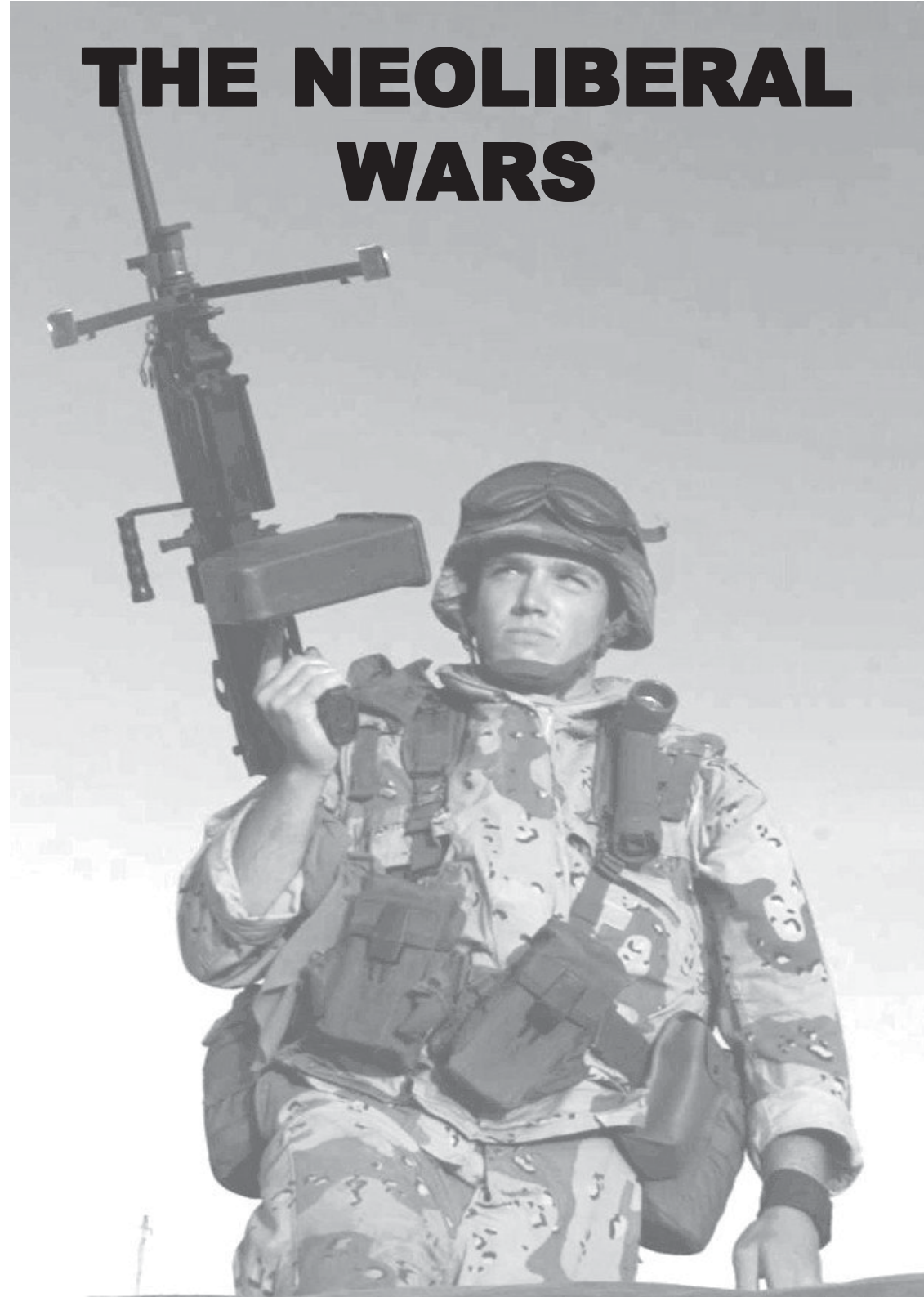




THE NEOLIBERAL WARS



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'Anti-Capitalism' as Ideology...and as Movement?

From the 2001 issue of the excellent annual communist journal from Britain, *Aufheben*, a critique of the anti-summit movement.

Behind the Twenty-First Century Intifada

Also from the 2001 issue of *Aufheben* a look at the proletarian elements of the Palestinian revolt in opposition to the usual presentation of it as a purely nationalist, state-building affair.

Class Struggle in Iraq

Four articles about war, mutiny and near-revolution in Iraq.

Global War for the World Order

Four articles from the German communist group *Wildcat* analysing the 9/11 atrocities and the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Globalisation: Origins-History-Analysis-Resistance

An article from the 1999 issue of British eco-anarchist/communist journal *Do Or Die*.

Mutinies: A Historical Reader

A collection of articles on mutinies against the Vietnam, Bosnia and Kosovo wars.

Outside and Against the Unions

A communist critique of trade unions focusing on the 1984-5 miners strike in Britain from British group *Wildcat*.

'Picket and Pot-banger Together': Class Re-composition in Argentina

A long article on the proletarian revolts in Argentina from the 2002 issue of *Aufheben* along with two shorter articles on the situation there.

Society of the Spectacle

The classic 1967 critique of spectacular capitalism by Guy Debord of *The Situationist International*.

Whither the World

Co-author of the classic *Eclipse and Re-emergence of the communist Movement* Gilles Dauve and Karl Nesic discuss the current malaise of both capital and proletariat in this piece from early 2002.

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INTRODUCTION

Warfare has significantly changed in the last thirty years. From 1945 until about 1975 most wars were part of the worldwide movement of decolonisation that saw the formation of dozens of new states in Africa and Asia. Since then most wars have been civil wars within the decolonised countries, sometimes continuing directly from the national liberation war as competing factions fought over the prize of the new state as in Angola.

While these wars all have their own proximate causes rooted in particular histories certain similarities can be discerned. Ruling classes have fractured into competing armed gangs under the strain of being squeezed between the demands of global capital (organised in the International Monetary Fund and World Bank) and proletarian and peasant resistance to the austerity programs they impose. A major component of capital's response to its long crisis since 1973 has been enclosure, the process of expropriating people from non-commodified resources so that they must become wage slaves in order to survive. War has been used to effect massive enclosures in countries as diverse as Afghanistan, Mozambique, and Yugoslavia. Once wars stop being functional for global capital the major powers intervene militarily to impose the peace they want as occurred in the Iran-Iraq war in 1988, the Bosnian war in 1995 and the Kosovo war in 1999 among others. Nevertheless as "Development by Other Means: The War in Somalia" makes clear things do not always go as planned for the masters of war. And of course the US-led occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq have turned out disastrously.

This pamphlet collects articles by a variety of communists on some of the wars that have been fought since 1990 as well as "War, Globalization and Reproduction" by Silvia Federici which is an account of how neoliberalism (the capitalist programme in response to the crisis, more commonly called "economic rationalism" in Australia) has meant war in many parts of the globe.

"Development by Other Means: The War in Somalia" first appeared in the communist magazine *Wildcat* #17, Spring 1994.

"Yugoslavia: From Wage Cuts to War" is from *Wildcat* #18, Summer 1996.

"Short Account of a Proletarian Catastrophe: The War In Chechnya and the Problem of Capitalist Reconstruction in the Caucasus" first appeared in the communist magazine *Undercurrent* #8, 1999. *Undercurrent* have a website at: www.anti-capital.net/undercurrent/index.html

"Afghanistan: A Potted Social History" was written in September 2001. Other articles by its authors, *Melancholic Troglodytes*, can be found at: www.geocities.com/nowar_buttheclawar/index.html

"War, Peace and the Crisis of the Reproduction of Human Capital in Former Yugoslavia" was included in an anti-war brochure published by *The Balkan Interior Enemy* in Athens in June 1999.

"War, Globalization and Reproduction" was one of only two good articles among a lot of academic liberal nonsense in the book *There is an Alternative: Subsistence and Worldwide Resistance to Corporate Globalization*, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, Nicholas Faraclas and Claudia von Werlhof (eds), Spinifex Press 2001. Other articles by Silvia Federici can be found at: www.commoner.org.uk/

effort as well as its resettlement scheme. So thorough was the co-operation and complicity between the USA, the UN and NGO personnel with the Ethiopian government that they hid the causes of the famine; they hid the diversion of food aid to the military (at most 15 per cent of the aid went to civilians, the rest went to the army), they hid the human costs of the resettlement scheme, they accompanied the Ethiopian Army 'to gain access to the famine areas' and, on top of it, they loudly complained that their humanitarian efforts were being hindered when the EPLF or the TPLF recaptured territory! Alex de Waal, a co-director of African Rights, has provided us with an in-depth, eye-opening account of this travesty (de Waal 1997: 115-27) which is especially valuable since he was directly involved in the events he reports on.

¹¹ This is similar to the 'new slavery' discussed in Bales (1999) where contemporary slave-owners in Thailand and Brazil avoid responsibility for their slaves who are then 'disposable' when they become unprofitable.



US troops in Kosovo

amply described this transfer of wealth. See: Brecher and Costello 1994; Bello 1994; Barnett and Cavanagh 1994; and Federici 1999.

⁴ The literature on structural adjustment in Africa is also immense. Since the mid-1980s, NGOs (both international and domestic) have become essential to the implementation of structural adjustment programmes, as they have taken over the areas of social reproduction that the state is forced to defund when it is structurally adjusted. As Alex de Waal writes: ‘the combination of neo-liberalism and advocacy of a “human face” has created a new role for international NGOs as subcontractors in the large-scale delivery of basic services such as health, agricultural extension and food rations... Often, the larger service-delivery NGOs (CARE, Catholic Relief Services, Save the Children Fund) have been drawn in when there has been a crisis such as famine or institutional collapse, and have stayed on afterwards. In other cases, NGOs have placed advisers in ministries (health is the favourite) and occasionally they have even taken over responsibility for entire services. The basic drug supply for clinics in the capital of Sudan, primary health care in rural Uganda and almost all TB and leprosy programmes in Tanzania are just three of the “national” health programmes largely directed by international NGOs using funds from Euro-American institutional donors’ (de Waal 1997: 53).

⁵ A good example of this plundering of weaker groups is to be found in the Sudan, where, in the late 1980s, the Sudanese government gave the Murahaliin militia, drawn from the Baggara Arabs, the right to plunder the cattle wealth of the Dinka. ‘Their raids were frequent, widespread and devastating. The raiders stole livestock, destroyed villages, poisoned wells and killed indiscriminately. They were also implicated in enslaving captives. Displaced survivors fled to garrison towns, where they were forced to sell their cattle and other assets cheaply’ (de Waal 1997: 94). For more on this process see Duffield 1994: 54-7).

⁶ For an analysis of World Bank policies promoting the capitalization of agriculture in Africa, see Caffentzis (1995).

⁷ The actual warfare between the government and the Islamic fundamentalists began with the government’s refusal to recognize the electoral gains of the fundamentalists in early 1992. The roots of the conflict, though, are to be found in the government’s harsh response to the 1988 anti-IMF riots. (See Stone 1997)

⁸ In 1987, Oxfam reported that a European Commission official responded to its request to aid pastoralists in southern Sudan with a self-fulfilling prophecy: ‘In his view, pastoralism was, in any case, non-viable and in decline all over the region.’ Oxfam went on to comment: ‘It is important to note that USAID, UNICEF, and EEC have all recently expressed similar views concerning pastoralism in the South; that it is on the way out and in twenty years would have disappeared anyway’ (Keen and Wilson 1994: 214).

⁹ As de Waal writes: ‘the first negotiated agreement on access to a war zone [was] Operation Lifeline in Sudan April 1989 [... this was] followed in 1991-2 with the concept of “cross-mandate” operations, for example in eastern Ethiopia, where UNHCR, UNICEF and WFP assisted refugees, displaced people and impoverished residents without discrimination. The cross-mandate approach was further developed in the former Yugoslavia’ (de Waal 1997: 69).

