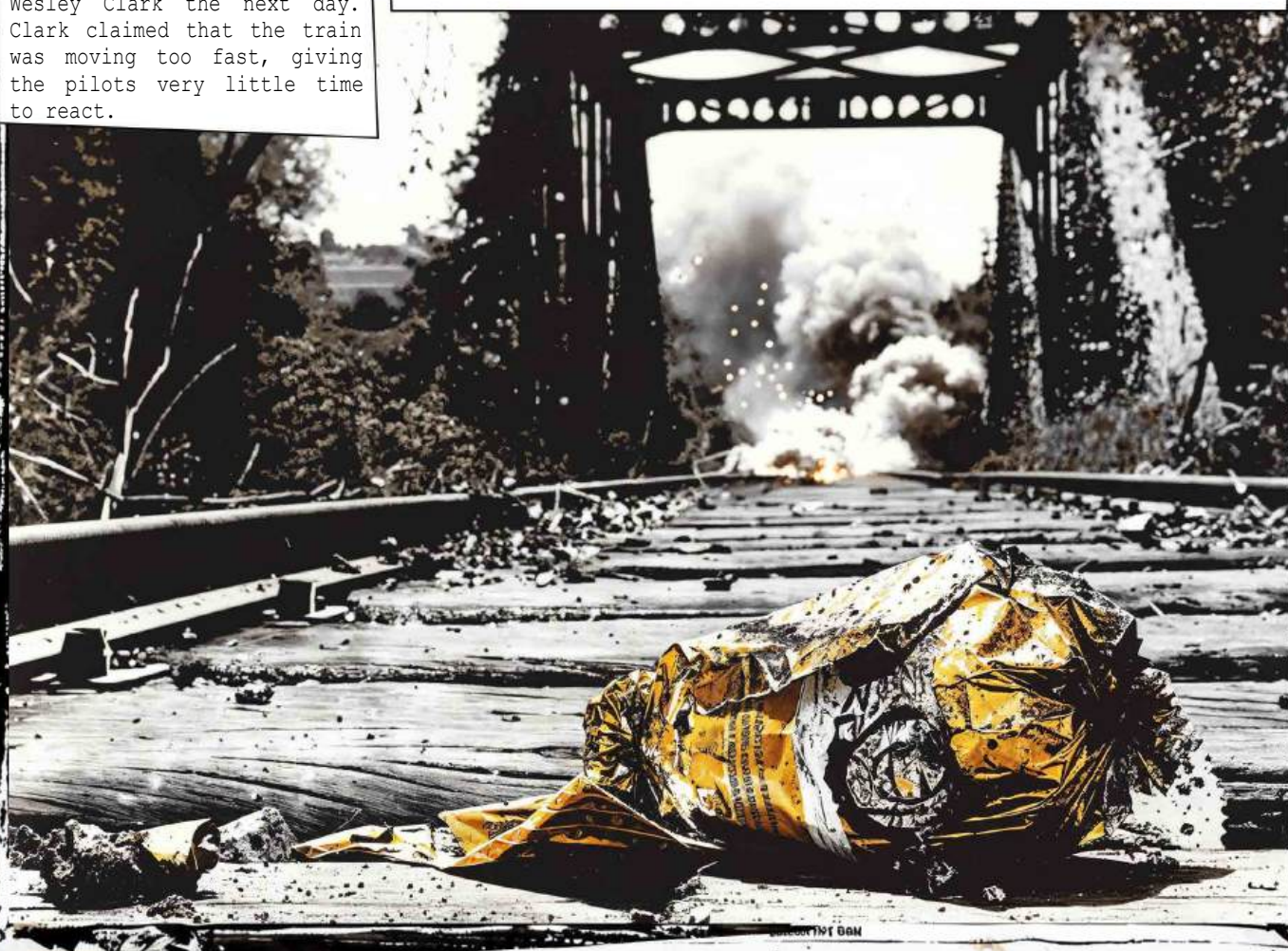


The aftermath of the two missile strikes soon became apparent to witnesses—around 100 foreign and local reporters arrived at the scene. Smoke lingered in the area, the smell of burnt flesh filled the air, and body fragments were scattered within a 30-meter radius from the impact site. Most Western reporters immediately began writing articles, dedicating 2-3 sentences to the loss of lives and 5-6 paragraphs to Serbia's "military aggression."

However, it was impossible to downplay such a significant incident, leading to a press conference with General Wesley Clark the next day. Clark claimed that the train was moving too fast, giving the pilots very little time to react.

He insisted that the first missile was fired from a considerable distance and the pilot could not see the train. After the first strike, the pilot decided to complete the operation and destroy the bridge, possibly assuming the train had already passed. He then made another pass and fired a second missile, which also hit the train.

This, of course, was declared an "unfortunate accident that we deeply regret" and "one of those sad incidents that occur during military operations." NATO leadership went so far as to "promote" their efforts by stating that they were doing "everything we can to avoid collateral damage." As U.S. Deputy Secretary of Defense John Hamre later told Congress: "We really wanted to destroy the bridge."

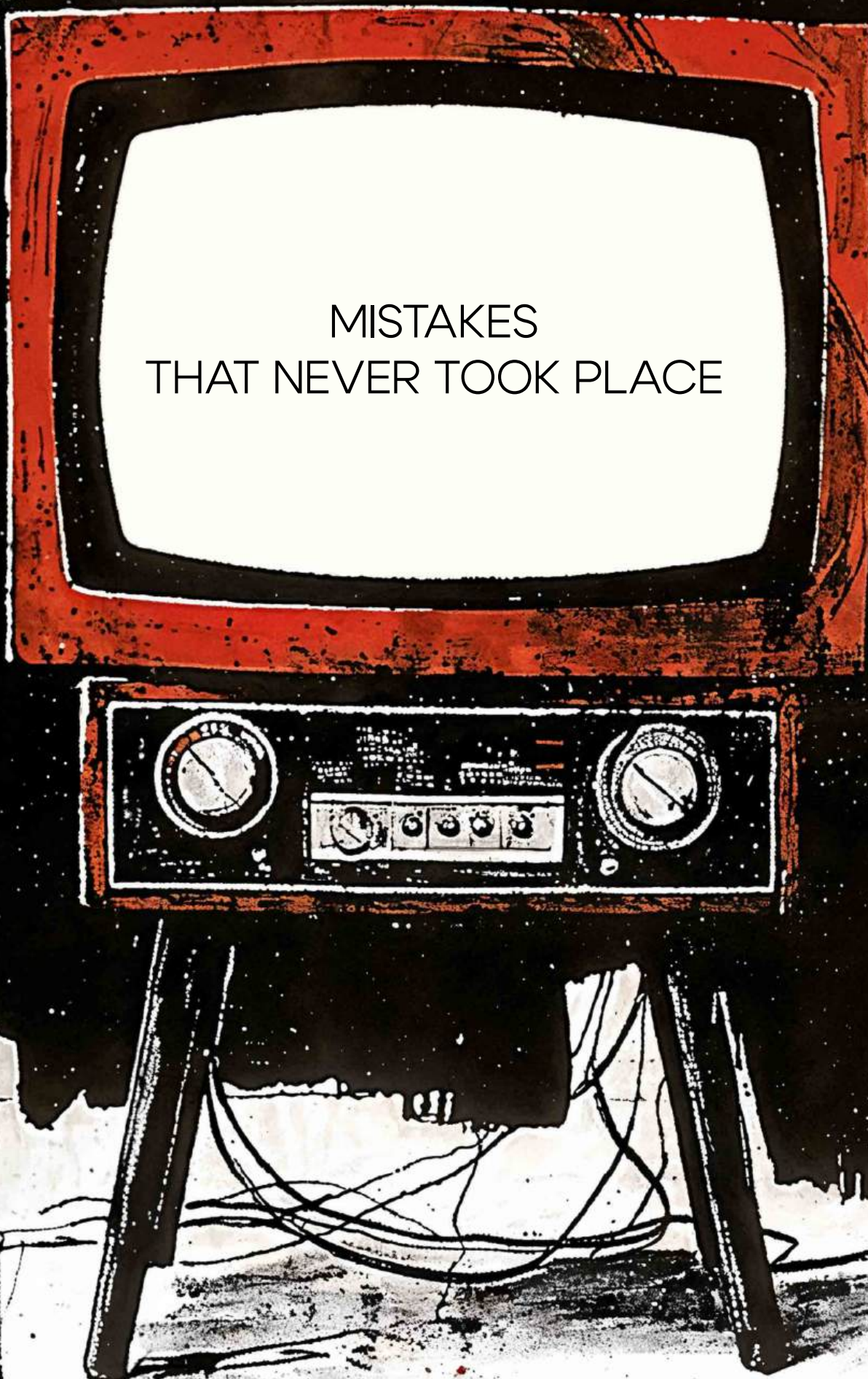




This sentiment was echoed by the special committee of the International Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, established in May 1999. It was supposed to investigate crimes against international law committed during NATO's operation. Regarding the April 12 tragedy, it concluded that NATO bore no responsibility, deeming the bridge a legitimate military target.

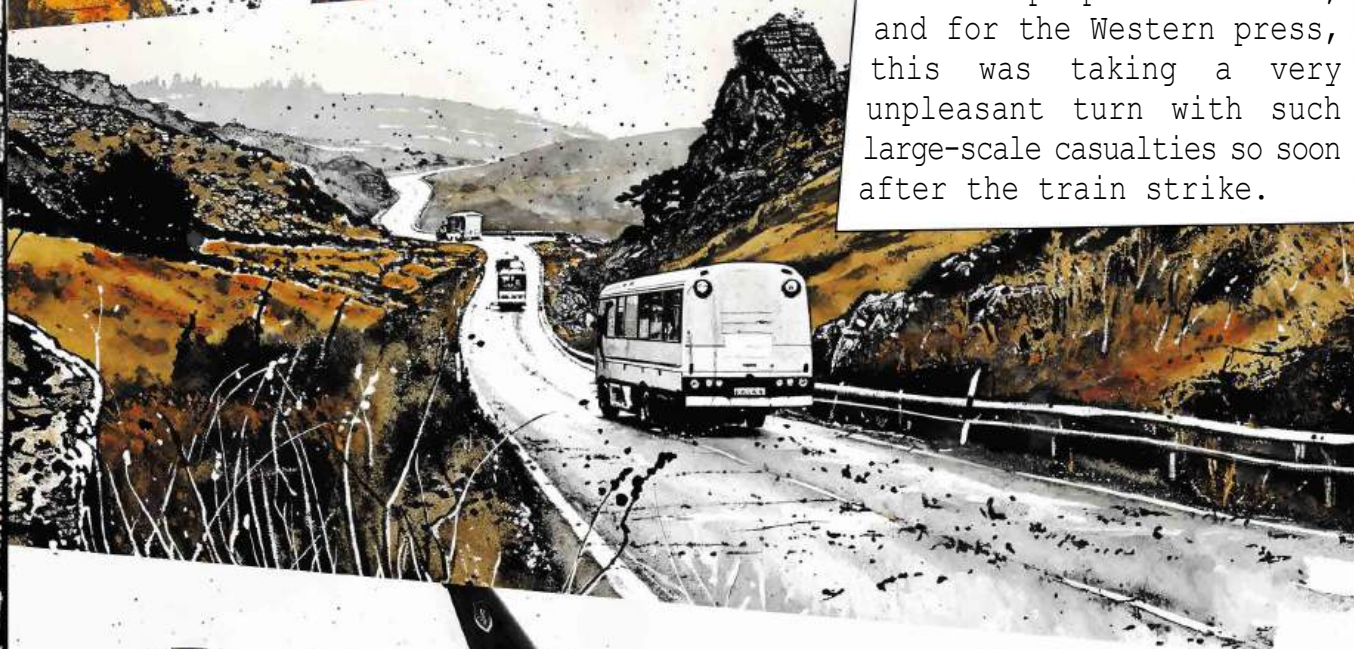
No one was ever held accountable for the deaths of at least 14 and the injuries of 16 Serbian civilians, despite multiple indications that attacking a military target close to civilians should be explicitly prohibited.

MISTAKES
THAT NEVER TOOK PLACE





On April 14, NATO bombed a column of civilians in the village of Bistrazin near the Terzijski Bridge. 52 people died, and for the Western press, this was taking a very unpleasant turn with such large-scale casualties so soon after the train strike.





So, it was decided to report that the Yugoslav Army was moving under the cover of a column of refugees. Of course, the question arose as to why it was critical to strike in this case. And "minor" details like the architectural value of the medieval Terzijski Bridge were simply not considered.

You just need to get accreditation to go there, but you don't actually have to go. Although, it would be nice to take some photos... Especially if there's an unrecognizable heap of metal next to the bodies...