¹⁰ One of the most egregious examples of this transformation of aid providers into military protagonists is the assistance given by the USA and the UN in the Ethiopian government’s war against the Eritrean People’s Liberation Front (EPLF) and the Tigray People’s Liberation Front (TPLF) in the 1980s. The famous ‘We are the Children’ famine of 1984-85 was not caused by drought, overpopulation, or improper land use as claimed at the time; its true cause was the Ethiopian government’s many offensives against the EPLF and TPLF as well as its resettlement programme which forcibly moved hundreds of thousands of people from the north to the south of the country (during which 50 000 people died). Food relief provided by the USA, the UN and various NGOs (which totalled almost \$3 billion between 1985 and 1988) was essential for the continuation of the Ethiopian government’s war

DEVELOPMENT BY OTHER MEANS: THE WAR IN SOMALIA

The defeat suffered by the death squads of the New World Order at the hands of the heroic proletariat of Somalia has made it clear that warlord Clinton didn’t send in his gunmen to give food to the starving but to terrorise the proletarian population. This is not because fearless journalists have exposed the UN’s war aims, but on the contrary, because fearless proles have killed journalists.

We don’t have any means of knowing directly what’s going on but the revolt of the proletariat has been strong enough to leave traces in the bourgeois media in the form of events which it simply can’t explain if clan-based armies and their supporters were the only source of resistance towards the UN. They have not been able to deny that many clashes between UN troops and Somalis have been with largely unarmed civilians rather than with the soldiers of General Aideed. On occasions residents of working class districts of Mogadishu have built barricades which even Aideed’s militiamen are not allowed to pass. Often the media will try to make out that there is just a blind nationalist, or even racist, rage against foreigners – ignoring the fact that almost all the foreigners in Somalia are journalists, soldiers or others directly involved in the UN war effort.

Some of the most outrageous media bullshit is that concerning the “warlord” General Mohammed Farah Aideed. In June 1993 there was a UN offensive, supposedly in response to the deaths of 24 Pakistani UN soldiers sent to close down Aideed’s radio station, in which numerous buildings were attacked around Mogadishu. The stated aim was to capture Aideed and bring him to trial for the deaths of the soldiers. The real aim was clear – it was to strengthen support for Aideed in the same way as the US bombings of Baghdad were designed to strengthen support for Saddam. Aideed at first welcomed the American invaders but then saw how hated they were and became a champion of anti-imperialism, his radio station pumping out anti-UN propaganda. This improved his standing with the proletariat no end.

ANOTHER WAR FOR OIL

The economic and strategic reasons for the US/UN intervention in Somalia are fairly clear. Somalia has enormous reserves of oil. Four major American oil companies (Conoco, Amoco, Chevron and Phillips) obtained the rights to prospect nearly two thirds of Somalia’s surface area just before President Siad Barre was overthrown at the beginning of 1991. Somalia was classed by the World Bank as one of the most promising African countries in terms of petroleum resources. It does not yet possess a significant oil industry or oil producing proletariat but it almost certainly will in a few years time. Creating social peace through terror there could pay handsome dividends for the bourgeoisie (literally for those investing in oil). The geographical location of the country is also important, allowing control of the tanker routes to the Red Sea and the Gulf. But it’s easy to make too much of these sorts of considerations. Capital has strategic interests all over the world – why should there be a need for such an overwhelming display of force in this particular little corner of it?

The main reason is that the US government thought that they could win without too much effort, installing a Somali government of their choice and helping American national unity recover from the battering it was given by the uprisings of May ’92. At the same time the image of the UN could be improved. Everybody loves famine relief agencies, so what could be better than showing UN troops protecting them? A few thousand US troops could have been stationed there for a spot of counterinsurgency training. In other words, Somalia could have played the military training role for

the US that Northern Ireland has for Britain. At present the US Army is being reorganised as a force which can actually take over pieces of territory and police them for long periods of time rather than one which only knows how to bomb them to bits and then get the hell out. Unlike British troops, most American troops don't know how to be cops. This is changing.

At the Fort Chafee army base in Arkansas 50,000 soldiers a year are put through a special training programme involving an artificial country called "Cortina". This has a guerrilla army (played by a US infantry battalion) and police, army and civilian authorities provided by a defence consultancy firm called BDM International. The troops are taught how to liaise with the local authorities and which suspects to free and which to hold. They are given the necessary ideological preparation for carrying out massacres – angry demonstrations by villagers often shield guerrillas. None of this prepared them for the horrors they would face in Somalia.

The US bourgeoisie must have thought that after years of war the Somali proletariat would be so crushed that they wouldn't resist the US/UN invaders, and might even welcome them as liberators. They were wrong.

BRUTALITY

The brutality of the UN forces is something that the media don't even try to hide. On 13 June at least 14 Somalis were killed when UN troops from Pakistan fired a heavy machine gun directly into a crowd protesting at the American bombing of various districts of Mogadishu, supposedly arms dumps for General Aideed. The commander of the Pakistani troops justified the shooting in words chillingly reminiscent of those used by British military commanders after Bloody Sunday in Northern Ireland, or those used after various massacres in Vietnam. He said that Somali "gunmen" routinely use civilian crowds as human shields. No guns were found on any of the dead. The head of UN peace-keeping operations, Kofi Annan, said that the incident showed the need for UN forces to be better equipped with tear gas and other riot control gear. On other occasions US helicopters have fired cannon shells and rockets at hospitals and even at the offices of their beloved relief agencies.

As soon as they arrived the UN troops made it clear that they were there to act as cops. When the US Marines first arrived in Mogadishu they encountered no military resistance at all. The first violence they were involved in was beating up some unarmed Somalis sleeping in a hangar at the airport! A wave of brutal "weapons searches" followed. Sometimes the lads even went a bit too far for their masters to tolerate. In March a Somali civilian was beaten to death while being detained at the Canadian UN compound at Relet Huen. Four paratroops were charged with torture and second-degree murder, the first time any Canadian soldier has faced such charges resulting from UN operations.

Much of this brutality, though, is in direct response to working class militancy. On 24 February there were widespread riots against the UN. Thousands of unarmed Somalis, described in the press as "supporters of General Aideed", fought UN troops and attacked the US embassy using just knives and rocks and shouting anti-American slogans. They were fired on with machine guns from US Cobra helicopters. The UN have never admitted how many they killed. The French embassy was also attacked. On September 9 Pakistani UN troops were attacked by a mob of hundreds of Somali men, women and children. A hundred or so were killed when UN helicopters opened fire.

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NOTES

¹ By a recent count there were seventy-five countries experiencing some form of war in 1999 (Effe 1999); thirty-three of them are to be found in Africa's forty-three continental nations. This is the 'Fourth World War' against the world's poor that Subcomandante Marcos often writes about.

² For a description of this new phase of capitalism that emphasizes the disappearance of interclass mediations see Federici (1999) and Midnight Notes Collective (1992). The phrase 'new enclosures' is used in these articles to indicate that the thrust of contemporary capitalism is to annihilate any guarantees of subsistence that were recognized by socialist, post-colonial or Keynesian states in the 1950s and 1960s. This process must be violent in order to succeed.

³ The immense existing literature on structural adjustment, globalization and neoliberalism has

Finally, we have to realize that we cannot mobilize against the bombings alone, nor demand that bombing stops and call that ‘peace’. We know from the post-war scenario in Iraq that the destruction of a country’s infrastructure produces more deaths than the bombs themselves. What we need to learn is that death, hunger, disease and destruction are presently a daily reality for most people across the planet. More than that, structural adjustment - the most universal programme in the Third World today, the one that, in all its forms (including the African Growth and Opportunity Act), represents the contemporary face of capitalism and colonialism - is war. Thus, the programme of the anti-war movement must include the elimination of structural adjustment in all of its many forms if war, and the imperialistic project it embodies, is to finally come to an end.

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SMOKED PORK...

During a battle starting in Bakara market in Mogadishu on October 3 at least 500 Somalis were killed. Two US helicopters came down. Given the importance of helicopter pilots in carrying out massacres it’s hardly surprising that the charred bodies of some of these pigs were dragged through the streets of Mogadishu by a jubilant crowd. Another one was protected from the righteous wrath of the proles by Aideed’s men, raising the spectre of a “hostage crisis” for the US government. The attitude of the local population is well illustrated by the following quote from the *Guardian* (5 Oct 93):

““There were six Americans inside the helicopter. I saw it had been hit and then it crashed down on six children who were coming out of the Koranic school’, said Hassan Issa Ahmed, whose house was five yards from the crash site. ‘The Americans defended themselves by opening fire on all sides. So people went into their homes to get their guns. We killed three of the Americans and one of them ran away’”.

On other occasions UN troops have been dragged into crowds at feeding centres and hacked to pieces. And it’s not just soldiers who are being brutally dealt with. When the Americans first arrived in December ’92 there were around 600 journalists about, including more than a hundred photographers and cameramen just at the famous beach landing of the marines. Now there are just eight Western correspondents. Recent TV pictures have been produced by means of a miniature video camera left in the hands of the Somali driver of the Reuters team. This mass withdrawal of the media is the result of the deaths of three Reuters and one Associated Press journalist, all deliberately killed by angry mobs. In July ’93 three photographers and a soundman were killed after American helicopters rocketed an alleged “command and control base” for General Aideed in an area packed with civilians, killing at least 30. According to the testimony of Scott Peterson (*Daily Telegraph*, 13 July 93), a journalist who narrowly escaped with his life, the hacks were under the protection of Aideed’s men at the time. Another surviving journo-pig, Mohamed Shaffi of Reuters, described how he burst into a nearby residential compound to escape but a woman living in it chased him back on to the street (*Independent*, 13 July 93). This incident led to calls from the Italian government for military operations to be suspended. The few media scum who remain are generally too frightened to leave their hotel rooms.

At the time of writing the US troops are still scheduled to leave by March 31, 1994 and the French and Belgians before then. Half the 16,000 US troops stationed in Somalia are kept well out of harm’s way – they’re at sea. The rest are mostly based at the huge fortified UN compound in Mogadishu and aren’t even in a position to defend the UN’s own property. According to one UN official, Somalis slip over the wall night and day, ripping off anything they can. “We’re losing vehicles from the port before we even inventory them” (*Guardian*, 27 Nov 93).

No police force can operate without some degree of cooperation from the policed population; UN troops are no exception.

...AND POWDERED MILK

The US invasion of Somalia was originally called “Operation Restore Hope”, with the stated aim of maintaining food aid to the starving children whose images had graced the TV screens of the Western countries. This is true up to a point, in that “aid to the starving” is a well-used capitalist code word for the use of food as a weapon against the proletariat. Capital creates famine. In Africa this is usually the result of the destruction of non-capitalist ways of obtaining food – subsistence farming, herding, hunting and gathering. It might do this through a declared war between states (extremely common in

Africa) or through its “peaceful” development – a bloody war against the independent producers! In other parts of the world where there is already a proletariat famine may be deliberately created by means of sanctions as a means of crushing proletarian resistance. Either way, food aid is then dangled in the faces of the starving to ensure that they do capital’s bidding. “Food for Work” schemes, the Third World equivalent of workfare, are just the most blatant examples of this.

Food “aid” might be organised through the UN or through charities, otherwise known as NGOs (non-governmental organisations) or PVOs (private voluntary organisations). As every cynic knows, charities are businesses – but not just because they provide fat salaries and conferences in Rome with generous expenses. Charities must obey the logic of capitalist expansion, they must use money to make more money and so expand capital’s Evil Empire of alienated labour. In the Western countries where they are based this means such things as paying for more adverts showing starving children, putting money into the coffers of advertising agencies, public relations companies and newspaper owners and opening more charity shops which gullible idiots work in for free. Charities must compete with each other for the money available and so are forced to expand and restructure. In the famine-stricken regions where they operate it means creating dispossession and the means of maintaining it, so creating more “clients” (starving people) for the charity and thus attracting more aid.

Food aid is often just a hidden form of subsidy for whichever regime happens to be in power, being used to feed the army – this applies to Bosnia as much as Somalia. In Angola UN aid is being distributed through the military on both sides in the devastated city of Kuito, even though there are no civilians on the UNITA side of town. In Kurdistan famine and food aid are used to strengthen the Kurdish nationalists and to take back the gains of the 1991 uprising by forcing starving insurgents to sell their guns, anti-tank rockets and printing presses.

Food which doesn’t go directly to soldiers ends up being sold by local merchants, and buildings and vehicles must be rented from other entrepreneurs who become dollar millionaires in the process. The presence of all this money and commodified food accelerates the destruction of subsistence food production and encourages cash crop production. In the case of Somalia the country went from being self-sufficient in food in the early ’70s to being one of the most food-dependent in Africa by the mid-1980s.

Many of the large houses in Mogadishu which are rented to relief agencies and the media are owned by one Osman Atto, one of the richest men in the country. He used to be the representative of the US oil company Conoco and owns their office, which is being used by the US special envoy to Somalia, Robert Oakley. Atto is also General Aideed’s main financier. Whenever a plane carrying food flies into an airport the relief agency concerned has to pay several thousand dollars to Somali middle men for landing rights and security. Atto was held in preventive detention for a few days but the UN have done nothing to curtail his legitimate business activities.

DEVELOPMENT

Somalis are a distinct ethnic group who, prior to capitalism, were mostly farmers in the South of what is now Somalia and nomadic pastoralists in the North. The colonial era saw the North under British rule and the South under Italian rule. Fortunately for the nomads in the North the British did very little with it. In the South development began – the best land was grabbed by Italian farmers who grew cash crops such as cotton and sugar cane. Life for the nomads has never been easy but mass starvation was very rare before capitalism. When the rains failed they could migrate long distances – something which became impossible with the creation of nation states and private property in land.

like Angola and Sudan, are in a state of permanent emergency and their viability as political entities is now in question.

It is through this combination of financial and military warfare that the African peoples resistance against globalization has so far been held in check, in the same way as it has in Central America (El Salvador, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Panama) where throughout the 1980s open US military intervention was the rule.

The difference is that, in Africa, the right of the USA/UN to send troops has generally been justified in the name of ‘peace-keeping’, ‘peacemaking’ and ‘humanitarian intervention’, possibly because under any other condition, a landing of the marines (of the type we have seen in Panama and Grenada) would not have been internationally accepted. These interventions, however, are the new faces of colonialism, and not in Africa alone. This is a colonialism that aims at controlling policies and resources rather than gaining territorial possession, in political terms, a ‘philanthropic’, ‘humanitarian’, ‘foot-loose’ colonialism that aims at ‘governance’ rather than ‘government’, for the latter involves a commitment to a specific institutional and economic set-up, whereas modern-day free enterprise imperialism wants to maintain its freedom always to choose the institutional set-up, the economic forms and the locations best suited to its needs.¹¹ However, as in the colonialism of old, soldiers and merchants are not far apart, as the marriage of food-aid distributions and military intervention today again demonstrates.

What is the significance of this scenario for the anti-war movement, and the claim made by this chapter that war is still on the global agenda?

First, that we can expect the situation that has developed in post-adjustment Africa - with its mixture of economic and military warfare and the sequence of structural adjustment – conflict - intervention - to be reproduced over and over in the coming years throughout the Third World. We can also expect to see more wars develop in the former socialist countries, for the institutions and forces that are pushing the globalization process find state-owned industry and other remnants of socialism as much of an obstacle to ‘free enterprise’ as African communalism.

In this sense, NATO’s war against Yugoslavia is likely to be the first example (after that of Bosnia) of what is to come, as the end of state-socialism is being replaced by liberalization and the free market, NATO’s advance to the East providing ‘the security framework’. So close is the relation between NATO’s ‘humanitarian intervention’ in Yugoslavia and ‘humanitarian intervention’ in Africa that relief workers - the ground troops of the contemporary war-machine - were brought from Africa to Kosovo, where they have already had the opportunity to assess the relative value of African and European lives in the eyes of international organizations, measured by the quality and quantity of the resources provided to the refugees.

We should also see that the situation we confront is very different from the imperialism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For the imperialist powers of those days were tied to, and responsible for, specific and territorially-defined social, political and infrastructural arrangements. Thus, in the imperialist era of the gun-boat and the machine-gun, which could kill thousands of people from afar, responsibility for massacres, famines and other forms of mass killing could always be identified. We know, for instance, that it was King Leopold of Belgium who had a personal responsibility for the killing of millions of people in the Congo (Hochschild 1998). By contrast, today, millions of Africans are dying every year because of the consequences of structural adjustment, but no one is held responsible for it. On the contrary, the social causes of death in Africa are increasingly becoming as invisible as the invisible hand of the capitalist market (Walton and Seddon 1994).

MOZAMBIQUE: A PARADIGM CASE OF CONTEMPORARY WAR

How war, first, and then humanitarian relief can be used to recolonize a country, bring it to the market and break its resistance to economic and political dependence is best seen in the case of Mozambique (Hanlon 1991; 1996). Indeed, the war that the Mozambique National Resistance or Renamo (a proxy of apartheid South Africa and the USA) waged against this country for almost a decade (1981-90) contains all the key elements of today's new globalization wars:

1. *The destruction of the country's physical and social (re)productive infrastructure to provoke a reproduction crisis and enforce economic and political subordination.* This Renamo achieved through (a) the use of systematic terror against the population (massacres, enslavement, the infliction of horrendous mutilations) that forced people off their land, and turned them into refugees (more than one million people were killed in this war); (b) the demolition of roads, bridges, hospitals, schools and, above all, the destruction of all agricultural activities and assets - the basic means of subsistence for a population of farmers. (The case of Mozambique shows the strategic significance of 'low-intensity warfare', beginning with the use of land-mines as a means to prevent people from going out to farm, and thereby creating a famine situation requiring external help.)

2. *The use of 'food aid' delivered to displaced people and victims of famine to ensure compliance with economic conditionalities, create long-term food dependency, and undermine a country's ability to control its economic and political future.* It must not be forgotten that food aid is a great boost to US agribusiness, which profits from it twice, first by being relieved of its huge surpluses and, later, by profiting from the helped country's dependence on imported food.

3. *The transfer of decision-making from the state to international organizations and NGOs.* So thorough was the attack on Mozambican sovereignty that, once it was forced to ask for aid, Mozambique had to accept that the NGOs be given the green light in the management of relief operations, including the right to enter any part of its territory, and distribute food directly to the population at places of their choice. As Joseph Hanlon has shown in *Mozambique: Who Calls the Shots?*, the government was hard put to protest the NGOs' politics, even in the case of right-wing NGOs such as World Vision that used the relief distributions for political and religious propaganda; or NGOs such as CARE that were suspected of collaborating with the CIA.

4. *The imposition of impossible peace conditions, such as 'reconciliation' and power-sharing with Renamo (the Mozambican government's and population's most irreconcilable enemy, responsible for many atrocities and the massacre of more than one million people) which created the potential for permanent destabilization.* This 'reconciliation' policy, now cynically and widely imposed, from Haiti to South Africa, as a 'peace-condition' - the political equivalent of the practice of feeding both parties in a conflict context - is one of the most telling expressions of the present recolonization drive, as it proclaims that people in the Third World should never have the right to have peace, and to protect themselves from proven enemies. It also proclaims that not every country has the same rights, since the USA, or any country of the EU, would never dream of accepting such a foul proposition.

CONCLUSION: FROM AFRICA TO YUGOSLAVIA AND BEYOND

The case of Mozambique is not unique. Not only are most African countries practically run by US-supported agencies and NGOs; the sequence - destruction of infrastructure, imposition of market reforms, forced reconciliation with murderous, 'irreconcilable' enemies, destabilization - is found, in different degrees and combinations, everywhere in Africa today, to such a point that several countries,

Serious capitalist development in Somalia began with Siad Barre's military coup in 1969. The country was put under "scientific socialism", what little industry existed was nationalised, close relations were established with the USSR and a massive military build up began. The administration was centralised in the name of "eradicating clannism and tribalism". Barre was committed to development through war and the militarisation of society. The already existing famine enabled the regime to accelerate its plans for settling nomads, who made up 80% of the population at the time. They were forced into agricultural "communes" where they were expected to work under military discipline. This was part of a regional trend. The nomadic way of life of millions of Africans was, and is, a major headache for the capitalist class because nomads don't respect national borders, don't attract Western aid and are almost impossible to tax, conscript or control.

In July 1977 Barre launched a major invasion of the Ogaden region of Ethiopia - its inhabitants were "Somalis" too - rapidly capturing the whole region and dramatically boosting his own support. Ethiopia had also recently become a client state of the USSR and the USSR decided to back Ethiopia with 18,000 Cuban troops. Barre turned to the Americans and by 1981 Somalia had become a client state of the US and the economy began to be privatised. The Somali troops were run out of Ogaden but the war was continued by the Western Somalia Liberation Front guerrillas organised by Barre's regime. Life for the nomads in the region became intolerable and hundreds of thousands ended up in refugee camps in Somalia. Concentrating them in arid localities resulted in overgrazing by the animals they had left. Western relief agencies arrived with food - far more than was necessary. Most of the food was going to the Somali army to maintain the war to dispossess the nomads to create more refugees... Many camp commanders were WSLF officers and the WSLF and the Somali Army would come to the camps to conscript teenage boys. Just like in Barre's pro-Soviet phase the inhabitants of the camps were instructed in political ideology by state officials called "politicians" - this time they were taught to blame the Russians and Cubans for their plight. Aid was turning "empty" desert into burgeoning towns. Barre's program of military-led accumulation was being enthusiastically supported by hordes of young middle class Western do-gooders who built the infrastructure and tried to teach former nomads how to grow food so that they could settle down and become peasants and agricultural labourers. Who, after all, could object to the building of roads - even if most of the people who used them were soldiers, cops and refugees being herded from one place to another? The camps were supposed to be temporary. Many of them are still there. In 1981 a study done by aid workers found that the relief industry accounted for two-thirds of the country's economy. Towards the end of his reign Barre was also receiving \$100 million a year in military and economic aid from the USA, making Somalia the third largest recipient of US foreign aid behind Egypt and Israel. It didn't do him much good.

The '80s were characterised by even more war than before as regional nationalist movements seized more and more areas of the country - in the North West (former British Somaliland), the Somali National Movement; in the Central and Western regions, the United Somali Congress; in the South, the Somali Patriotic Movement. In July 1989 there were two days of anti-government demos and riots in the capital. The writing was on the wall for Barre. Washington suddenly discovered that he was a human rights violator and cut off aid. At the end of 1990 the USC took the capital. In January 1991 Barre fled, leaving the capital in the hands of an unstable alliance of regional and clan leaders. This quickly broke down leading to a war in which hundreds of thousands died. General Aideed was the military commander of the USC and a former ambassador to India under Barre.

The war in the capital reduced its population of one-and-a-quarter million by half. The southern countryside was looted by soldiers to the extent that whole villages were left with no food and no animals in the middle of the dry season. Throughout the war troops protected the luxury houses of the capital and the agri-business plantations. Villagers in Qorioli starved to death next to huge banana

plantations. If they even gathered grass to eat they were likely to have their hands tied together and a bullet put through the palms.