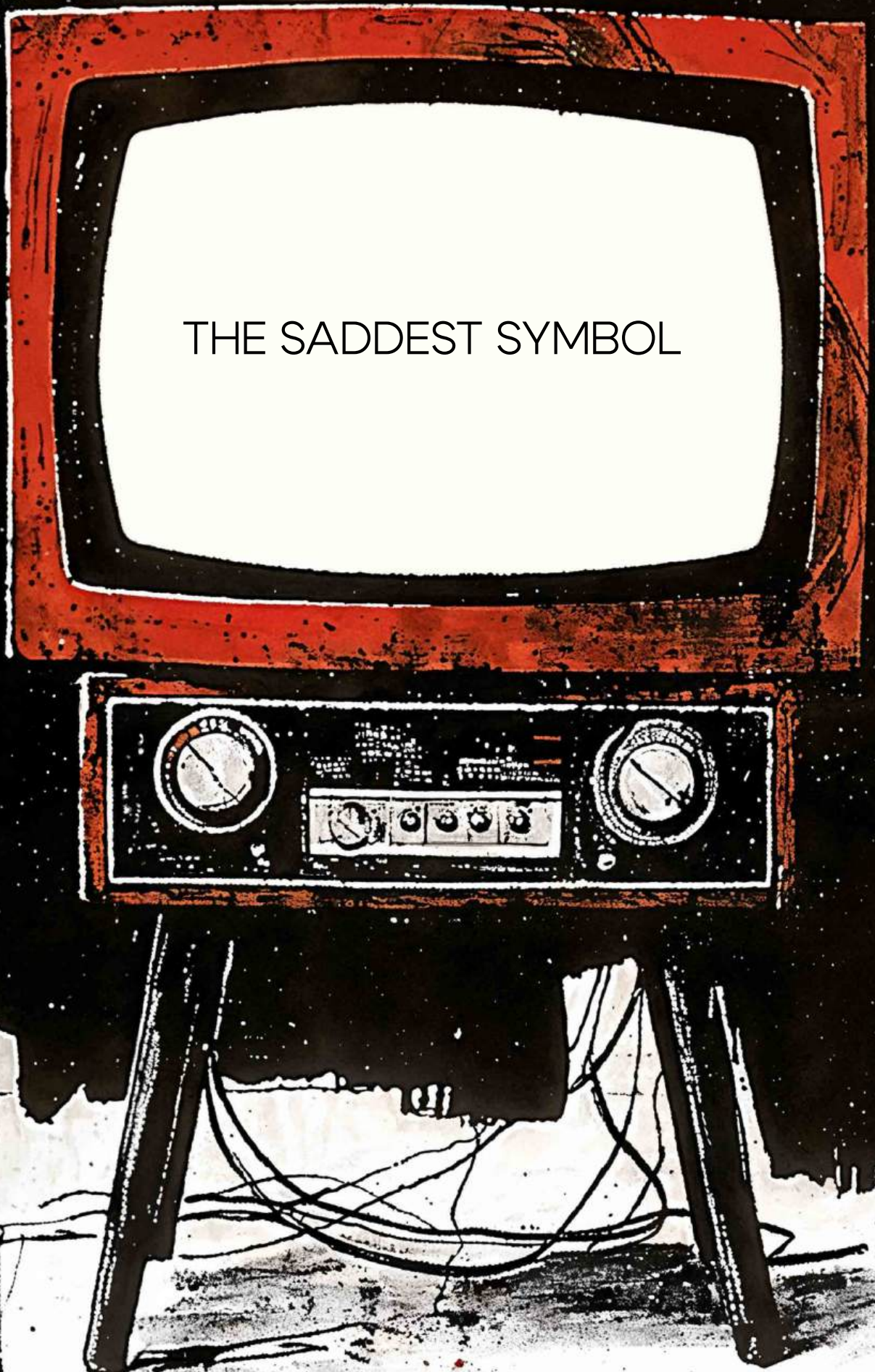




But...

We have to write
as soon as possible that
Yugoslav forces were using
refugees as cover
for moving their troops
and equipment!

THE SADDEST SYMBOL





Three-year-old Milica Rakić lived with her parents and older brother in the Belgrade suburb of Batajnica. A kilometer away was an airbase that NATO planes had bombed at the start of the military invasion. However, by April 17, there were no more air raids, and that evening was quiet. The children were getting ready for bed, and the adults were watching the news.



Brush your teeth, Milica, I'll be right back—just making your bed.



Mom,
protect me!

Bo-o-o-o-o-o-o-om!!!



Leaving her daughter in the bathroom, the girl's mother went down to the dining room, which also served as the family's living room and bedroom, and then there was an explosion. A cluster bomb had exploded in the street of the suburb – a type of bomb that disperses smaller munitions upon detonation. This significantly increases the impact radius. This was felt by five civilians who were injured in the explosion.



Until that point, NATO had only used this type of weapon in Kosovo. The most tragic and symbolic outcome was that on that evening, three-year-old Milica Rakić was killed in the bathroom of her own home. Shrapnel from the bomb pierced the house wall, shattered the small window above the bathtub, entered the room, and scattered at high speed. One piece struck the child directly in the head.



When her relatives rushed into the bathroom, Milica was already unconscious, lying in a pool of blood. Her father grabbed her and raced to the hospital, hoping to save her life. But the injury and blood loss were fatal, and soon the girl's heart stopped beating. She was just three years, three months, and eight days old.





And this
will continue
on and on
and on!

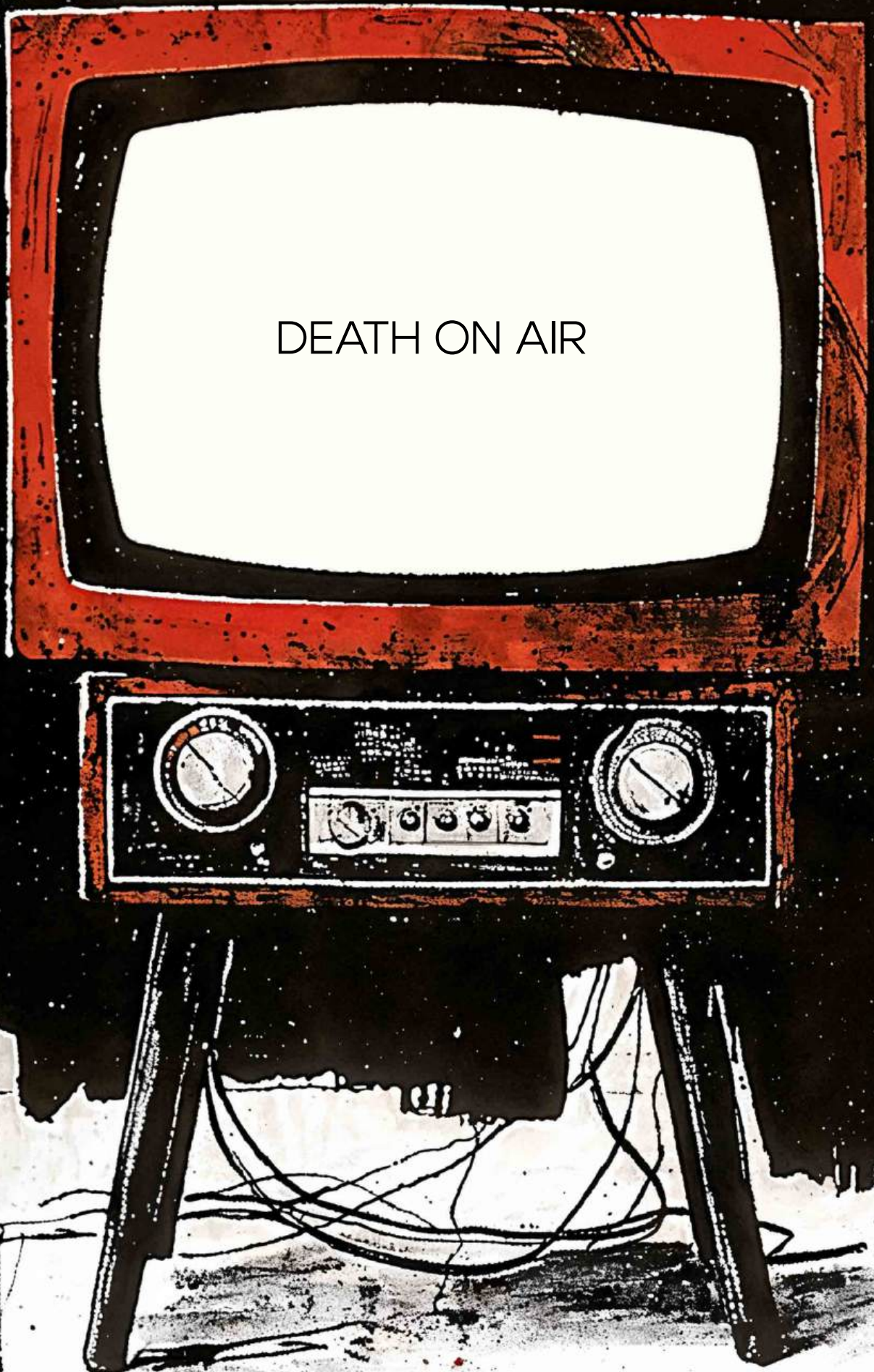
While this tragedy was widely covered in the Serbian media, it was met with complete silence in the Western press. In NATO's final report on the bombings of Yugoslavia, Milica Rakić's death was not even mentioned under "special incidents," despite investigators from the international human rights organization Human Rights Watch also examining the details of the incident.





The Yugoslav government included documents in the "White Book of NATO Crimes in Yugoslavia," and for the entire nation, little Milica became a symbol of all the children killed in the country. During the 78 days of "humanitarian" bombings and shelling, hundreds of children died, and a monument in their memory stands on the central alley of Belgrade's Tašmajdan Park.

DEATH ON AIR





The hardest hit, without a doubt, was the attack on the TV center, which killed 16 people from the night shift of "Radio Television of Serbia." This happened on April 23 at 2:06 AM. The Alliance launched Tomahawk cruise missiles.

RTS greatly irritated NATO's military-political leadership. Among other things, RTS promptly and often comprehensively countered NATO's information "drops." When a rumor from NATO headquarters about the execution of Ibrahim Rugova and his closest associates spread, Serbian television immediately responded by showing footage of Rugova, "executed," in negotiations with Milošević.

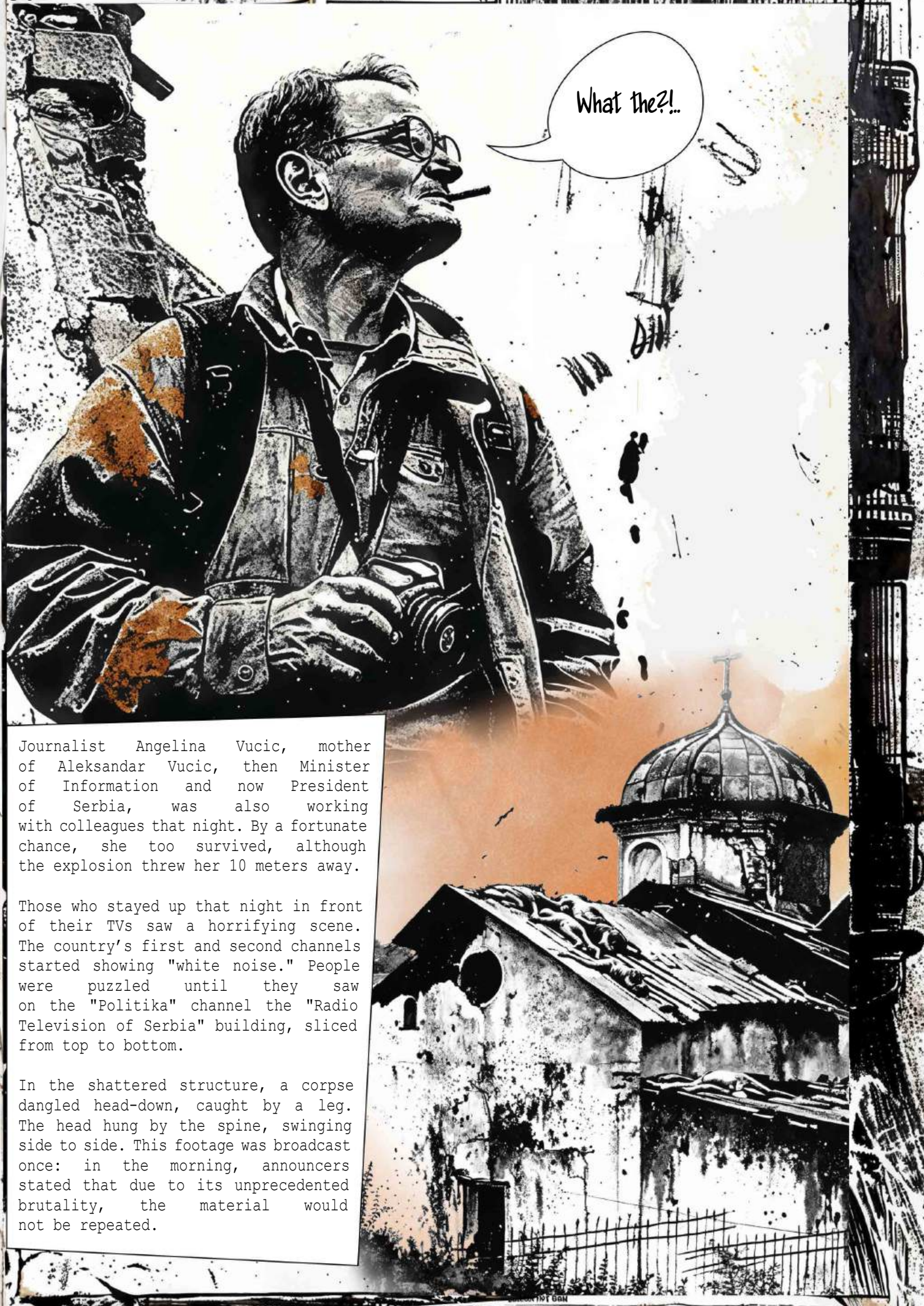
When NATO claimed a stadium had been turned into a concentration camp for Kosovar Albanians, RTS aired footage of a completely empty stadium. And when NATO stated there was no evidence of people using their bodies to protect Belgrade's bridges, hence the bridges could be bombed, RTS broadcasted live chains of people on the bridges. In the information war, "Radio Television of Serbia" consistently demonstrated a high level of professionalism.