So the Somalis lost the battle against dispossession through war, a process that made the Highland Clearances look like a vicarage tea party. They became proletarians (apart from the few who became bourgeois generals and nationalist leaders). But what sort of proletarians have they become? A large percentage of the men have been soldiers in the various nationalist/clan armies and are no strangers to the use of fire arms. In general the wide availability of guns has had a detrimental effect on working class solidarity by intensifying the war of all against all. In other parts of the Horn of Africa traditional tribal disputes over natural resources, which might have occasionally resulted in a few spearings, can now turn into massacres. On the streets of Mogadishu robbery of fellow proles by men with guns is pretty common. At the same time guns are often used by workers against their employers, which these days usually means the charities and the UN, who are just as keen to force down pay as any other boss. For example, following the disappearance of several food trucks in November '92 the World Food Program laid off its long haul Somali drivers for three months and brought in Ethiopians to work for half the wages. In response to these kind of attacks, charity administrators have been known to be besieged in their compounds by their own security guards demanding more pay. At the end of 1992 a UNICEF house manager was nearly killed when he tried to sack some workers.

The Somali proletariat also have an undying hatred of the UN and all its works – no doubt heightened by the knowledge that Boutros Ghali, Secretary General of the UN, used to be the foreign minister of Egypt when it supported Siad Barre. The fact that they have forced the most powerful nation on earth to drastically alter its foreign policy should inspire class struggle militants across the world. There is much we can learn from them – not least that terrorising journalists really spoils the game for international capital. The struggle of our class in Somalia can only sharpen our understanding, and hatred of, food aid charities – those insidious capitalist rackets with shops and offices on almost every main street in every town in Western Europe and America.

A very useful article about food aid charities, written by a disaffected ex-aid worker can be found in the *Village Voice*, 19 Jan 1993. A major article about the use of food as a weapon against the proletariat can be found in *Zerowork* no.2 1977 (Harry Cleaver, "Food, Famine and the International Crisis", <http://www.eco.utexas.edu/~hmcleave/357Lcleaverfood.pdf>)



US troops in Somalia

FOOD AID AS STEALTH WARFARE

In many cases, what arms could not accomplish was achieved through 'food aid' provided by the USA, the UN and various NGOs to the refugees and the victims of the famines which the wars had produced. Often delivered to both sides of the conflict (as in the Sudan, Ethiopia and Angola), food aid has become a major component of the contemporary neo-colonial war-machine, and the war-economy generated by it. First, it has entitled international organizations other than the Red Cross to claim the right to intervene in areas of conflict in the name of providing relief (in 1988 the UN passed a resolution asserting the right of donors to deliver aid) (Macrae and Zwi 1994a: 11-12).⁹ It is on this basis that the US/UN military intervention in Somalia in 1992-3 (Operation Restore Hope) was justified.

Even when it is not accompanied by troops, the delivery of food aid in a conflict situation is always a form of political and military intervention as it prolongs the war by feeding the contending armies (often more than the civilian population), it shapes military strategy, and it helps the stronger party - the one best equipped to take advantage of food distribution - to win (Duffield 1994: 60-3). This is exactly what took place in the Sudan and Ethiopia in the 1980s where, by providing food aid, the USA, the UN and NGOs such as CARE became major protagonists in the wars fought in these countries.¹⁰

In addition, food aid contributes to the displacement and the relocation of rural communities, by setting up feeding centres organized around the needs of the NGOs; it undermines local agriculture by causing the prices of locally marketed produce to collapse; and it introduces a new source of warfare, since the prospect of appropriating the large food supplies and selling them locally or internationally provides a new motive for conflict, indeed, the creation of a war-economy, especially in countries that have been radically impoverished (Duffield 1994).

So questionable has food assistance been in its effects, so dubious its ability to guarantee people's livelihood (which would have been better served by the distribution of agricultural tools and seeds and, first of all, by the end of hostilities), that one has to ask whether the true purpose of this initiative was not the phasing out of subsistence farming, and the creation of a long-term dependence on imported food - both centrepieces of World Bank reform, and conditions for the integration of African countries into the global economy. This question is all the more legitimate considering that the negative effects of food aid have been well known since the 1960s, when it became the object of much protest and research throughout the Third World. Since then, it has been almost an axiom that 'you don't help people by giving them food, but by giving them the tools to feed themselves', and that, even under famine conditions, what people need most to survive is to preserve their ability to farm. How the UN and the World Bank could have forgotten this lesson is indeed inexplicable, unless we presume that the appearance of food aid in contemporary war-related operations in Africa has had as one of its major objectives the commercialization of land and agriculture and the takeover of the African food markets by international agribusiness.

It must be added that 'relief operations' relying on the intervention of foreign NGOs and aid organizations have further marginalized the victims of conflicts and famines, who have been denied the right to control the relief activities while being portrayed in the international media by the same NGOs as helpless beings unable to care for themselves. Indeed, as Macrae and Zwi point out, the only right that has been recognized has been the right of the 'donors' to deliver assistance, which, as we have seen, has been used (in Somalia in 1992-3) to call for military intervention (Macrae and Zwi 1994a).

conflicts in Yugoslavia) have been rooted in these processes. From the mass expulsions of immigrants and religious riots in Nigeria in the early and mid-1980s, to the ‘clan’ wars in Somalia in the early 1990s (Chossudovsky 1998), to the bloody wars between the state and the fundamentalists in Algeria (Stone 1997), in the background of most contemporary African conflicts there have been the World Bank’s and the IMF’s ‘conditionalities’ that have wrecked peoples’ lives and undermined the conditions for social solidarity.

There is no doubt, for instance, that the youths who have been fighting the numerous African wars of recent years are the same who two decades ago could have been in school, and could have hoped to make a living through trade or a job in the public sector, and could have looked to the future with the hope of being able to contribute to their families’ well-being. Similarly, the appearance of child-soldiers in the 1980s and 1990s would never have been possible if, in many countries, the extended family had not been undermined by financial hardships, and millions of children were not without a place to go except for the street and had someone to provide for their needs (Human Rights Watch 1995).

War has not only been a consequence of economic change; it has also been a means to produce it. Two objectives stand out when we consider the prevailing patterns of war in Africa, and the way in which warfare intersects with globalization. First, war forces people off the land, ie. it separates the producers from the means of production, a condition for the expansion of the global labour market. War also reclaims the land for capitalist use, boosting the production of cash crops and export-oriented agriculture. Particularly in Africa, where communal land tenure is still widespread, this has been a major goal of the World Bank, whose *raison d’être* as an institution has been the capitalization of agriculture.⁶ Thus, it is hard today to see millions of refugees or famine victims fleeing their localities without thinking of the satisfaction this must bring to World Bank officers as well as agribusiness companies, who surely see the hand of progress working through it.

War also undermines people’s opposition to ‘market reforms’ by reshaping the territory and disrupting the social networks that provide the basis for resistance. Significant here is the correlation - frequent in contemporary Africa - between anti-IMF protest and conflict (Federici 1992). This is most visible perhaps in Algeria where the rise of antigovernment Islamic fundamentalism dates from the anti-IMF uprising of 1988, when thousands of young people took over the streets of the capital for several days in the most intense and widespread protest since the heyday of the anti-colonial struggle.⁷

External intervention – often seizing local struggles and turning them into global conflicts - has played a major role in this context. This can be seen even in the case of military interventions by the USA that are usually read through the prism of ‘geo-politics’ and the Cold War, such as the support given by the Reagan administration to the governments of Sudan and Somalia, and to UNITA in Angola. Both in the Sudan and Somalia SAPs had been under way since the early 1980s when both countries were among the major recipients of US military aid. In the Sudan, US military assistance strengthened the Neimeri regime’s hand against the coalition of forces that were opposing the cuts demanded by the IMF; even though, in the end, it could not stem the uprising that in 1985 was to depose him. In Somalia, US military aid helped Siad Barre’s attack on the Isaaks, an episode in the ongoing war waged by national and international agencies over the last decade against Africa’s pastoralist groups (Africa Watch 1990).⁸

In Angola, too, US military aid to UNITA served to force the government not just to renounce socialism and the help of Cuban troops, but to negotiate with the IMF, and it undoubtedly strengthened the bargaining power of the oil companies operating in the country (Sogge 1994: 105).

YUGOSLAVIA: FROM WAGE CUTS TO WAR

The war in former Yugoslavia has raged for more than four years and has attracted more media attention per death than any other war in history. Bourgeois commentators endlessly speculate about the military and political balance of forces, in other words about the significance of the war for this or that fraction of their class. To understand its significance for *our* class, the world proletariat, we have to look at the effect of the war on the class struggle and vice versa. We have to examine the struggles which the war was launched to repress and the struggles which it provoked amongst the proletarians directly affected by it. This is not any easy task given the lack of reliable sources of information.¹

The news from the Balkans is likely to remain depressing but this shouldn’t stop us analysing how the bourgeoisie were able to get away with this assault on our class and how the proletariat resisted. The future large-scale effective resistance to capitalist war which we hope to see, and which as communists we work towards, will not fall out of the sky – it will develop out of already existing struggles, however limited, and the lessons which proletarians have been able to learn from them.

Like the last Gulf War the outbreak of war in Yugoslavia was an attack on a rebellious and relatively affluent section of the world proletariat. As in the Gulf, the war led to an almost immediate and catastrophic fall in their living standards. There the similarity ends. Unlike the Gulf states, Yugoslavia does not contain vitally important raw materials or other economic resources. During the Cold War it was important politically and militarily as a bridge between East and West. Now the nations of ex-Yugoslavia are of no more importance to world capital than dozens of others across the globe.

Although the interests of the most powerful states in the region are not primarily concerned with immediate business opportunities, we should not forget that there is plenty of money to be made in any war. It’s no coincidence that the country which lobbied hardest for the lifting of the arms embargo against ex-Yugoslavia is the USA, which is also the world’s leading arms producer, with over half the world arms market.²

The importance of the Yugoslav conflict for world capital is primarily ideological – it’s a testing ground for finding out which nations, national alliances and capitalist institutions proletarians are really prepared to believe in and die for. It is more a media and political event than a military one. With the creation of the “International War Crimes Tribunal” in Holland the world’s most powerful states can simultaneously shed crocodile tears for the dead of the war and use the threat of International Law to do deals with the warring parties (for example, by the indictments against Karad·ic and Mladic). As usual the small fry will be scapegoated while their political masters will remain free to plan more massacres.

For the Western media it is a matter of contrasting the barbarism of the war with the civilised, humanitarian values of the Western politicians who, of course, are doing their best to bring about peace, and of hiding the fact that it was the “Westernisation” of the barbarian East which brought about the war. The media daily invoke the words “ethnic cleansing” as if they are describing some evil which is unique to the war in ex-Yugoslavia, or even unique to the evil Serbs. They want to make us forget that institutionalised pogroms and forced migrations have always been part of the history of those war machines known as nations. Examples include: the “repatriation” of Germans from Eastern Europe sanctioned by the Allies in 1945; the 1923 Treaty of Lausanne between Greece and Turkey, sponsored by the League of Nations, which required an exchange of populations amounting to one third of the Greek population *or* the “ethnic cleansing” carried out by Western European immigration

officers every day – which will certainly intensify against Yugoslav refugees now that “peace” is officially declared.

The media’s vilification of “the Serbs” follows a well-worn pattern. Serbia was the region of Yugoslavia in which there was the greatest resistance both to the IMF-led austerity programmes of the 1980s and to the war when it began in late 1991. For the media and other sources of bourgeois propaganda the most evil dictators are always those who confront a rebellious section of the working class. Supposed opposition to the regime provides a justification for measures against the proletarians who live under it – starvation-inducing trade sanctions, travel restrictions, military attacks and the encouragement of racist attitudes towards anybody who has had the misfortune to live under that regime. Liberal calls to “isolate the regime” always mean, in practice, “isolate the contagion of class struggle”.

A less important ideological offensive has been the attempt to create a *bloc* of Orthodox nations – Russia, Serbia, Greece etc. There have also been attempts by Saudi Arabian-backed charities and paramilitary groups to turn the largely secular so-called Muslims³ of Bosnia-Herzegovina into actual practitioners of the Islamic religion. These have largely been unsuccessful. Coupled with this are attempts by Islamic regimes to get their citizens to join with their rulers in condemning the Western powers for ignoring the plight of their Islamic brothers.

The UN has again played its role of ideological camouflage for the bourgeoisie. The UN may be universally reviled for being “incompetent”, “lacking political will”, “soft on the Serbs” and so on, but we can not be allowed to doubt that it *is*, or can be, an instrument of peace, a humanitarian whole which is greater than the sum of its warmongering parts. This requires that the complicity of UN troops in massacres is carefully hidden.⁴ The latest “peace initiative”, starting with the bombing of Republika Srpska (the Bosnian Serb statelet) military installations in September 1995 by US warplanes under the aegis of NATO, is yet another attempt by the US government to demonstrate that American might is right and proper. That it is not likely to lead to lasting peace in the region is shown by the simple fact that it involves the lifting of the arms embargo, enabling Croatia to become an even stronger military power, and the Bosnian forces to reduce their dependence on an alliance with Croatia. In the discourse of anti-imperialism the Western powers are generally assumed to have some sinister hidden plan for countries at war, usually linked to the idea that the imperialists want “a strongman in the region”. But why have just one strongman when you can have two or three? The “imperialist” powers have not significantly favoured one side or the other, they have simply created the conditions where the war will keep going – as they did in the Iran-Iraq war, which lasted for eight years and killed a million people without the borders shifting by as much as one metre!

WAR AND CAPITAL ACCUMULATION

Capitalist society is characterised by a war of all against all at all levels. At the level of the capitalists themselves there is a continuous struggle over markets leading to the continuous “revolutionising of the means of production”. Capitalists who fail to adopt the latest methods of production must quickly catch up or risk being eliminated entirely. State intervention measures such as nationalisation and state subsidies can alleviate the effects of competition for some sectors but only by taking surplus value away from other, more profitable, sectors. Capitalists can never just sit back and let the profits roll in – they have to keep devising new methods of squeezing more surplus value out of the proletariat. When the working class organises itself collectively to resist this process the tension in society can become unbearable for the capitalists – they can’t restructure but at the same time they *must*. War is an obvious “solution” to their problems. From the point of view of capital as a whole, rebellious, and potentially rebellious, proletarians are sent off to massacre each other. From the point of view of individual capitalists, and capitalist fractions, they can solve their short-term profitability problems by

AFRICA, WAR AND STRUCTURAL ADJUSTMENT

In reality, the situation in Africa shows the coincidence between the implementation of the structural adjustment programmes (SAPs) introduced in the 1980s by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to facilitate the advance of multinational capital in the region, and the development of a state of constant warfare. It shows that structural adjustment generates war, and war, in turn, completes the work of structural adjustment, as it makes the countries affected dependent on international capital, and the powers that represent it, beginning with the USA, the European Union (EU) and the UN. In other words, to paraphrase Clausewitz, *‘structural adjustment is war by other means’*.

There are many ways in which structural adjustment promotes war. This type of programme was imposed by the World Bank and the IMF on most African countries starting in the early 1980s, presumably to spur economic recovery and help the African governments pay for the debts which they had contracted during the previous decade in order to finance development projects. Among the reforms it prescribes are land privatization (beginning with the abolition of communal land tenure), trade liberalization (the elimination of tariffs on imported goods), the deregulation of currency transactions, the downsizing of the public sector, the defunding of social services, and a system of controls that effectively transfers economic planning from the African governments to the World Bank and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).⁴

This economic restructuring was presumably intended to boost productivity, eliminate inefficiency and increase Africa’s ‘competitive edge’ in the global market. But the opposite has occurred. More than a decade after its adoption, local economies have collapsed, foreign investment has not materialized, and the only productive activities in place in most African countries are once again, as in the colonial period, mineral extraction and export-oriented agriculture that contributes to the gluts in the global market, while Africans do not have enough food to eat.

In this context of generalized economic bankruptcy, violent rivalries have exploded everywhere among different factions of the African ruling class who, unable to enrich themselves through the exploitation of labour, are now fighting for access to state power as the key condition for the accumulation of wealth. State power, in fact, is the key to the appropriation and sale on the international market of either the national assets and resources (land, gold, diamonds, oil, timber), or the assets possessed by rival or weaker groups.⁵ Thus, war has become the necessary underbelly of a new mercantile economy, or (according to some) an ‘economy of plunder’ (Bayart et al. 1999), thriving with the complicity of foreign companies and international agencies which (for all their complaints about ‘corruption’) benefit from it.

As in Russia, the World Bank’s insistence that everything be privatized has weakened the state and accelerated this process. In the same way, the deregulation of banking activities and currency transactions (also demanded by the World Bank) has helped the spread of the drug trade which, since the 1980s, has been playing a major role in Africa’s political economy, contributing to the formation of private armies (Bayart et al. 1999; Williams 1998).

A further source of warfare in Africa has been the brutal impoverishment into which structural adjustment has plunged the majority of the population. While intensifying social protest, this, over the years, has torn the social fabric as millions of people have been forced to leave their villages and go abroad in search of new sources of livelihood; and the struggle for survival has laid the ground-work for the fomenting and manipulation of local antagonisms and the recruitment of the unemployed (particularly the youth) by warring parties. Many ‘tribal’ and religious conflicts in Africa (no less than the ‘ethnic’

WAR, GLOBALIZATION AND REPRODUCTION

First came the foreign bankers eager to lend at extortionate rates; then the financial controllers to see that the interest was paid; then the thousands of foreign advisors taking their cut. Finally, when the country was bankrupt and helpless, it was time for the foreign troops to 'rescue' the ruler from his 'rebellious' people. One last gulp and the country had gone. (Pakenham 1991: 126)

You who hunger, who shall feed you?

Come to us, we too are starving.

Only hungry ones can feed you.

(B. Brecht, 'All or Nothing')

As Maria Mies has shown (1986; Bennholdt-Thomsen and Mies 1999), a key aspect of the present phase of globalization is the ongoing destruction of subsistence economies and, in particular, subsistence agriculture, the primary means of sustenance for much of the world's population. As we know, the structural adjustment programmes imposed by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) on the countries of the 'Third World' have this as one of their most basic objectives. What needs to be stressed, however, is the key role that war plays in this process.

In what follows I argue that the destruction of subsistence economies is one of the main reasons behind the proliferation of conflicts in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and the zest of the USA for military intervention throughout the 1980s and 1990s.¹ More broadly, I argue that war is on the global agenda precisely because the new phase of capitalist expansionism requires the destruction of any economic activity not subordinated to the logic of accumulation, and this is necessarily a violent process. Corporate capital cannot extend its reach over the planet's resources - from the fields to the seas and forests to people's labour, and our very genetic pools - without generating an intense resistance worldwide. Moreover, it is in the nature of the present capitalist crisis that no mediations are possible, and that development planning in the Third World gives way to war.²

That the connection between integration into the global economy, the destruction of subsistence economies and warfare is not generally recognized is due to the fact that globalization today, while in essence continuing the late nineteenth century colonial project, presents itself primarily as an economic programme. Its first and most visible weapons (as already mentioned) are structural adjustment programmes, trade liberalization, privatization and intellectual property rights. All these policies are responsible for an immense transfer of wealth from the Third World to the metropolises, and the expropriation of Third World assets and resources by the multinational corporations, but they do not require territorial conquest, and thus are assumed to work by purely peaceful means.³

Military intervention too is taking new forms, often appearing under the guise of benevolent initiatives, such as 'food aid' and 'humanitarian relief', or, in Latin America, the 'war against drugs'. A further reason why the marriage between war and globalization - the form that imperialism takes today - is not more evident is that most of the new 'globalization wars' have been fought on the African continent, whose current history is systematically distorted by the media which blame every crisis on the Africans' alleged 'backwardness', 'tribalism' and incapacity to achieve democratic institutions.

immediately imposing a whole series of austerity measures (from price increases to the militarisation of labour) on "their own" working class and by directly seizing markets and capital assets from other capitalists.

The bourgeois media like to tell us that war destroys everything - the implication being that it is a folly that nobody, bar mad dictators, could consciously wish for. In reality war destruction is often a lot more selective than they would have us believe. For example, the bombing of Dresden in February 1945 left its industry almost untouched. In Bosnia the nationalist militias couldn't be expected to show quite the same precision as RAF Bomber Command but they generally avoided direct military confrontation with the UN. Consequently, in each town where the UN had a presence its base was situated on the main industrial plant, ensuring that only residential districts were shelled.

An important feature of conflicts within the ruling class in the former "Eastern Bloc" since 1989 has been the tendency for more modern, competitive fractions of capital to dissociate themselves from less competitive ones by waging a struggle against the centralised states which share out surplus value between more competitive and less competitive capitals. This can be seen in the secession of the Baltic states from the Soviet Union, in the fighting between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, in the separation of the Czech Republic from the Slovak Republic and so on. These divisions often conveniently correspond to historic linguistic, religious and other "ethnic" divisions. Where these ethnic divisions don't exist they can always be invented. This is precisely the course which the war took in Yugoslavia.

The first of the republics to declare its secession was Slovenia. This was the republic with the most modern industry and most developed trade with the West. The bourgeoisie of Slovenia also had another very straightforward economic reason for seceding. Slovenia was Yugoslavia's border with Western Europe. Most of the duty on Western goods was therefore paid at this border. Secession was a major blow to the hard currency finances of the Yugoslav state, and an immediate gain for the new Slovenian state. The brief (10 day) war which Slovenia experienced in June-July 1991 helped enormously in creating the national unity required for restructuring.⁵ Within Yugoslavia (while it was still in one piece) the Republics of Slovenia and Serbia came to represent the two most extreme political poles. The Slovene leadership, who had economic power but little political and military power, stood for a less centralised "confederal" state. The Serbian leadership, who had a growing monopoly of military and political power but declining economic power, stood for increased centralisation of the state under Serbian domination. The Slovene Communists were the first to walk out of the 14th (last) Congress of the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) when it broke up in early 1990. They immediately ceased contributing their portion of the "Fund for Underdeveloped Regions" earmarked for Serbia - an act of war if ever there was one!

In Bosnia and large parts of Croatia, successive waves of "ethnic cleansing" have created a more and more atomised population, ready to go to wherever they are least likely to be massacred and to work for almost nothing. The US "Dayton peace plan" supposedly allows for refugees to return to their homes but this is obviously bullshit. All sides have seen to it that it is almost impossible for most refugees to return. Amongst other things they have carried out the systematic destruction of housing - for example, after over-running Krajina, causing the flight of almost the entire Serb population, the Croatian Army destroyed over 60% of houses and plundered virtually all of them. Official backing for the refugees' right to return will simply encourage the poor to fight each other more ferociously over who gets the remaining houses.

Hundreds of thousands of Yugoslavs are now living in refugee camps in Germany where they have been told they will be sent back to "their own" country as soon as it is declared "safe" (at the time of

writing German politicians are already talking about doing this now that there is “peace”). These refugees have almost no rights at all, apart from the most important right granted by bourgeois society – the right to work! Around Berlin, for example, they might get the chance to earn 2DM per hour working in a factory or 1DM per hour as a servant in the homes of the rich. The effect of this on the overall rates of pay of all workers in Germany hardly needs spelling out.

In Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia austerity has often taken the simple form of workers not being paid. In the Bosnian government controlled regions of Bosnia workers have carried on working for months on end without being paid because it’s for the good of their country. Trade union delegations to Western Europe are happy to point this out. In Croatia there was a solid rail strike in early 1995 against unpaid wages. The media denounced the strikers as “pro-Serb” traitors and the strike was broken largely by the Minister of Defence threatening that all the strikers would be drafted and sent to the front lines.