Therefore, no one was particularly surprised when rumors spread on April 12 that NATO planned to attack the TV center building and had warned foreign journalists sending materials from there. Rumors also circulated that some foreign colleagues refused to leave the building that day. Another version was that there were strong disagreements between the US and French governments regarding RTS as a target.

However, time passed, no strike occurred, and daily work continued in the TV center. That night, April 23, security guard Bojan Mijatović was lucky to survive: he was on duty and saw the missile. It passed four to five meters away, very close. The blast wave threw Mijatović off, and later he was told he instantly got up and then fell again.





Journalist Angelina Vucic, mother of Aleksandar Vucic, then Minister of Information and now President of Serbia, was also working with colleagues that night. By a fortunate chance, she too survived, although the explosion threw her 10 meters away.

Those who stayed up that night in front of their TVs saw a horrifying scene. The country's first and second channels started showing "white noise." People were puzzled until they saw on the "Politika" channel the "Radio Television of Serbia" building, sliced from top to bottom.

In the shattered structure, a corpse dangled head-down, caught by a leg. The head hung by the spine, swinging side to side. This footage was broadcast once: in the morning, announcers stated that due to its unprecedented brutality, the material would not be repeated.



The Guardian

They bombed
Milošević's influence
center, no less

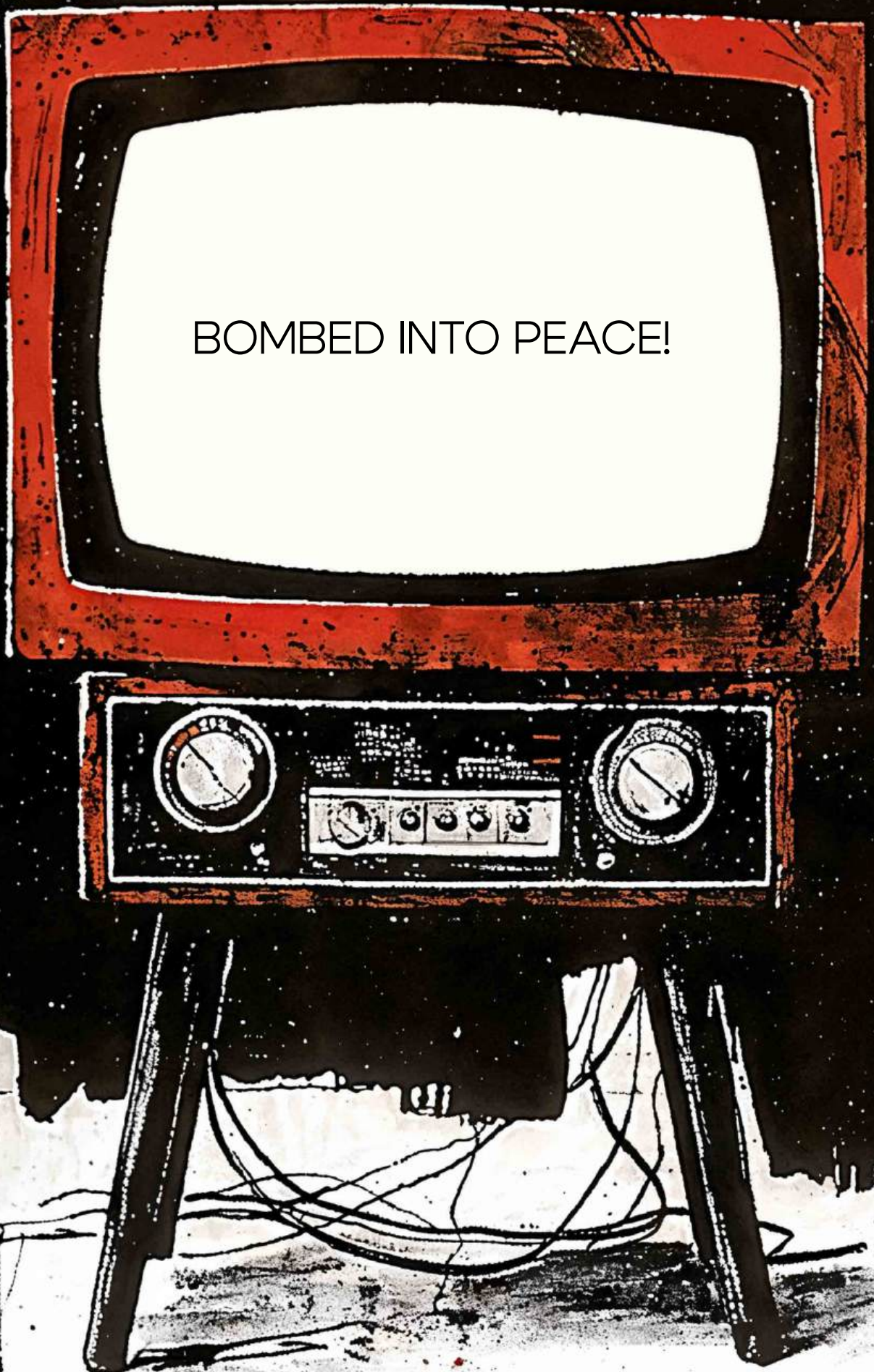
International organizations Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International condemned the attack in the strongest terms. Indeed, RTS "was not used to incite violence," which "could justify its destruction."

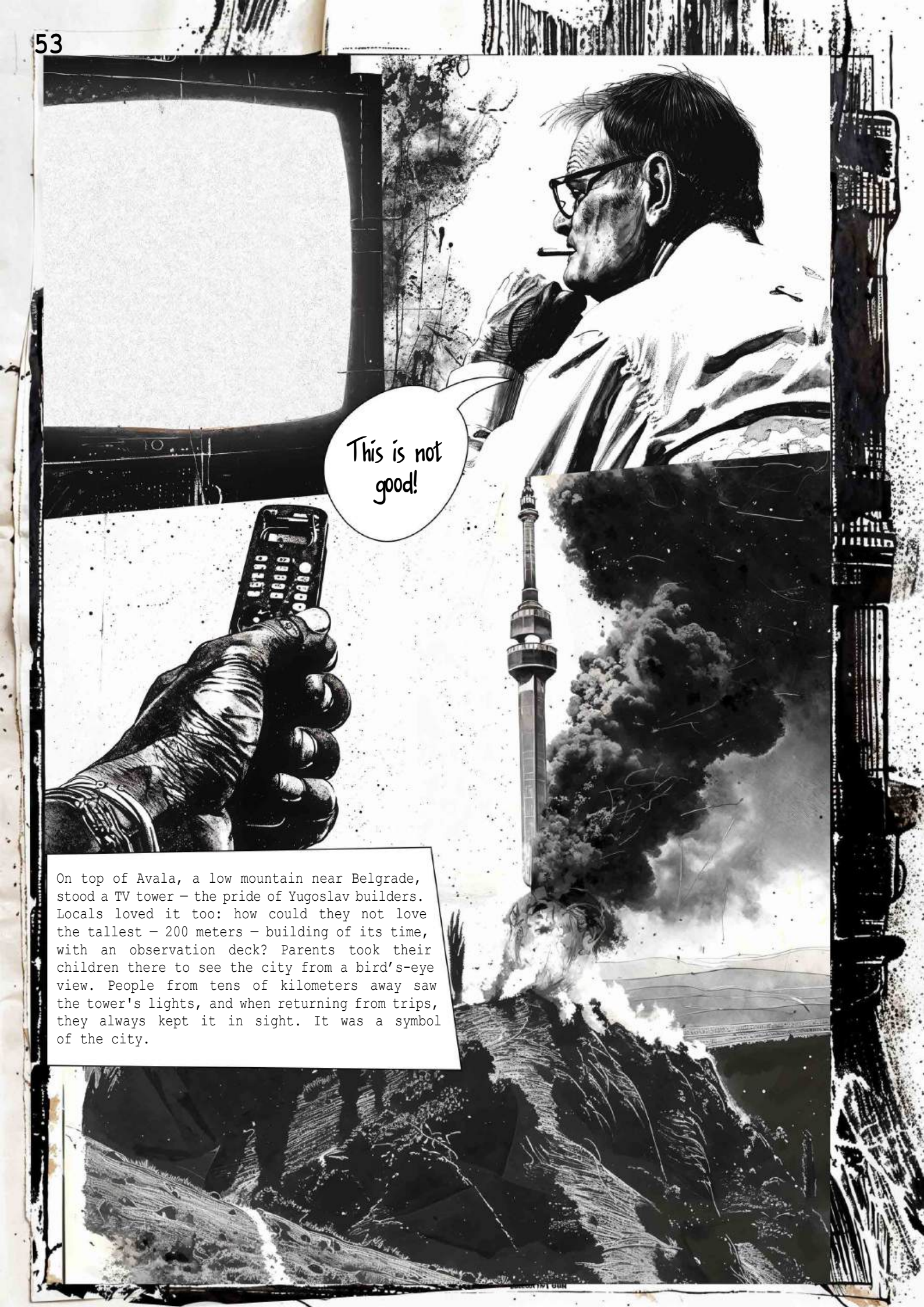
However, NATO had its view: British Prime Minister Tony Blair stated that "the media is the apparatus keeping Milošević in power, and we have every right to strike such targets."

Right in the middle
of the news broadcast!
When only operators
and sound engineers were
there in the middle
of the night!

The
Guardian

BOMBED INTO PEACE!





This is not
good!

On top of Avala, a low mountain near Belgrade, stood a TV tower – the pride of Yugoslav builders. Locals loved it too: how could they not love the tallest – 200 meters – building of its time, with an observation deck? Parents took their children there to see the city from a bird's-eye view. People from tens of kilometers away saw the tower's lights, and when returning from trips, they always kept it in sight. It was a symbol of the city.



It looked like
a beacon.

A NATO missile hit the TV tower on April 29 at 10:40 PM local time, collapsing it like a house of cards, and for a while, all TV and radio stations went silent. A few hours later, broadcasts resumed from a small building nearby. Until morning, Belgraders knew nothing, although many recalled being woken by a strange jolt that night. It was felt even in parts of the city opposite the tower. Only the next day did everyone realize the tower was gone when they habitually looked towards Avala.



When we came back
from our trips, we always
looked at it and knew
we were going home.

And they'll make it look
like "preventing the government
from spreading propaganda
on television". I can imagine
the headlines!

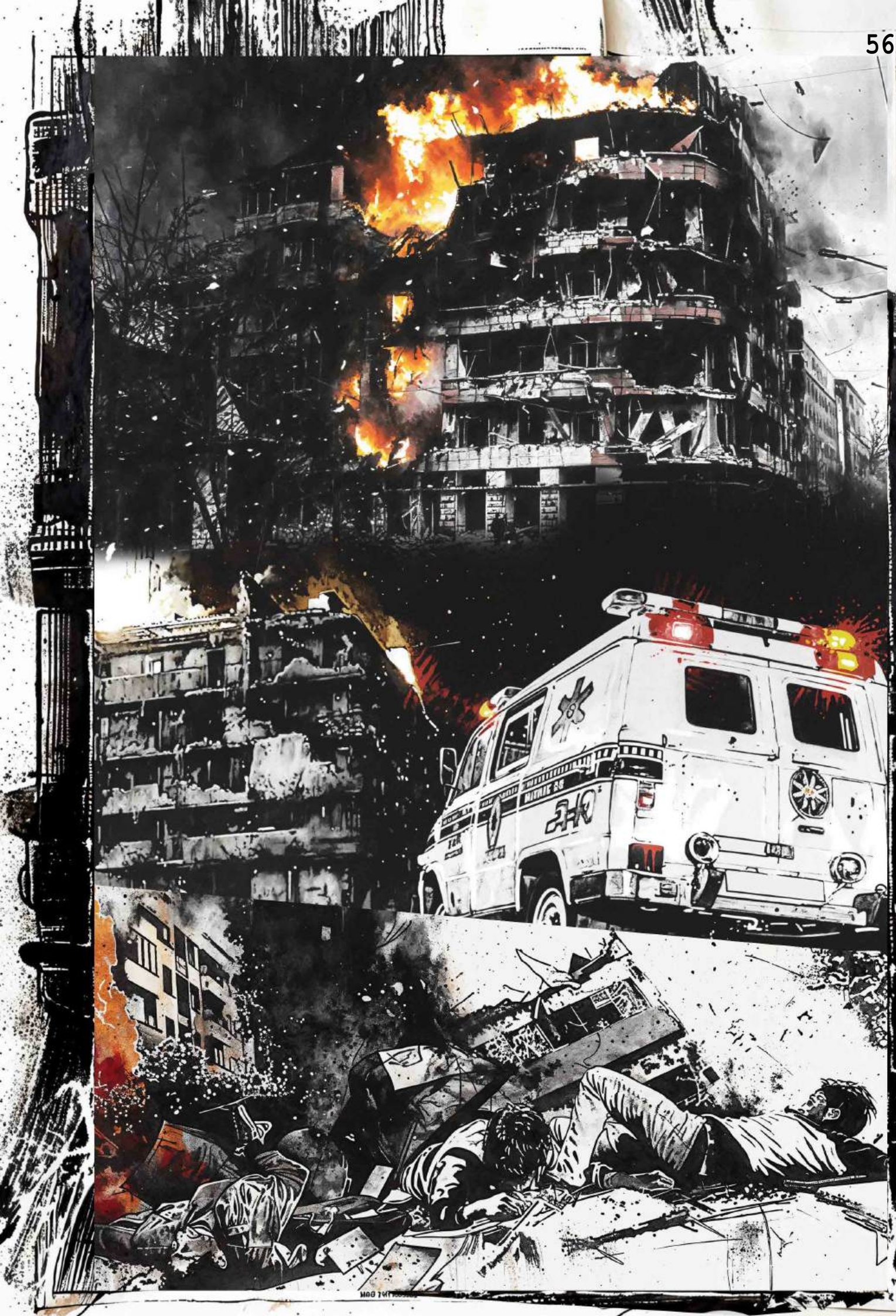


Any more hits?