As we have already discussed in our article on Somalia in *Wildcat* 17, (also in this pamphlet – ed.) war is also an important means by which capital expropriates the peasantry. Before the war Yugoslavia was still a largely peasant country. Unlike in the Soviet Union, the Socialist collectivisation of agriculture never got very far. Even industrial workers in large towns maintained links with the countryside, which took the edge off absolute poverty. Now much of the countryside has been ruined. In Bosnia not only have hundreds of villages been destroyed but fertile fields have been liberally sown with millions of land mines, making them unusable for decades. Much of the fiercest fighting has taken place in rural areas and ex-peasants have fled to urban areas. As always, the bourgeoisie are “expanding the populations of cities and saving millions from the idiocy of rural life”.

CAUSES OF THE WAR

The first military clashes took place on 17 August 1990 in the Krajina region of Croatia after the local Serbian nationalist party had organised a referendum on political autonomy for the mostly Serb area. From then on the political and military tensions between the republics of Serbia and Croatia escalated rapidly leading to a state of full-scale war in August 1991, supposedly around the issue of the status of the Serbs living within the borders of the Republic of Croatia. This war did not happen by mistake. It had been painstakingly prepared in advance by both sides in direct response to the movement of struggle launched by the proletariat and making use of the weaknesses of that struggle.

In this preparation Serbian nationalism played the most important role. There were two reasons for this. Firstly, there was the central role that the fraction of the ruling class associated with the Republic of Serbia played in the administration of the army, the police and the state bureaucracy. Secondly, there was the fact that significant numbers of people who considered themselves to be Serbs (or who could be persuaded to consider themselves to be Serbs with the help of media misinformation and physical threats) could be found in all the regions of Yugoslavia apart from Slovenia and Macedonia. Serbian nationalism thus had a potential to divide and terrorise the proletariat across almost the whole of Yugoslavia in a way that other ethnic nationalisms didn’t. In this sense the dominant Western media view that “the Serbs started all the trouble” has an element of truth in it, although, being itself a nationalist point of view, this deliberately ignores the fact that the most serious resistance to the war effort would develop in Serbia itself. The ideology of Serbian nationalism (in so far as it can be distinguished from other nationalist ideologies) is analogous to Zionism – the Serbs are a historically persecuted people who suffered horrific massacres at the hands of the Nazis (and, of course, during 500 years of Turkish rule, the Balkan wars, World War I...); the threat of genocide (a favourite Serbian nationalist word) could return at any moment if national unity falters; the Croats were given their own state by the Nazis during World War II so all Croats are Nazis (and Germany was the most enthusiastic

In this wide-ranging campaign – whose success will always be at stake since new expressions of social antagonism will always reappear – the Greek state participated politically and militarily in every move of NATO, as one of the 19 cowboys that it consists of. Hoping for a large piece of the pie of the reconstruction of Serbia and Kosovo, it put aside its outdated pro-Serb bollocks while, at the same time, showing great tolerance towards the manageable anti-American demonstrations of the left patriots. In this way, inside Greece it preserved the profile of a neutral pacifist who seeks a “diplomatic solution only”, as if wars created by capital are meant to last eternally and that a “diplomatic solution” would not be THE “solution” that would allow the continuation of the exploitation of the proletariat by “peaceful means”. Greece’s share in the feast is at stake at the moment (the Greek state has managed to get Thessaloniki appointed as the centre of the European Service for the Reconstruction of Kosovo), but so far the privileged deals of the Greek capitalists – with the mediation of the Greek state – with the Serb bureaucracy seem to be blocked, since the latter faces its potential breakdown, or, in any case, its radical transformation.

From the beginning of this war our small group of people kept the only position that fits those who wish to believe that they are against capital and the state: we kept away from the nationalist demonstrations of the left, we refused to play the game of selective anti-nationalism (turning against either the “Serb-fascists” or the “Albanian crutches of NATO”) and we tried with our minimal forces to project the proletarian internationalist response to the war. For that purpose we organised, along with a small number of comrades, some autonomous actions and we primarily addressed Albanian immigrants, not in order to blame the Serb proletarians or the Serb bosses specifically (as the autonomist anti-fascists did), but to speak the language of proletarian internationalist solidarity with them. It is a fact that we were isolated since we did not follow either the dominant pro-Serb activities, or the harrowing pro-national-liberation, pro-Albanian exhortations. It was however a consciously chosen isolation which, to say the least, protected us from being ridiculed by following the cynical cruelty of either pro-Serb or pro-Albanian nationalism.

EDITORS NOTES

¹ A law passed in 1997 that changed the Greek secondary education system to make access to university more difficult. For a discussion of the violent struggle against it in 1998-9 see TPTG’s article “A Heavy Burden for Young Shoulders” at:

<http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/2379/heavyburden.htm>

² The treaty “negotiated” in March 1999 that Yugoslavia was to sign to avoid being attacked by NATO. It was so onerous that it appears it was designed to ensure that Yugoslavia would not sign. It was not signed and Yugoslavia was duly bombed for 78 days.

³ This is referring to the massive uprising in Albania in 1997 that was only suppressed due to the intervention of Italian and other European “peacekeepers”. For more information see TPTG’s article “Upheaval in the land of the eagles: a short account of the post-war Albanian social history and the 1997 rebellion” at: <http://www.geocities.com/CapitolHill/Lobby/2379/albania.htm> and “Albania: Laboratory of Subversion” by Alfredo Bonnano at:

<http://www.geocities.com/cordobakaf/albania.html>

- * It aggravated the military and police repression in the whole region so as to thin out the population by forcing more and more people into immigration.

This whole process, which lasted 15 years, was intensified even more in recent years because of the blocking of the restructuring of the labour and political-hierarchical relations in Serbia proper in the 90's. The war in Bosnia, the sanctions imposed by international capital and the fear of a new outburst of the class struggles, which could be contained temporarily through nationalist ideology, the remnants of the welfare state and the possibilities of working in the black market, had transformed the governmental gang of Milosevic from a neo-liberal reformist one into the political boss of a protectionist 'war' economy. By increasingly resorting to barbarism, the Serb regime created by itself the political terms of the failure of the policy of restructuring in Kosovo in the form of "ethnic cleansing". The resistance of the Albanian bourgeoisie, which had allied itself with the patriarchal family and had overshadowed the social conflicts with its nationalist language as far back as the 1981 uprising, increased by promoting its own agenda: internationalisation of the supposed ethnic conflict and the political and military intervention of international capital so as to allow them to take over the process of westernising Kosovar society themselves. In order to achieve the definite nationalisation of the social question and to win the support of the international capitalist organisations, which had shown from the very beginning of the Balkan tragedy that they favour the creation of ethnically "clean" states in former Yugoslavia, a fraction of the Albanian bourgeoisie set up the national-liberation gang of the KLA. These bullies began their campaign in '96 with bomb attacks on camps for Serb refugees from Croatia, they gradually upgraded the tension between the two communities and, after the savage military operations of the Serbs last summer ('98), managed to complete their mission by attaching to the chariot of nationalism the scared and persecuted Albanian population who was by now forced once and for all to take sides in order to survive.

In early '98, NATO was still closer to Milosevic's "solution" and branded the KLA as a "terrorist organisation", but after the meeting of the US envoy Richard Holbrooke with the leadership of the KLA guerrillas in Yunik in June '98 things started to gradually change and former high officials of the State Department found themselves alongside the guerrillas in the camps and in the negotiations at the Rambouillet castle. NATO did not of course fall in love with Albanian nationalism in one day. They gradually realised that Milosevic was an inadequate cop who could not create the preconditions for capitalist restructuring in his region, nor solve the so-called "Kosovar question" or reverse the downfall of his regime into a de-stabilising force. Their decision was to intervene under the veil of humanitarian ideology so as to kill many birds with one stone:

- * They sped up the thinning out of the Kosovar population by destroying traditional agricultural communities and producing a cheap labour reserve force (not to mention the disciplining of the Albanian workers and peasants through rallying them around their national leaders).
- * They terrorised the Serbian proletariat and destroyed the productive structures of Serbia, creating overnight thousands of sacked workers and a regime highly dependent on western financial help, and thus facilitating the transition to a market economy.
- * They militarily supervised the Albanian labour force, which demonstrated very bad behaviour two years ago³.
- * They created the preconditions for a Balkan "zone of free exchanges" by unblocking the process of deregulation.

supporter of Croatian independence, so say no more...); anybody whose grandparents visited the mosque now and again must be a crazed Islamic fundamentalist.

THE WORKING CLASS MOBILISES

With the death of Tito in 1980 a terrible secret came to public notice, the size of the national debt – this was at least \$14 billion. It had grown to this size for much the same reasons as elsewhere – increases in energy prices as a result of the "oil shock" of 1974 and the policy of high interest rates by the Western powers. At the beginning of 1980 Yugoslavia became a member of the IMF and in 1981 it received the largest amount of credit ever given by this organisation. In 1983-4 Yugoslavia carried on funding negotiations with 600 Western banks as well as the IMF. The IMF called on the Yugoslav government to impose wage cuts on insolvent businesses, to lift price controls, to increase interest rates and to devalue the Dinar by 25%. The larger banks were propped up with foreign credit and given the function of closing down smaller insolvent banks which had made loans to unprofitable businesses. This was an attempt to deal with a major structural problem in Yugoslavia's economy – its financial institutions were completely mixed up with its industry so many businesses, particularly ones with politically powerful bosses, could effectively print themselves money by granting themselves unlimited credit. In other words, Yugoslavia was expected to carry out an East European variant of the "anti-inflation" measures being carried out in the US and Western Europe.

In 1984 a wave of strikes broke out, starting in Macedonia, which was mostly against redundancies. For example, a textile firm was to have been closed, taking away the jobs of a majority of the local population. Three hundred workers successfully struck for 46 days against the dismantling of self-management and in the name of the masses against the "bureaucratic mafia". Faced with this kind of militancy the government could not carry out its aims. The number of successful bankruptcy proceedings actually decreased from 156 in 1979 to 97 in 1985. Instead the banks printed more and more Dinars in order to try to reduce wages without closing unprofitable businesses.

Meanwhile, attempts at direct wage cuts continued. In summer '85 the Koper port administration announced a wage cut because of alleged under-usage of the harbour capacity. The strike was broken after two days by means of sackings and police repression against ringleaders but it led to strikes almost all over Yugoslavia. In the course of the strikes the state controlled unions became almost completely discredited, not least because they had supported all the state's austerity programs. In Slovenia several large factories had struck and workers had handed in their union cards. In Kosovo the miners had struck, partly against corrupt union bosses who were forced to resign.

In March 1986 the government of Milka Planinc stepped down because it was completely unable to impose the IMF's austerity program. The new government, under Prime Minister Mikulic, promised a six-month pay freeze and price rises. This was not to be. The workers forced through an 8% rise in real wages over the course of that year – according to the unions the workers were "eating up the equipment and machines". Once again the government devalued the Dinar and brought a new banking law into effect designed to create bankruptcy of unprofitable businesses through preventing them from obtaining unsecured loans. The first company to go under was a building firm in Titograd (now Podgorica). 2000 workers were sacked and unemployment in Titograd rose to 20%. Then followed the famous "scandal" of the Bosnian food distribution group Agrokomerc. This company effectively printed money for itself on a scale of several hundred million dollars. Its director was one Fikret Abdic, who later set up an independent western Bosnian statelet backed by the UN. In Macedonia, Montenegro and Kosovo (the poorest regions) all the banks failed and many enterprises were simply abandoned. Unemployment jumped to 1.2m – in a country of 24m. Inflation reached 130%.