On the night of April 30, a torrential river flowed down South Boulevard from the intersection with Gorky Street in Belgrade: a bomb hit a house, leaving only ruins and a crater. In what was recently a home to a family of three, the underground water supply was ruptured by the impact. Two more houses nearby were destroyed, one completely, the other partially.

No,
people are just
afraid to stay
in their homes.

After ambulances took away injured civilians, who had been peacefully at home that night, the entire neighborhood was afraid to sleep. Before dawn, people poured onto the streets, fearing another raid: what if NATO aviation found another "military target" in someone's home?





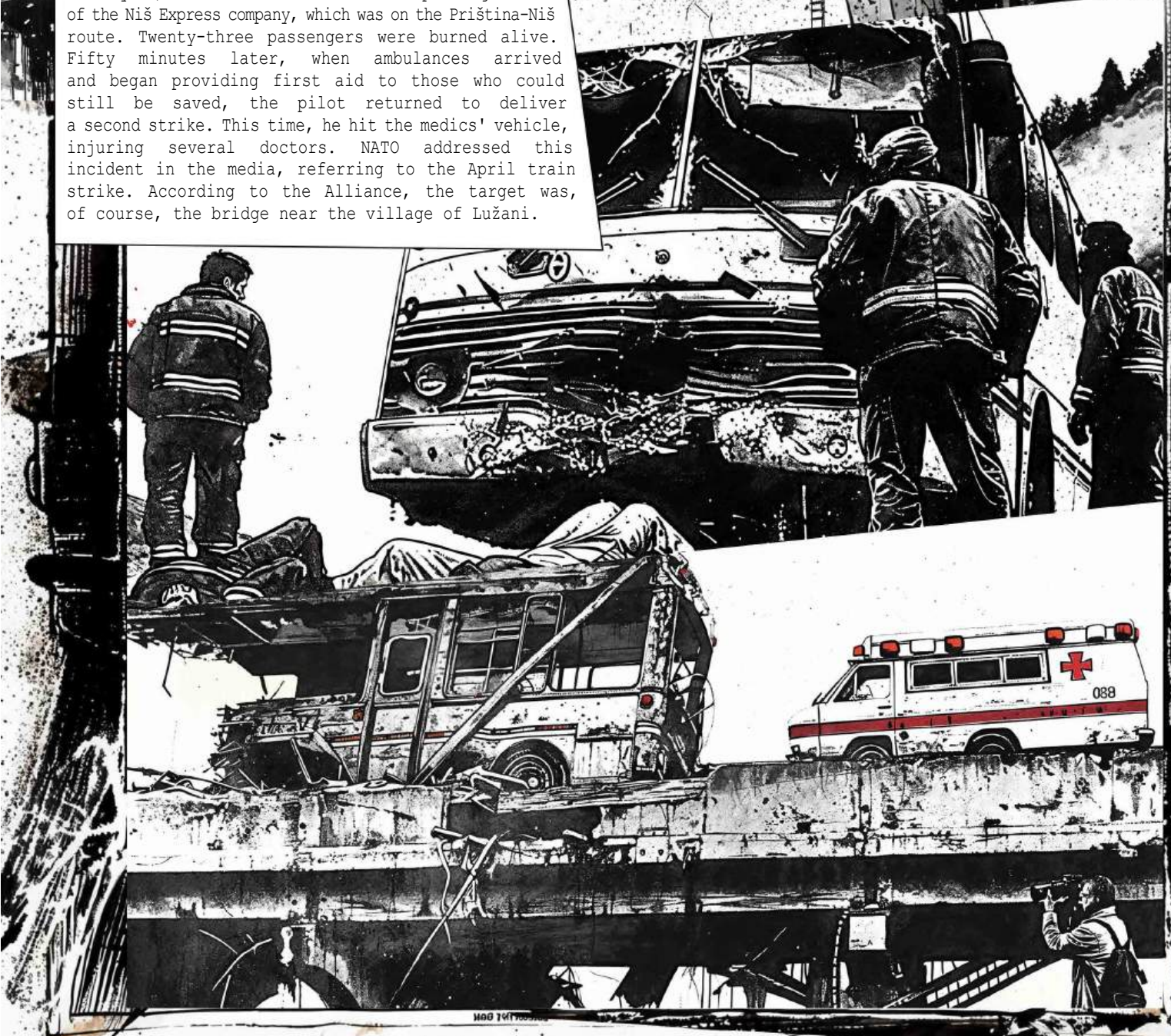
Meanwhile, in the darkened center of Belgrade, the building of the Yugoslav Army's General Staff was on fire. Smoke mixed with dust spread through the city. Fire trucks roamed to contain the fire, while ambulances took away the dead pedestrians from Kneza Miloša Street.

By this time, NATO aviation increasingly used a tactic: after the first strike, when firefighters, rescuers, and medics arrived at the targeted building or structure, the Alliance plane would make another pass and strike again. The same happened with the General Staff building: during a repeated bombing, a member of the city's civil defense headquarters lost both legs.



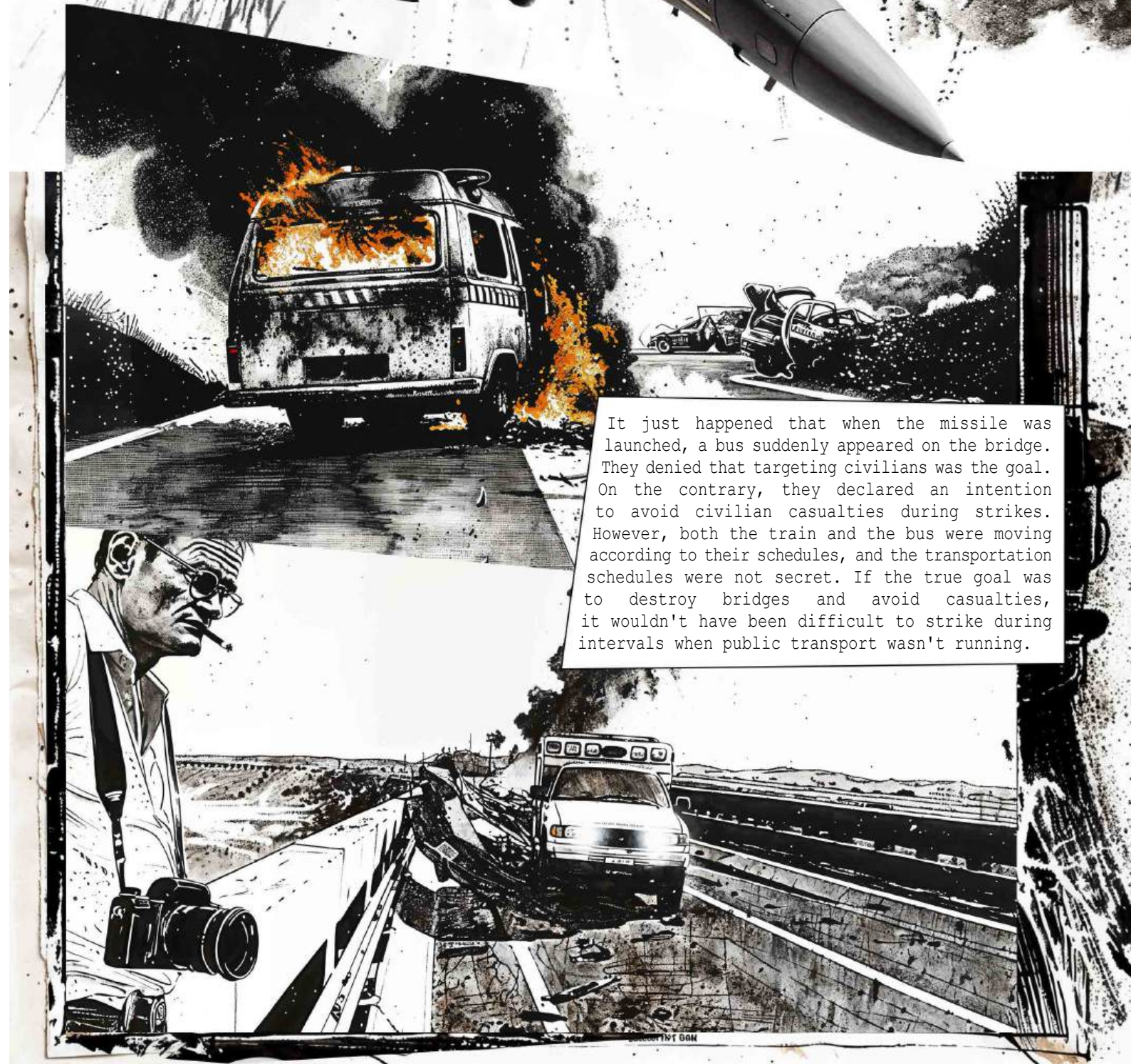


On May 1, NATO aviation struck a passenger bus of the Niš Express company, which was on the Priština-Niš route. Twenty-three passengers were burned alive. Fifty minutes later, when ambulances arrived and began providing first aid to those who could still be saved, the pilot returned to deliver a second strike. This time, he hit the medics' vehicle, injuring several doctors. NATO addressed this incident in the media, referring to the April train strike. According to the Alliance, the target was, of course, the bridge near the village of Lužani.