At the end of February 1987, in response to an increase in various prices, a wage freeze and an intensification of work, several strikes broke out which were described as “wildcat” by the authorities. For a month and a half there were some 80 strikes without warning across Yugoslavia, particularly in Croatia. The authorities threatened sackings and military intervention but the movement continued to grow. After a short interruption at the beginning of April a strike developed in the coalfield of Labin which lasted for 30 days. The miners demanded the cancellation of all price increases, a 100% increase in wages (a common demand at this time) and a change of mine management. Faced with the possibility of the strike spreading the bosses conceded a wage increase of more than 40% and dismissed various unpopular functionaries.

Demonstrations in front of the Republican parliaments by striking workers became common. In July 10,000 workers in a shoe and tyre company went on strike – 5,000 of them went to Belgrade to demand the doubling of their wages and the resignation of the former director, who was then Minister of Foreign Trade. They called for the dismissal of the whole management as well as the whole of the town council of Vukovar. They didn’t just go to shout out their demands to the Federal Parliament but also to express solidarity with workers in Belgrade and to call for a general strike throughout Yugoslavia. This represented an important break with the republic-by-republic containment of the movement.

At the end of May 1988 another strike movement broke out, mostly in the mining and transport sectors in Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, in response to a “redistribution of revenue” law being passed by the Federal Parliament which would have meant dramatic cuts in wages. In October of the same year there were violent clashes between workers and special police units in Montenegro. For two days Titograd was cut off by the units but the movement still led to the resignation of Montenegro’s government. Shortly afterwards the government of the “autonomous province” of Vojvodina also felt obliged to resign. Finally, in December 1988 the federal government itself resigned and reconstituted itself under the aegis of Prime Minister Ante Markovic.

Markovic announced the stunningly original program of freeing prices, restricting credit and devaluing the Dinar. This led to another wave of strikes during the first months of 1989 with the now familiar call for 100% wage increases. Industrial unrest continued throughout the year. In December 1989, 650,000 labourers from Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia declared themselves on strike against government policy and once again called for 100% pay rises. The enterprise bosses gave in, contrary to government directives, and granted the demands. Over the course of the year workers managed to force an increase in real wages of around 25%. The resistance to this new austerity programme was particularly strong in Serbia. In Slovenia there was a successful spate of bankruptcies and the emergence of significant unemployment for the first time, but in Serbia the authorities were forced to ignore the wage freeze and to continue bailing out bankrupt enterprises. Within months the average income in Serbia equalled that of Slovenia, with no corresponding increase in productivity. In September 1989, 10,000 striking workers demonstrated in Belgrade and Skopje and threatened to launch a general strike if the Federal government didn’t stop inflation. They also demanded that the Deutschmark should be the principle currency they were paid in. As in Britain and elsewhere in the 1970s, inflation was transformed from a weapon of the bosses into a focus for political mobilisation by the workers, who understood that it wasn’t enough just to screw more money out of each individual enterprise.

In February and March of the same year Kosovo exploded. There were strikes and uprisings in all the towns of this province – police stations were attacked, trains were attacked, shops were plundered, cops were shot at from the roofs of houses. The university was occupied. Secondary school students boycotted classes. A State of Emergency was declared, followed by a curfew on 27 March. The next day the Serbian parliament voted unanimously for the Autonomous Provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo to lose their constitutional autonomy and become fully integrated into Serbia. The immediate aim of

selective anti-nationalism, either gathering under the national flags of the left and shouting hackneyed and boring slogans like “Americans-you-murderers-of-the-peoples” or devoting themselves to a costless condemnation of the “Serb-fascists” which suited NATO’s and NGOs’ humanitarianism. The winners of this anti-war/pacifist/humanitarian story are nation-states, i.e. the nationalisation of social struggles. And all that is left for those who took sides in this war, excusing Milosevic or Simitis or NATO’s leaders or the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army), is the bitter taste of delusion. Each one, according to their ideological hobbies, sought to find the “greatest victim” in this story and everyone was of course anti-fascist and democratic.

Meanwhile the “cleansing” goes on: yesterday it was unappointed teachers and students, today it is Serb proletarians, tomorrow it will be Albanians again and the war of capital against all of us bears up well.

In order to be clear about this war, having in mind the questions that we asked in the beginning and looking for what was the problem in Kosovo from the standpoint of capital, let’s start with the Albanian moderate nationalist Veton Surroi, the publisher of the newspaper *Koha Ditore* in Pristina. He said in 1990:

There is a problem here, in that the Kosovo village is backward and unproductive. Because it exists at a subsistence level, it has no distinct awareness of its own specific interest and is not the bearer of a new agrarian development. The strong trends of emigration into the cities and abroad also militate against this. The peasant himself does not know [sic] what to do with his land and there are no models elsewhere in Yugoslavia that he can follow...The Kosovo peasant does not produce for the market...Kosovo as a whole is overpopulated. The density of population is in fact the greatest in the country. Yet right now we are expecting new settlers!

If we referred to the way in which the problem was posed by the Serb bourgeois intellectuals or by the makers of the Rambouillet treaty² which demanded that the “economy of Kosovo shall function in accordance with free market principles” we would not notice any serious differences from the Albanian politicians who propagate “civil society”. What differs is the way in which every national or international capitalist fraction tried to solve the problem for its own benefit.

The Serbian side, which was the one that was primarily demonised in the West, tried in the 80’s to settle the problem within the context of dealing with the general crisis of capitalist reproduction in Yugoslavia, which, due to the continuous class struggles, had reached a turning point. To deal with the problems of the high birth rate of the Albanians, of the adherence to the patriarchal agricultural family, of low productivity in the enterprises, it proceeded with a series of measures (which initially had the approval of the Yugoslav federal government):

- * It relieved the Kosovo Albanian “Communist” party leadership, which had developed political-clientelist ties with the Albanian population, of its command so as to promote with greater ease the layoffs and the “restoration of the public sector to health”.
- * It drew up a long term plan of settling thousands of Serb refugees in the region so as to replace the patriarchal Albanian family with small and mobile agricultural households in certain areas which would form the basis of a future modernisation of agricultural production.

WAR, PEACE AND THE CRISIS OF THE REPRODUCTION OF HUMAN CAPITAL IN FORMER YUGOSLAVIA

If one leaves aside the left patriots (Communist Party, various Marxist-Leninist organisations) who used the anti-war demonstrations, which they organised and led, as a vote-hunting tactic, all the “well-intentioned” anti-war protestors who dragged themselves to the spring demonstrations in Greece, failed completely. They failed, not in the sense of stopping the war – that was impossible and, anyway, it was primarily the duty of the Albanian and Serbian proletariat, who in the best of cases would have had the help of the proletarians of the countries which the mercenaries of NATO came from. They failed, and this is most important, to ask the fundamental questions about this war, which has been going on in Yugoslavia for the last ten years. Questions like:

- * What is the function of war in promoting the larger aims of a globalized economy?
- * What role does it have in maintaining/restructuring the dominant mode of production and the consumption of ideologies?
- * In what way is it a means for the production and reproduction (i.e. the organisation and control) of labour power?
- * How can we, as a class react in such a way so as to create a community of struggle?

For someone to ask these questions, she must have sensed from her daily experiences in work, in consumption, in the kitchen, that the central social relation is the (exploitative and hierarchical) capitalist relation and that the whole organisation of this society revolves around the reproduction of human capital, i.e. the reproduction of the disciplined worker/consumer/parent/student.

Yet, how many of those who participated in previous years in the social struggles against lay-offs, wage cuts, the law 2525¹, expulsions of immigrants, etc, tried to reflect seriously on their own activities and on the inner connection of the various tactics which constitute the strategy of capitalist power? How many thought even once that lay-offs, the creation of unemployed people through the abolition of the teachers’ list of seniority and the new examinations or of students failures through constant exams for example, are “mild” forms of “cleansing” a surplus, demanding population, and that the “harsh” forms of “cleansing” that Milosevic and NATO promoted may simply be the other, bloody side of the same coin? How many wondered if the devaluation of labour power by all means “in times of peace”, corresponds to a savage, i.e. by bombs and ethnic slaughter, devaluation and even destruction of human capital “in times of war”?

For years now the “well-intentioned” anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian political groups keep separating the problems we face into personal and political, into direct issues and issues of solidarity, into those that concern them and those which concern people who are “different” from them: immigrants, refugees, unappointed teachers, students, with which they “from the outside” can in the best of cases have the relation of an “active supporter to their just cause”; and in the worst of cases they choose a “social subject” whose suffering better suits their ideology. In such a way thousands of proletarians in Europe and in Greece have become the victims of anti-imperialist (read anti-American) ideology or of

this was to legalise the suppression of the uprisings by troops from outside the province but it also fitted in well with the Kosovo policies of Serbian nationalist politicians and gave Serbia two more votes on the collective Federal Presidency which contained one representative from each of the six republics and two Autonomous Provinces of Yugoslavia.

The strike movements in the 1980s had many positive features, apart from their sheer size. The strikes were completely unofficial (due to the unions being openly part of the state bureaucracy) and were often very active, involving occupation of work-places to prevent scabbing. There were also numerous demonstrations and blockages of roads in solidarity with the strikes. Yugoslav workers had never been domesticated into the Western European style of strike where everyone goes home and watches TV until the union tells them to go back to work. For this reason any official figures relating to number of strikes or days on strike (even figures used by us!) should be taken with a large pinch of salt. Here we are not talking about well-defined “labour disputes” which begin and end at set times with a specific list of demands. It was not unusual for one factory to have more than one wildcat strike in the same week or even for there to be two separate strikes going on in the same factory at the same time.

Despite the simultaneity of the struggles, they were uncoordinated, tending to confine their scope to specific provinces. This was the main weakness that the bourgeoisie came to exploit. This was helped by the fact that, like other manifestations of the class struggle in Eastern Europe, workers’ anger was overwhelmingly directed at the “corrupt, bureaucratic, one-party state”. This sort of perspective fitted in very well with the projects of the nationalists who could present themselves as the “voice of the people” which had long been suppressed by the evil Communists. This “subjective” factor was also helped along by the “objective” economic factor that austerity and restructuring had not been completely held back. Economic divisions between the regions had been exacerbated. For example, unemployment in Slovenia was still only 1 or 2%, while in Kosovo it had reached 30%. This intensified regional resentments within the working class – “the Croats are privileged”, “Serbs and Montenegrins are poor because they are lazy”. Since the 1970s jobs for migrant workers in Western Europe had become less available. As a consequence more and more workers from the poorer regions (e.g. Serbia) were migrating to Slovenia instead, leading to the usual divisions between natives and immigrants.

THE BOURGEOISIE RESPONDS

Slobodan Milosevic began his exploitation of these divisions by making a successful bid for leadership of the Serbian League of Communists in September 1987. The issue which he made use of was the status of the Serb and Montenegrin minority in Kosovo, where there was a large Albanian majority (around 90%). The media, increasingly under the control of Milosevic’s faction, began to pump out stories about how Serbs in Kosovo were being driven from their homes and faced “genocide” at the hands of “terrorist separatist” Albanians. In reality there was hardly an Albanian nationalist movement, let alone a separatist one, and what there was certainly didn’t have the means to drive out Serbs. The Kosovo issue was also chosen because of the symbolic nature of Kosovo in Serbian nationalist mythology – it was the site of an important battle in 1389 where the Serb forces were crushed by the Turks, leading to almost five centuries of Ottoman Turkish rule. Serbian nationalists celebrate the anniversary of this battle as if it was a victory, in much the same way that British nationalists remember Dunkirk. In concrete terms the use of this mythology helped to mobilise all the Serbian nationalist forces behind Milosevic’s fraction, from academics and novelists to the Party, the media, and the Orthodox Church.