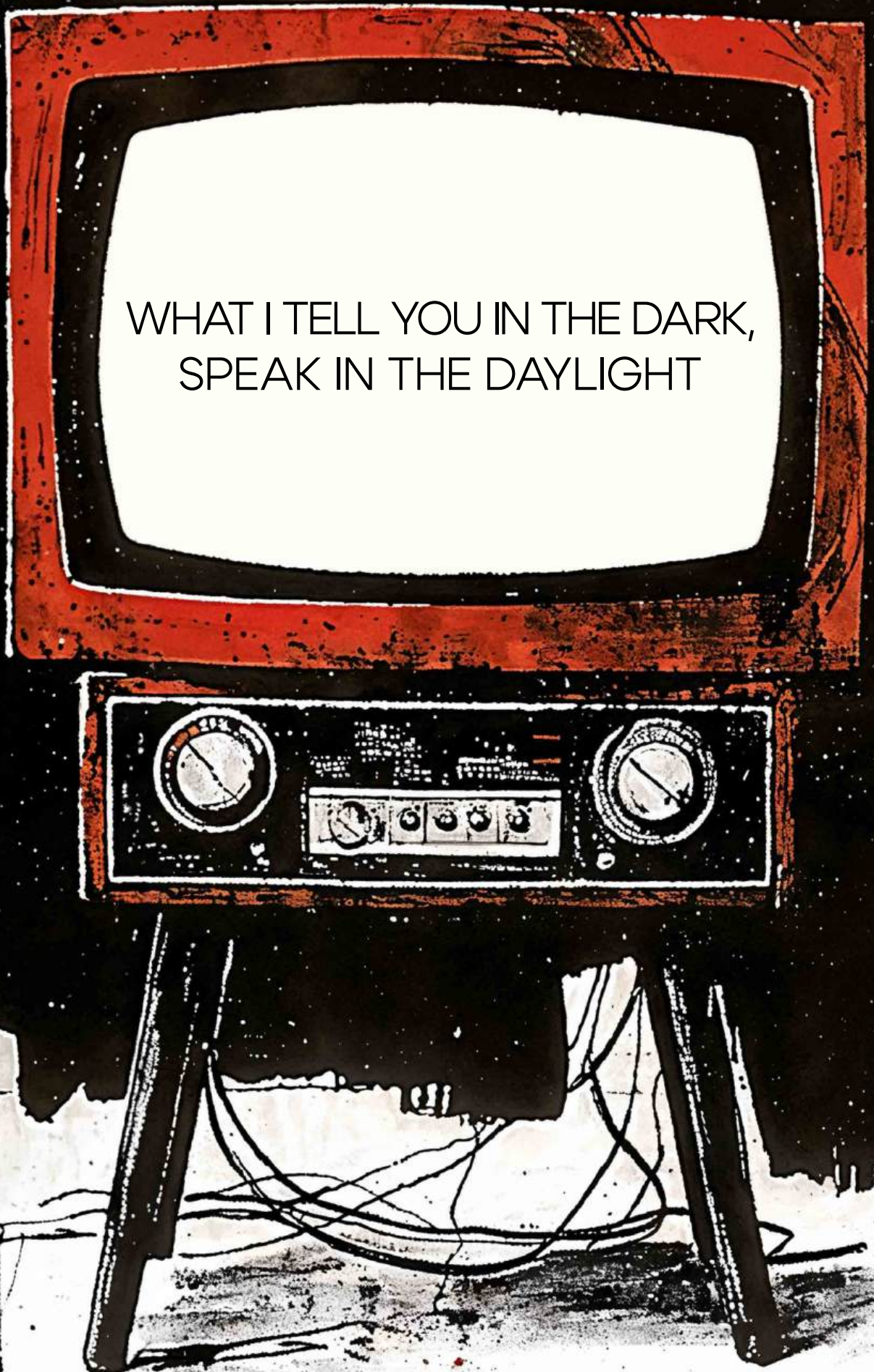


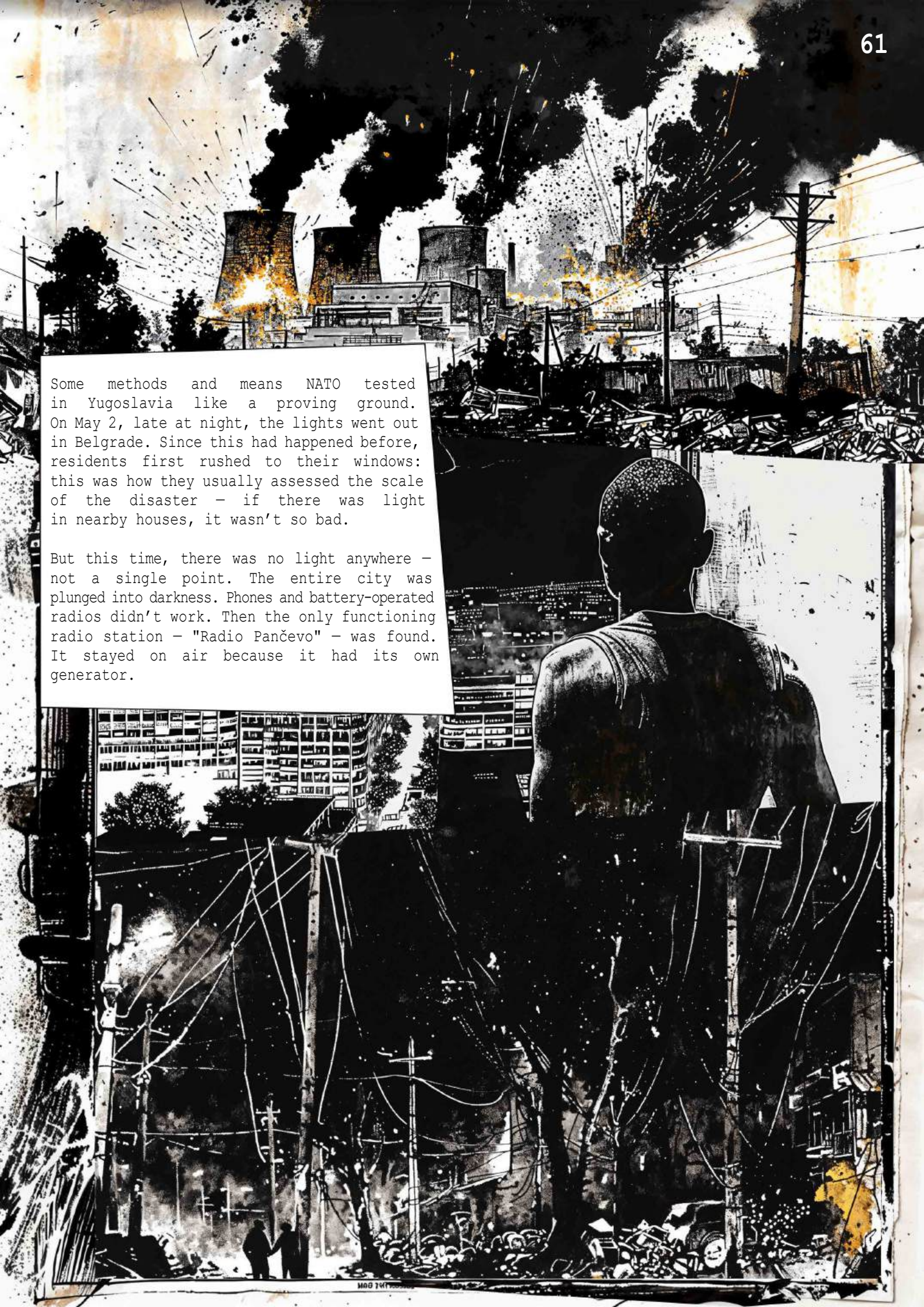


It just happened that when the missile was launched, a bus suddenly appeared on the bridge. They denied that targeting civilians was the goal. On the contrary, they declared an intention to avoid civilian casualties during strikes. However, both the train and the bus were moving according to their schedules, and the transportation schedules were not secret. If the true goal was to destroy bridges and avoid casualties, it wouldn't have been difficult to strike during intervals when public transport wasn't running.



WHAT I TELL YOU IN THE DARK,
SPEAK IN THE DAYLIGHT





Some methods and means NATO tested in Yugoslavia like a proving ground. On May 2, late at night, the lights went out in Belgrade. Since this had happened before, residents first rushed to their windows: this was how they usually assessed the scale of the disaster - if there was light in nearby houses, it wasn't so bad.

But this time, there was no light anywhere - not a single point. The entire city was plunged into darkness. Phones and battery-operated radios didn't work. Then the only functioning radio station - "Radio Pančevo" - was found. It stayed on air because it had its own generator.

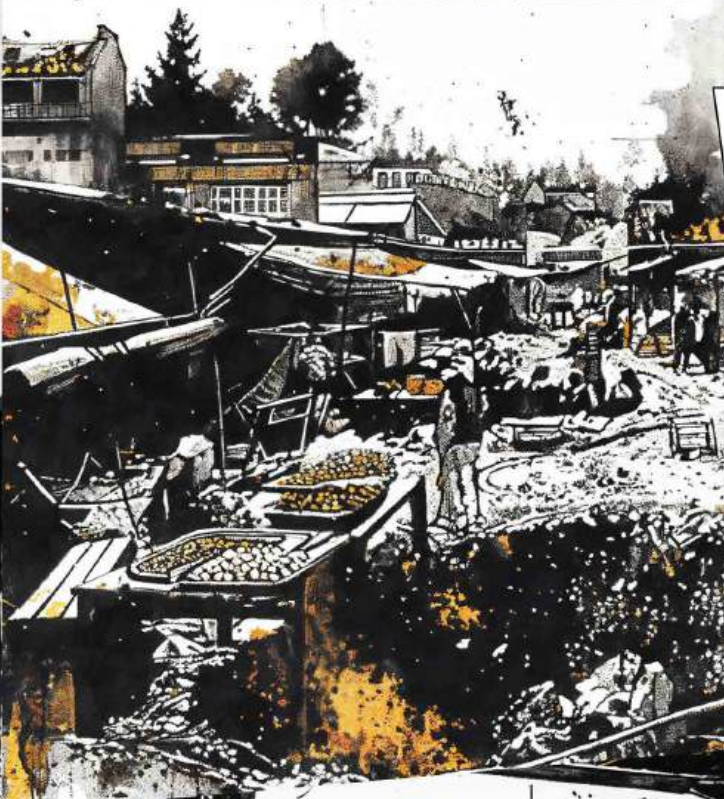
The night of May 2-3, many Belgraders – even those who had not previously gone to bomb shelters—spent in hiding. To this day, they shudder recalling that "pitch darkness where no one knew what to expect, but it certainly wasn't anything good." This was how Belgrade residents became acquainted with graphite bombs. These munitions caused short circuits in power lines, leaving entire cities without light and water.



Mom said
everyone should
go downstairs!

Thanks to these bombs, after the strike on the Nikola Tesla power plant in Obrenovac, most Yugoslav cities were left without electricity for some time that night. Maternity wards across the country urgently switched on their generators to power incubators for premature babies: at that time, for obvious reasons, far more pregnancies than usual resulted in premature births. All these babies needed artificial life support.





On May 7, NATO dropped cluster bombs, banned by the Geneva Convention, in Niš near the city market, with predictable results for civilians—15 people died, including a pregnant woman, and 18 were injured. NATO Secretary General Javier Solana promptly apologized, stating that the munitions were intended to strike the airfield, not civilians.



Yesterday, the Alliance committed another terrible crime...

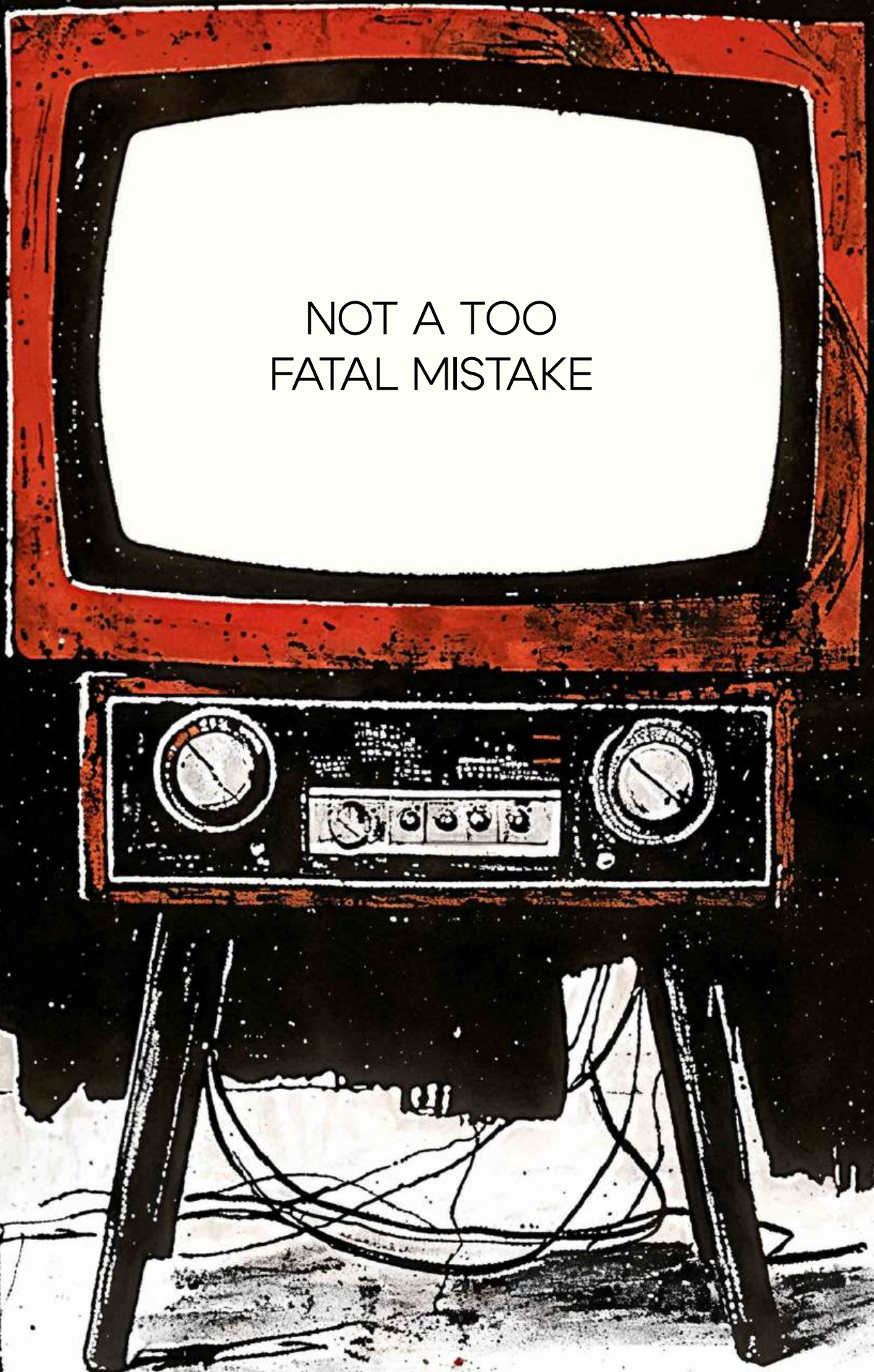


Today, the Alliance apologized for Niš and struck the historical center of the city of Kragujevac, destroying the theater, gymnasium, and post office!

Despite deep regret and claims of no intent to harm civilians, it is hard not to doubt: Niš was too often targeted by NATO aviation, and by the end of the conflict, 56 residents had died there, over 200 were injured to varying degrees, 120 city buildings were destroyed, and more than 3,000 were damaged. Local residents remember the bombings of the hospital, the city center, and entire residential areas. They also haven't forgotten the drops of graphite bombs in the area of Niš's hydrotherapy center.



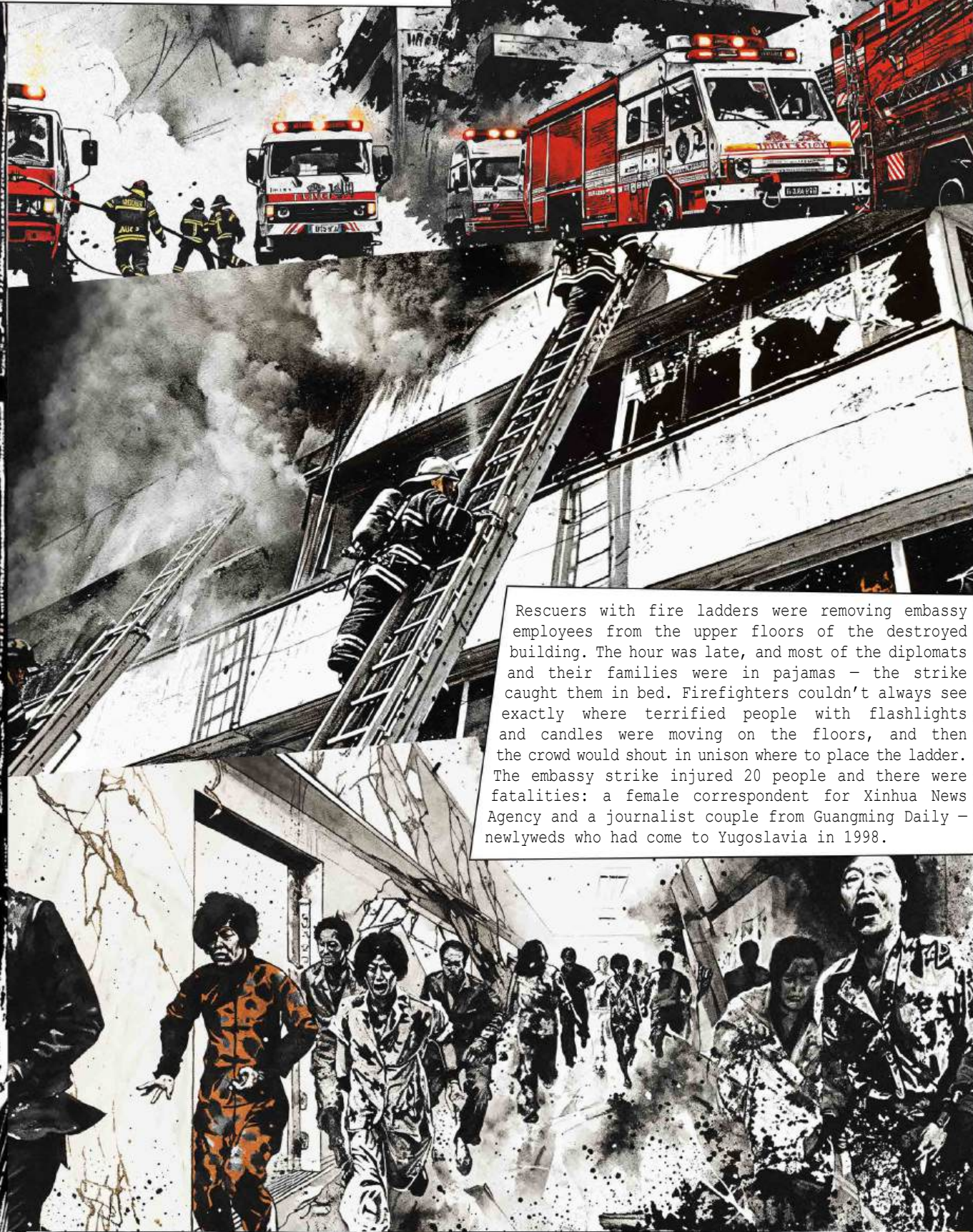
NOT A TOO
FATAL MISTAKE





On the night of May 7, the first rumor spread that NATO bombs had hit the Chinese embassy – a permanent member of the UN Security Council – most people simply didn't believe it. However, "Radio Pančevo" went on air with an official confirmation, and journalists who rushed to call the embassy realized that the phone lines were down.

Understanding the importance of public resonance, the Yugoslav Army General Staff itself took on informing the press by all possible means. Within 10-15 minutes, about a hundred journalists from different countries were at the embassy, and more were arriving.



Rescuers with fire ladders were removing embassy employees from the upper floors of the destroyed building. The hour was late, and most of the diplomats and their families were in pajamas – the strike caught them in bed. Firefighters couldn't always see exactly where terrified people with flashlights and candles were moving on the floors, and then the crowd would shout in unison where to place the ladder. The embassy strike injured 20 people and there were fatalities: a female correspondent for Xinhua News Agency and a journalist couple from Guangming Daily – newlyweds who had come to Yugoslavia in 1998.



Just a few hundred meters from the embassy, at the same time, the Yugoslavia Hotel was bombed, where, according to rumors, NATO was trying to "catch" the Interpol-wanted commander of the volunteer guard "Tigers."

Instead, a random Serb from Bosnia, unfortunately staying at the hotel overnight, was caught and killed. Twenty minutes after the first raid, the hotel was attacked again.

Are there casualties?

Yes, a Serb from Bosnia, stayed overnight...



Besides the realization of the tragedy and sympathy for the Chinese, Serbs still harbored hope for a powerful international public outcry from such an event and a push to end the bombings and establish peace. But by 4 a.m., another series of rocket-bomb strikes hit the capital – likely to show that even after such a monstrous mistake, NATO was not going to halt its operation. Dark Belgrade – with electricity remaining only in the very center of the city – was shrouded in thick smoke.



NATO
will not stop
bombing Yugoslavia
until...

Until recently, NATO leaders responded to calls to stop the bombings by stating they were waiting for a "clear, verifiable signal" of the start of troop withdrawals from Kosovo. On May 9, the Yugoslav military command decided to withdraw "excess" units of the armed forces and police from Kosovo due to the completion of military actions against the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA).



President
Slobodan Milošević
accepts all the known
demands of the alliance.

All the known
and five new,
yet unknown,
on top!



However, according to a representative of the British Foreign Office and an official NATO spokesperson, this was not sufficient to halt the bombings. Partial concessions were seen as a sign of weakness, "half-measures" were rejected by U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, and now the full implementation of NATO's demands was required.



Furthermore, U.S. Secretary of Defense William Cohen mockingly did not rule out the possibility of NATO air strikes on the Yugoslav forces being withdrawn from Kosovo. But the real response to Milošević's proposed compromise came with intense bombings on May 11.

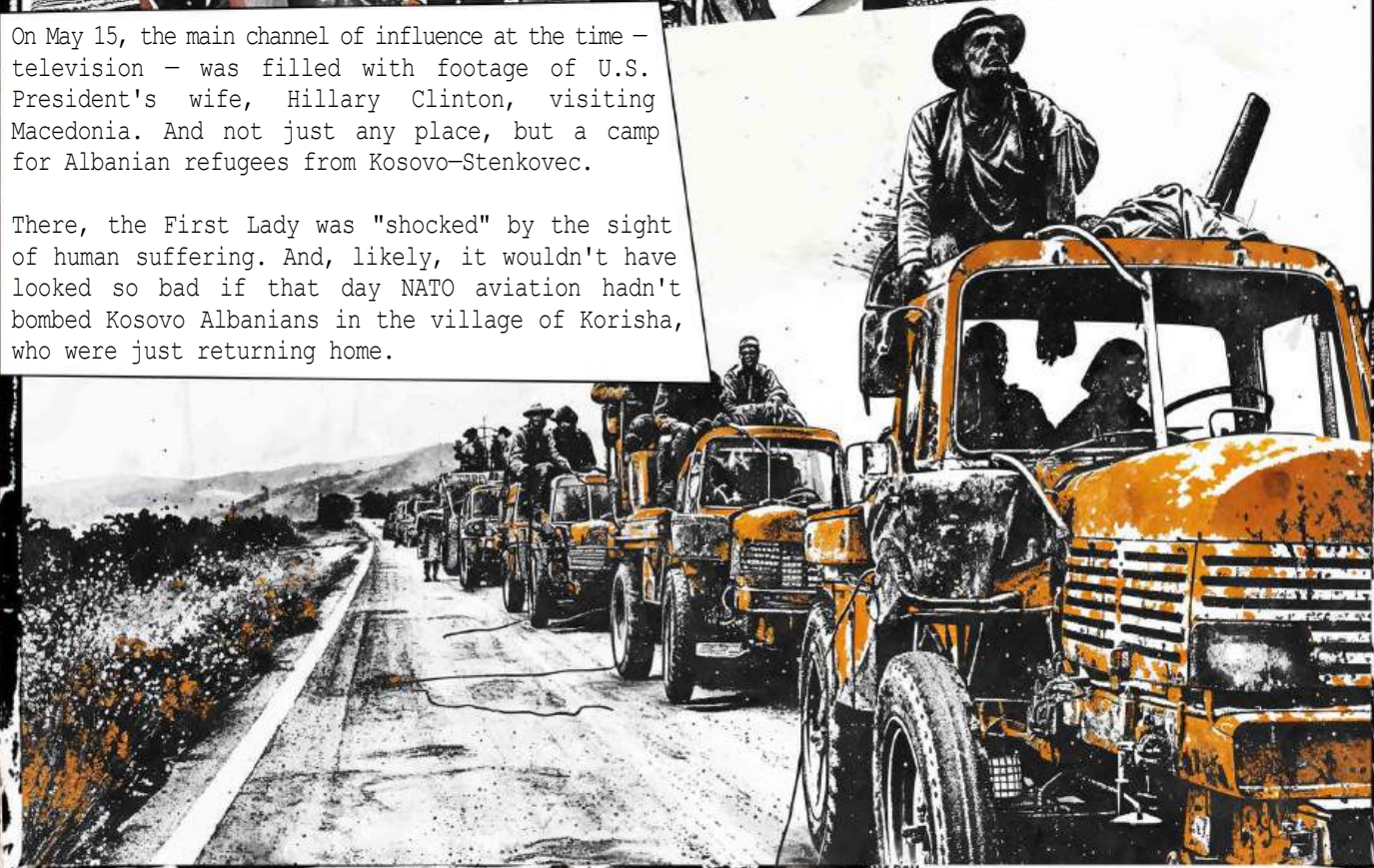
«THE NORTH ATLANTIC
ALLIANCE
PROTECTS THE DEFENSELESS»

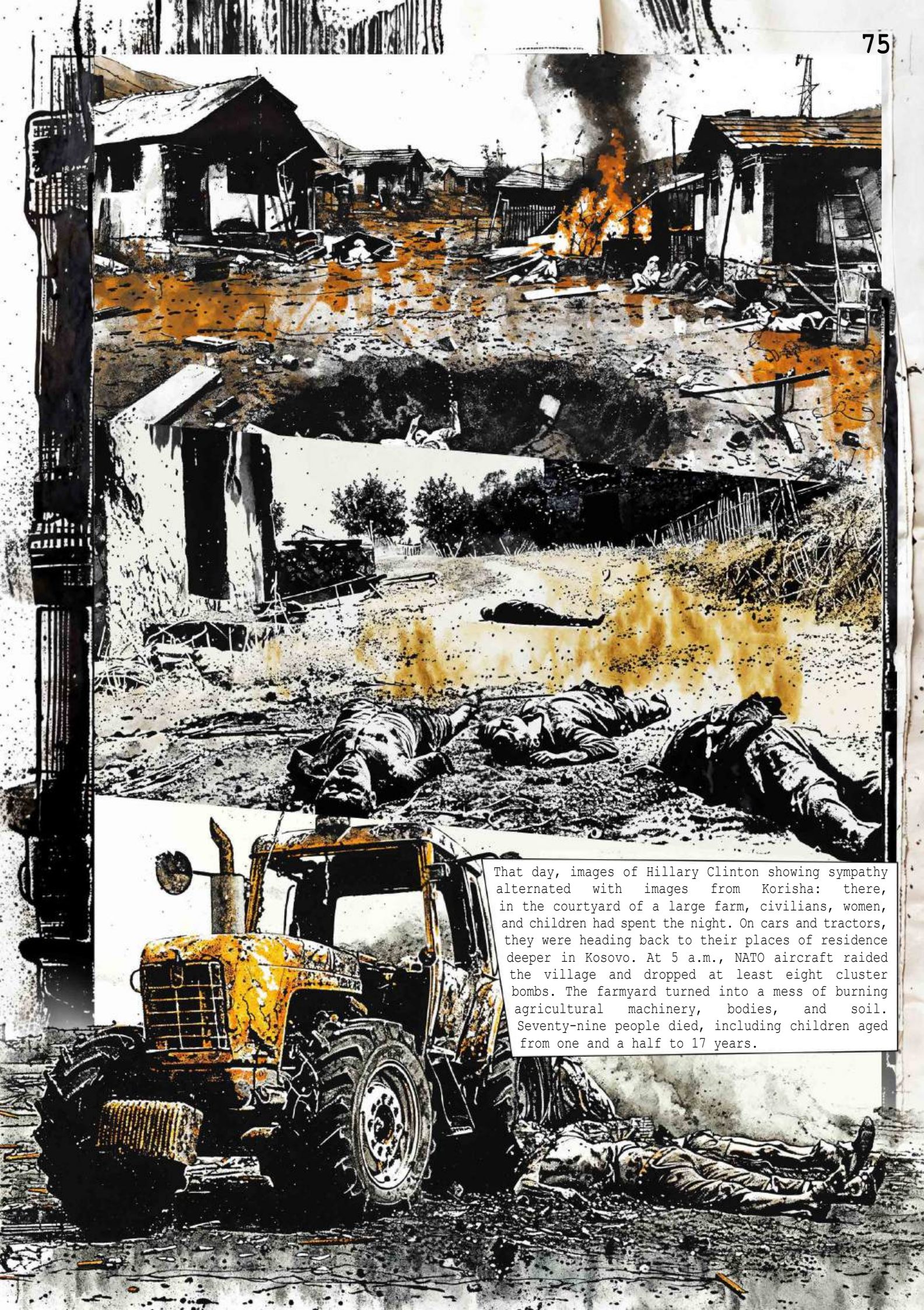




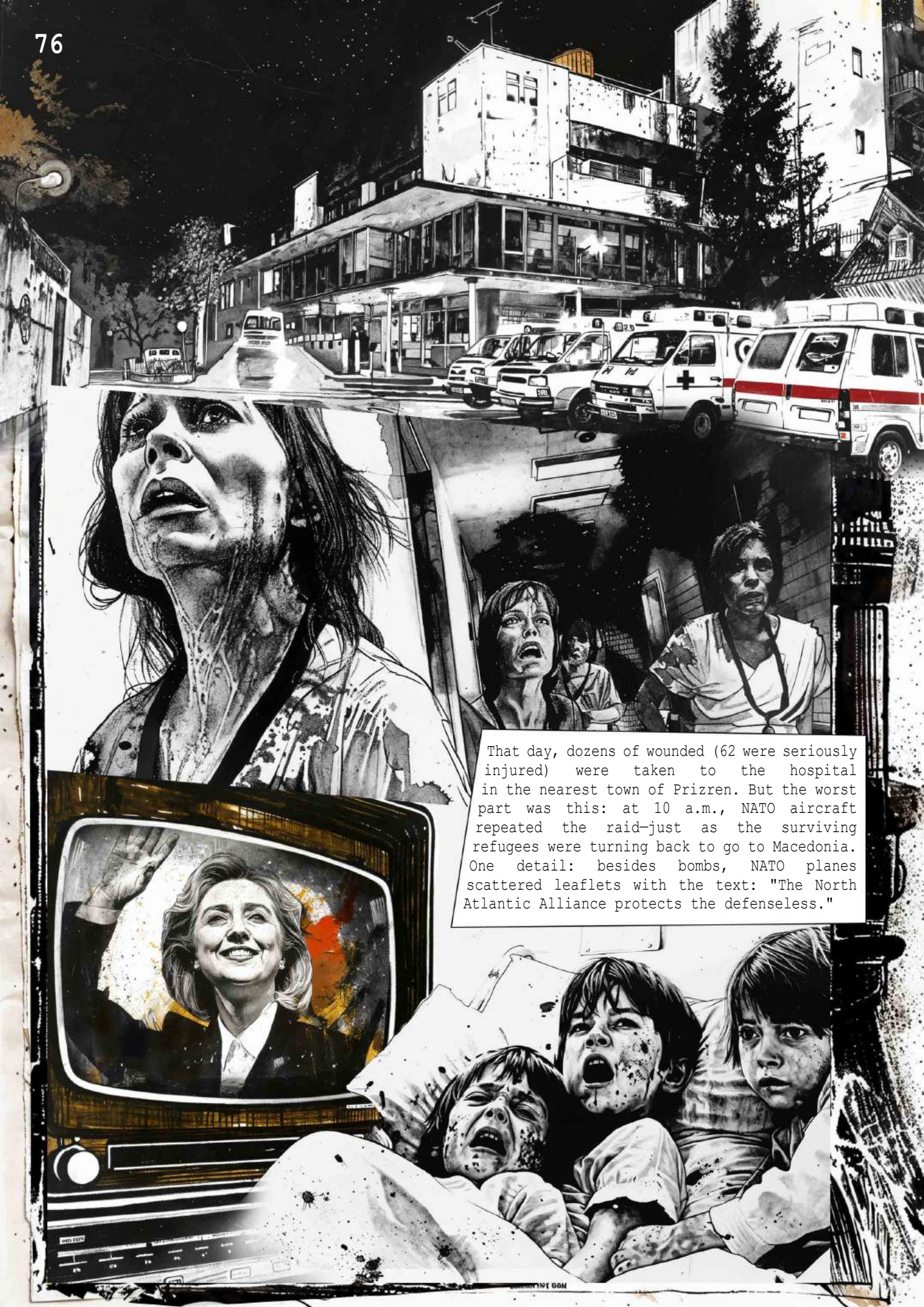
On May 15, the main channel of influence at the time — television — was filled with footage of U.S. President's wife, Hillary Clinton, visiting Macedonia. And not just any place, but a camp for Albanian refugees from Kosovo—Stenkovec.

There, the First Lady was "shocked" by the sight of human suffering. And, likely, it wouldn't have looked so bad if that day NATO aviation hadn't bombed Kosovo Albanians in the village of Korisha, who were just returning home.





That day, images of Hillary Clinton showing sympathy alternated with images from Korisha: there, in the courtyard of a large farm, civilians, women, and children had spent the night. On cars and tractors, they were heading back to their places of residence deeper in Kosovo. At 5 a.m., NATO aircraft raided the village and dropped at least eight cluster bombs. The farmyard turned into a mess of burning agricultural machinery, bodies, and soil. Seventy-nine people died, including children aged from one and a half to 17 years.



That day, dozens of wounded (62 were seriously injured) were taken to the hospital in the nearest town of Prizren. But the worst part was this: at 10 a.m., NATO aircraft repeated the raid—just as the surviving refugees were turning back to go to Macedonia. One detail: besides bombs, NATO planes scattered leaflets with the text: "The North Atlantic Alliance protects the defenseless."

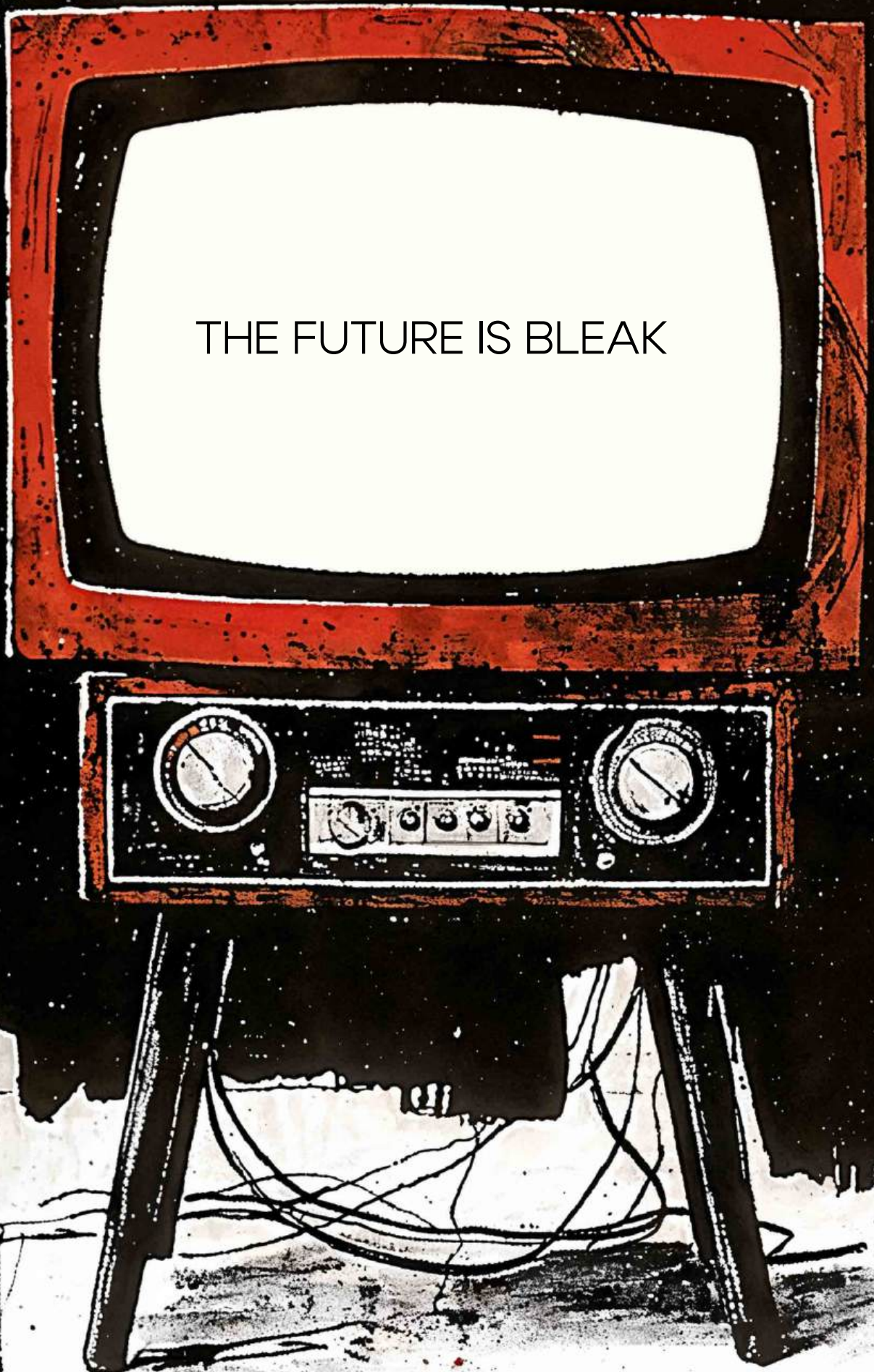
Soon, the list of "military targets" included hospitals. On May 20, NATO aviation struck with cruise missiles at the "Dr. Dragiša Mišović" clinic in Belgrade. The main strike hit the neurology department, where three patients died. Next to it was the gynecology department, and that night it housed 48 patients and 49 infants (one woman had given birth to twins). Ten minutes before the strike, a cesarean section had just been performed on a patient.

Nurse Jelena Savić recalled how she had just left the room with the instruments before the explosion, while her colleague stayed behind to prepare the operating room. The blast wave threw both women into the corridor and, despite their injuries, they immediately got up and ran to the intensive care unit. There, with five recently operated women, their colleague needed help. The babies and mothers were evacuated from the building within 20 minutes.



It's good
that the operation
is over!

THE FUTURE IS BLEAK





On Trinity Sunday, May 30, NATO aviation struck a bridge over the Velika Morava River in the town of Varvarin. The bridge led to the town's central square, crowded with people celebrating Sunday and the holiday. Four planes dropped bombs on the bridge in two waves, killing 10 and injuring 47 civilians.

Among the dead was 15-year-old Sanja Milenković, a winner of several mathematics olympiads and contests. She was studying in Belgrade and had come home for the holidays. Her father carried her body off the destroyed bridge. For understanding the profound senselessness of this strike from a military standpoint: the bridge was pedestrian, so it couldn't be used for moving equipment and weapons.



At the end of May, life in Belgrade became particularly oppressive: after raids with graphite bombs, which, exploding over power lines, caused short circuits (and duty crews then spent days removing synthetic fibers from the wires), came direct strikes on thermal power plants and substations. Belgrade lived without electricity and water for three days.

I turned the radio, they just reported that electricity had been restored — when NATO struck again...

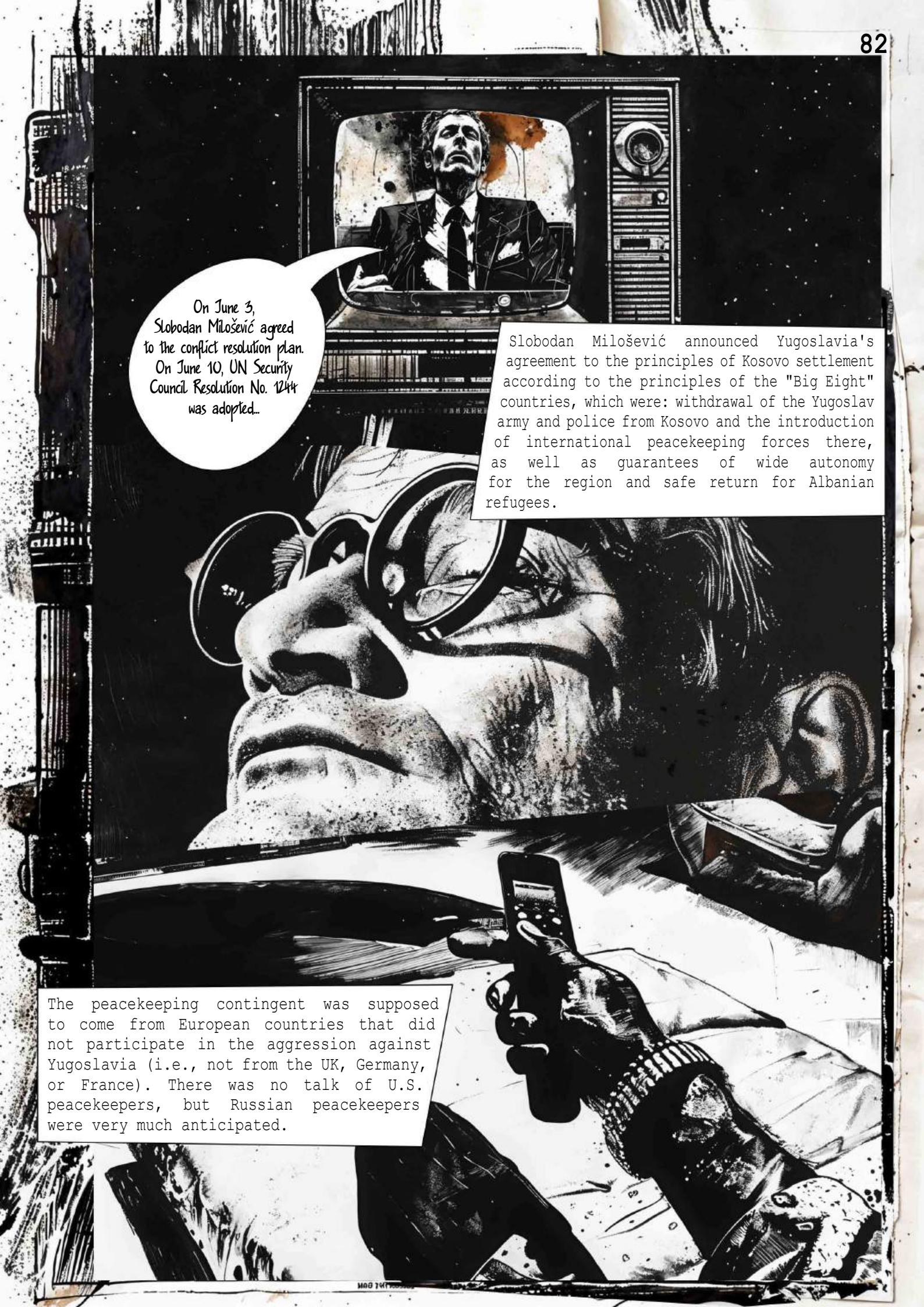
They hit 8 Čuburska Street, miraculously no one was hurt...

Like then, on Gorky Street...

Televisions were silent, and this silence was perceived more painfully than the lack of bread in the city. The radio helped a bit, though the short news releases did not inspire hope: it was clear that NATO was intentionally leading negotiations to a dead end—they did not want a peaceful settlement in Kosovo but an occupation of the region. Once again, Western politicians talked about a ground invasion. All this was discussed by local residents in lines for water tanks.

There,
a girl died,
very young...



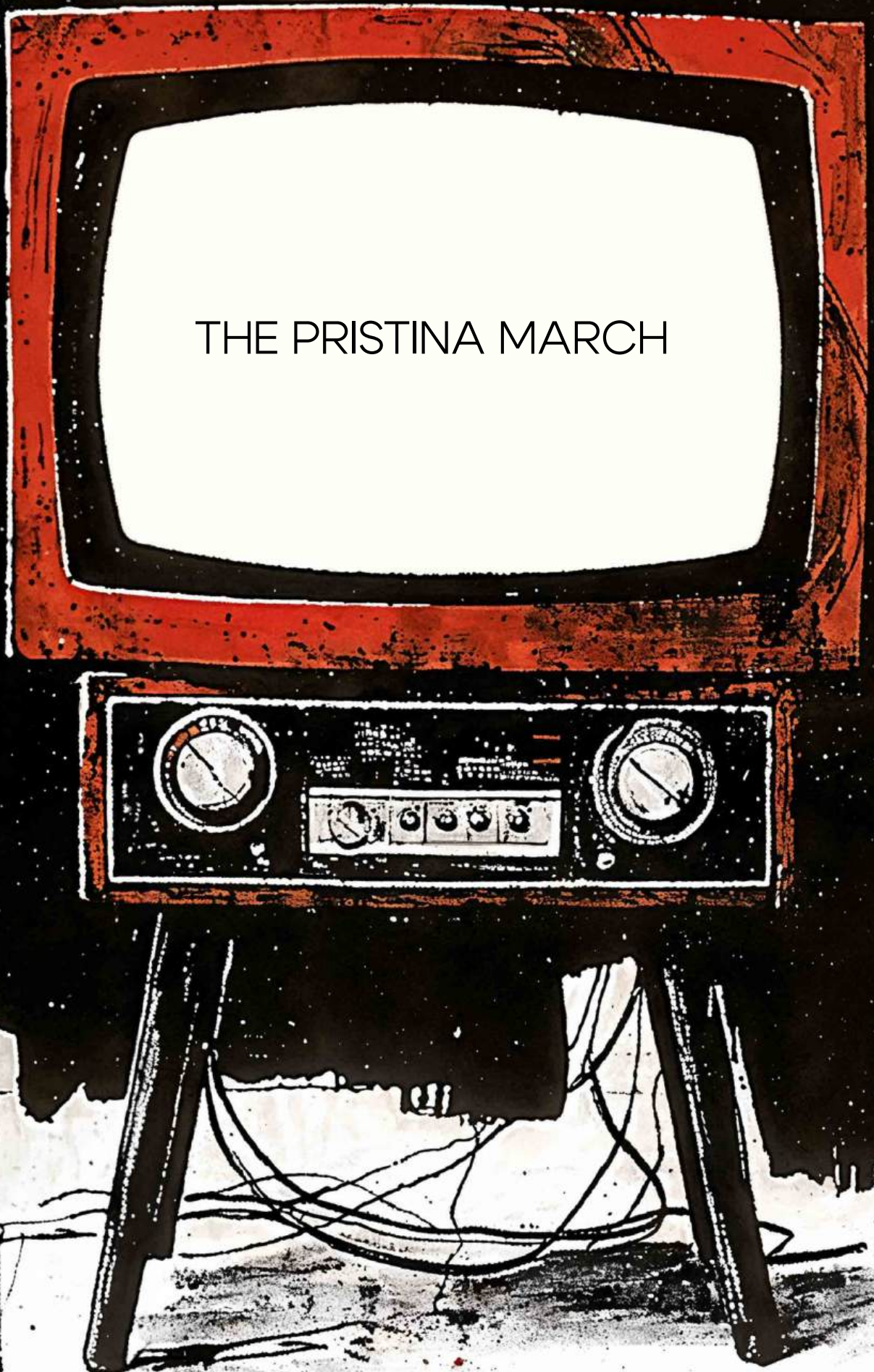


On June 3,
Slobodan Milošević agreed
to the conflict resolution plan.
On June 10, UN Security
Council Resolution No. 1244
was adopted...

Slobodan Milošević announced Yugoslavia's agreement to the principles of Kosovo settlement according to the principles of the "Big Eight" countries, which were: withdrawal of the Yugoslav army and police from Kosovo and the introduction of international peacekeeping forces there, as well as guarantees of wide autonomy for the region and safe return for Albanian refugees.

The peacekeeping contingent was supposed to come from European countries that did not participate in the aggression against Yugoslavia (i.e., not from the UK, Germany, or France). There was no talk of U.S. peacekeepers, but Russian peacekeepers were very much anticipated.

THE PRISTINA MARCH





Heard?
The Russians
have arrived!

When the military-technical agreement between the Yugoslav army and NATO was signed on June 9, and UN Security Council Resolution 1244 was adopted on June 10, officially ending the war, the Alliance began preparing to deploy troops in Kosovo and Metohija. At the same time, a mechanized column and a detachment of Russian paratroopers from the peacekeeping brigade in Bosnia and Herzegovina, after passing through Belgrade, moved towards Kosovo.



Despite all attempts by NATO generals to prevent this "initiative," the Russian peacekeepers entered Kosovo first on June 12. At 2 a.m. on June 12, the battalion, fully exploiting the surprise of their raid, reached the Kosovo airport "Slatina" and by 7 a.m. had taken it and its approaches under full control. Thus, CNN could only broadcast live the entry of Russian troops into Pristina - to the great disappointment of NATO's military leadership.





My order is
to let no one
through!



CALL
THE COMMANDER!
Under the international
treaty...



We don't know
about any agreements.
Command orders —
no one passes.



IN THAT CASE,
WE'LL CRUSH
YOUR CHECKPOINT
WITH TANKS!



TARGET 7.
LOAD!



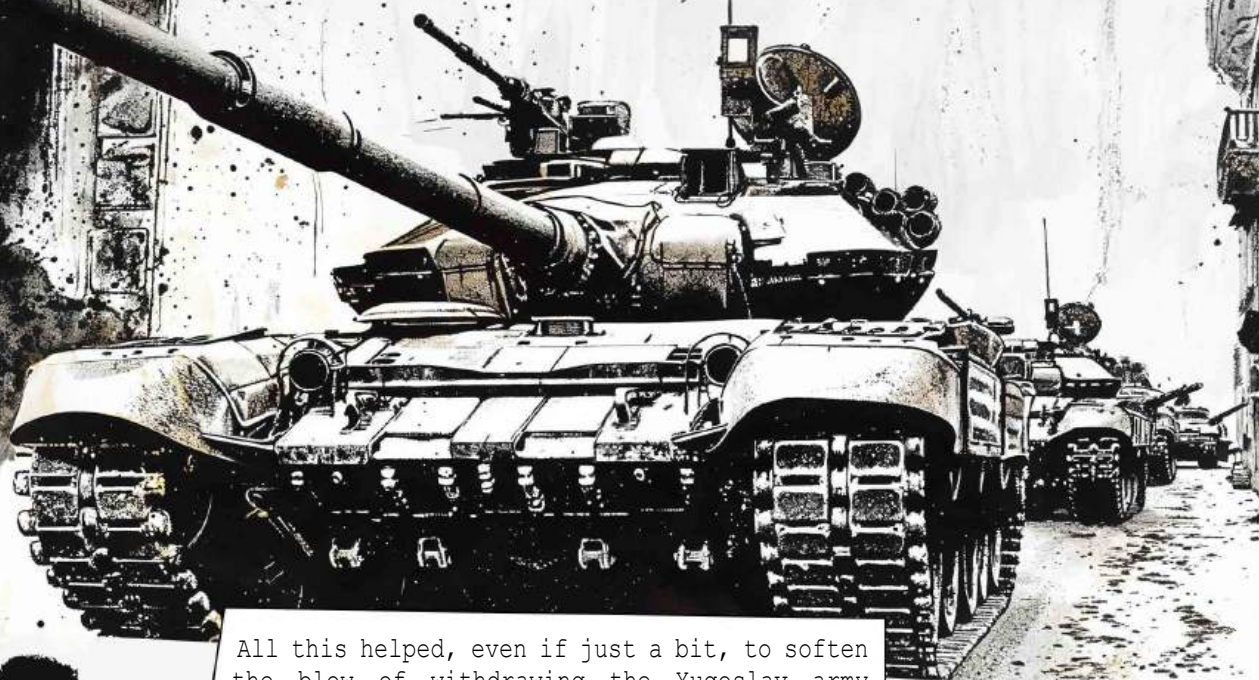
Look at that,
the officer's still
shouting but the driver's
already backing up!

Kosovo



According to the Alliance's plan, the first peacekeepers to enter Kosovo were to be from the United Kingdom (yes, Yugoslav authorities' demands were not considered). After such a daring seizure, there were several attempts to land or enter Slatina territory. But as soon as British helicopters descended over the airfield, Russian paratrooper armored personnel carriers began to circle the area, preventing a calm landing. And when British jeeps and tanks approached, it became clear that they wouldn't easily get through the Russian checkpoints.





All this helped, even if just a bit, to soften the blow of withdrawing the Yugoslav army and police from the region. It's worth noting that right into the withdrawing military columns, tractors and cars of local Serbs merged: many decided to flee to Yugoslav territory, fearing the return of terrorists under the cover of NATO troops. Thus ended this difficult chapter in the country's history.



On March 24, 1999, NATO countries began an aggressive war against Yugoslavia. More than 1,700 people, including 400 children, have been killed in civilian bombings by US, British, German and French aircraft.

**Summary
of the "humanitarian bombing"
of Yugoslavia**

Targets included more than
1,500 civilian settlements;
40,000 residential buildings,
and 300 elementary schools,

as well as
40 high schools,
50 preschools,
20 university buildings,
6 student dormitories,
39 hospitals and clinics,
35 churches,
29 monasteries.