Milosevic organised a series of large-scale rallies and demos throughout Serbia, Vojvodina, Kosovo and Montenegro which were used to force the resignation of Yugoslavist LCY bureaucrats so that they could be replaced with Serbian nationalist LCY bureaucrats. This was known as the “anti-bureaucratic revolution”. Serbian nationalism in general was as much about recuperating discontent amongst

“Serbian” proletarians as it was about intimidating non-Serbs throughout Yugoslavia. In 1988, for example, rallies were deliberately held in Montenegro to capitalise on an upsurge of unrest which developed after the Republic declared itself bankrupt. As soon as Markovic’s austerity programme was unveiled it was attacked by the Belgrade press as “anti-Serbian”. Because of this role it could provide a social-democratic framework for making the necessary strategic concessions to the working class without encouraging them to ask for even more. Milosevic’s fraction always understood very well that in order to maintain national unity the policy must be, to some extent, “guns *and* butter”. Milosevic’s election victory in December 1990 wasn’t just a result of monopoly control of the media. He had arranged an illegal loan (of around \$1.7 billion) from Serbia’s main bank to the Serbian government. He used this to grant hefty wage and pension increases.

The climax of the nationalist demo movement was the celebration of the 600th anniversary of the battle of Kosovo on 28 June 1989 in which a million or so Serbs from all over Yugoslavia and the world were gathered on the site of the famous battle for a festival of Serbian cultural kitsch and nationalist speeches. The significance of such a gathering so soon after Kosovo had been shaken by uprisings, and pacified by tanks, should be obvious. This gathering was a triumph for Milosevic, sealing his domination of Serbian politics from then on.

At the beginning of 1989 radio transmitters in Vojvodina were redirected to beam Serbian nationalist propaganda into Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Serb-populated regions of Croatia and Serbian nationalist rallies began to be held in Croatia. In the same year Serbian nationalist militias armed by the state began to be trained in Serbia – these would later form the shock troops of the Serbian side of the war in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Throughout 1990 and up to the outbreak of war in 1991 Serbia’s Interior Ministry secretly supplied weapons to Serbian nationalists based in the majority Serb areas of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

The opportunity for civil war offered by Milosevic was gratefully seized with both hands by Tudjman. One of the first actions taken when Tudjman’s party came to power was the repeal of a large chunk of the Titoist legislation protecting the rights of national minorities – a calculated attempt to encourage the growing nationalist paranoia in Serb regions of Croatia. This was followed by the systematic sacking of Serbs from government jobs and many private companies. There was a whole series of other measures designed to incite ethnic divisions – names of streets and squares were changed so as to erase anti-fascism, Socialism and anything to do with Serbia; the “Croatian” language was officially re-invented, supposedly without “Serbian” words⁶; the flag of the new ruling party became the official national flag and was flown everywhere. Tudjman’s famous comment during his election campaign that “I am doubly happy that my wife is neither a Serb nor a Jew” was hardly likely to endear him to people whose grandparents had been murdered by Croatian Nazis.

In Slovenia the leaders of the Communist League had promoted a campaign of Slovenian national pride in the mid-1980s around the slogan “Slovenia My Homeland”, which consisted primarily of a series of TV adverts portraying the beauty and diversity of the Slovene countryside. T-shirts displaying this noxious slogan also became extremely popular. Later they increasingly used the media to blame the other republics for the country’s economic ills. However, it was the political forces emerging outside the Communist League which had the greater influence on the development of Slovenian nationalism. In the 1980s a whole range of Western-style single-issue campaigns arose – ecology, conscientious objection to the military, human rights and even gay rights. No doubt most of the idealistic young people and intellectuals who participated in these movements would have been horrified by the idea that their efforts would be used to contribute to the break-up of Yugoslavia and hasten the descent into civil war, but nevertheless this is so. By the late 1980s the Republic of Slovenia’s Youth Organisation had ceased to serve the LCY and become a major focus of opposition to the regime. In particular its

productive forces, the Afghan state could only manage a precarious formal domination in some urban areas, whilst the inaccessible rural environment retained pre-capitalist social relations.

The war against the USSR forged a new entrepreneurial elite in the countryside, which ironically is more ‘advanced’ than its city counterpart (Osama Bin Laden is one such example). These ‘old men of the mountain’ are plugged into the international capital circuit overseeing the distribution of arms, subsidies, humanitarian aid and drugs. Moreover, during peacetime they turn their attention to real estate speculation (similar to the warlords’ activities during the reconstruction of Beirut).

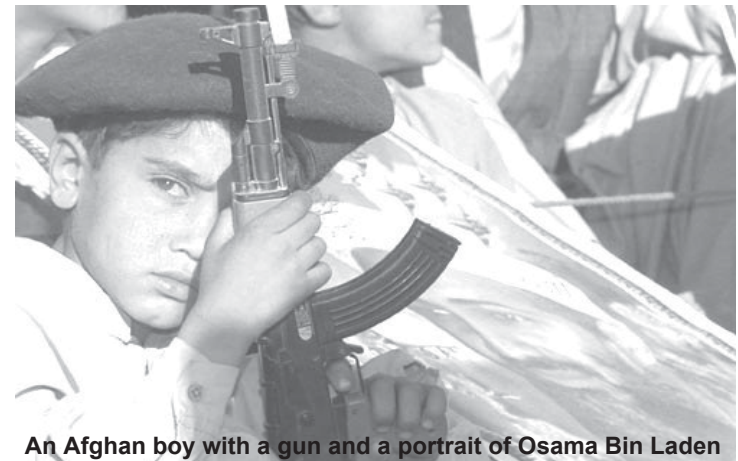
VII

If the history of Afghanistan is about any one thing, it is about contending models of warfare: Tribal war, Jihad, and Modern warfare (and now post-modern warfare?).

Tribal war is typified by a unity (admittedly hierarchical at times), which is directed against the formation of the state (political society). Troops are presented and paraded, confrontation and retreat are conducted within limits; most of the time battles are avoided altogether and if unavoidable then conducted at a specific time and with a minimum of casualties.

The Jihad, on the other hand, is the expression of a civil society (camouflaged by a false religious unity) in pursuit of political power. Asabiyya (tribal solidarity) is broken up in favour of umma (Islamic false community). The tribal obsession with symmetry and balance no longer applies. Shariat and discipline are imposed through jihad.

In Modern warfare civil society is temporarily suppressed (e.g., AFL-CIO have decided to postpone their demonstration in the USA and Bush has launched an attack on Non-Governmental Organizations accusing them of being terrorist fronts), in favour of a total mobilisation of political society. Total war recognises no boundary, either in space, time, or between categories of the population. Afghanistan has proved itself a quagmire for such professional, disciplined armies, as the Russian and British states would attest. Pentagon strategists know this, which is why they are groping towards a new mode of warfare: post-modern warfare, which combines policing and commando raids with hi-tech intelligence and PR. The modern facet of the US military response found expression against the Taliban, whilst its pots-modern facets were directed against the rest of us in a cyber-war involving the latest tools of propaganda.



An Afghan boy with a gun and a portrait of Osama Bin Laden

As soon as victory over a common enemy (be it the USSR bourgeoisie or the Kabul elite) is in sight, all the tribal, ethnic and religious divisions resurface. Fragmentation ensues and the equilibrium re-establishes itself. The Taliban are today in precisely this phase of disintegration.

IV

If the history of Afghanistan is about any one thing, it is about the dream of Sultan Galiev, a Muslim Tatar who joined the Bolsheviks in November 1917 and worked under Stalin's "People's Commissariat for the Nationalities". Galiev saw 'Muslim societies' as collectively oppressed (with the exception of a few big landlords and bourgeois elements). He, therefore, argued against fanning the flames of class war inside such societies.

He envisioned a petty-bourgeois cadre leading his new Muslim Communist Party. He believed the Comintern's emphasis on the West as the engine of the world revolution was misplaced. Later he advocated a Communist Colonial International for non-industrial countries to counteract both the 'West' and Russian Chauvinism. Many of today's Mojahedin are more reactionary versions of Sultan Galiev. Once the Bolsheviks were finished using him against Kolchak, his unorthodox views became burdensome. He was probably killed around 1940 on Stalin's orders.

V

If the history of Afghanistan is about any one thing, it is about the fact that in the 80's Afghani mullahs could have come to an accommodation with the USSR bourgeoisie at any time (in fact many of them did just that!).

In so far as some engaged in the 'anti-colonial' struggle, the ploy accomplished three aims: Firstly, the war had devastated craftsmen, textile makers, weavers and peasants. The mullah's traditional power base was both shrinking and spinning out of control. New cross-sectional alliances had to be forged to ensure the mullah's class privileges. Secondly, the anti-imperialist movement provided the perfect cover for liquidating competitors. Sufi pirs (elderly sages) with their masonic matrix of patronage and favours mediating between devoted murids (disciples), landlords, village leaders, and government officials became the silent victims of various waves of Islamic integrationism. The Pashtun aristocracy had begun to lose its hegemony to the new elite of "Islamic intellectuals, mullahs, and small warlords inside Afghanistan", and in the 90's this group in turn was marginalized by (mostly Pashtun) neo-fundamentalist intellectuals amongst the emigrants to Pakistan. The Taliban movement signified the victory of the US-Pakistan axis of emigrants over the US-Saudi axis of urban Islamic graduates. Ahmad Shah Masood's recent assassination completes this phase. And, thirdly, the anti-colonial jihad was waged to nip the risk of agrarian reform in the bud and to divert proletarian dissatisfaction into safer alternatives. The clergy emerged from the victory over USSR in a stronger position than before and were able to frustrate proletarian/peasants demands.

VI

If the history of Afghanistan is about any one thing, it is about capital's preference for land-mines to fence off enclosures over the more traditional barbed wire (20-25 Afghani are killed/injured by land-mines daily).

Oil producing Middle Eastern countries used their massive riches for rapid urbanisation. Soon they engineered two modes of capital domination – formal domination in rural areas and real domination in the cities. Deprived of easy 'petro-dollars' and faced with stiffer resistance to the development of

newspaper *Mladina* ("Youth") had become a major thorn in the side of the military. On 31 May 1988 Janez Jansa, a senior *Mladina* writer on military affairs was arrested on suspicion of betraying military secrets. Later two more journalists and a non-commissioned officer were arrested after classified documents were found at the newspaper's office. The trial of the four led to a massive public campaign in their support and although they were initially sentenced to terms of between 5 months and 4 years they ended up serving much reduced sentences. The trial of the four was very widely seen as an attack on Slovenia since the JNA (*Jugoslovenska Narodna Armija*, "Yugoslav People's Army"), with its overwhelmingly Serb and Montenegrin officer corps and Serbo-Croat (not Slovenian) as its language of command, was perceived as a Serb institution. Jansa was to become Minister of Defence a year before Slovenia declared independence and played a major role in organising its 10-day war⁷. Similarly, when the Slovenian opposition, with massive popular support, organised a rally in Ljubljana in February 1989 to condemn human rights abuses in Kosovo, it provided an opportunity for the Communist leadership in Slovenia to openly defy the LCY for the first time.

The first "free" (i.e. multi-party) elections held in the Republics of Yugoslavia, in 1990, were a veritable referendum on war. In all the major protagonist Republics: Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia and Bosnia-Herzegovina, ethnic nationalist parties won clear victories over Yugoslavist representatives of the old Communist League and non-ethnic liberal parties. Elections in Slovenia were won by Demos ("Democratic Opposition of Slovenia"), a coalition of five opposition parties who were so confident of their ability to break away from Yugoslavia that they immediately began preparations for issuing a new Slovenian currency. In Serbia in December, Milosevic's Socialist Party of Serbia (SPS) won 194 out of the 250 Assembly seats. In Croatia, Tudjman's HDZ won enough seats to form a homogenous HDZ government. Even in supposedly "multi-ethnic" Bosnia the three ethnic parties⁸ gained over two thirds of the votes cast, enabling them to carve up power between them. Effectively, the citizens of Yugoslavia were asked: "Are you in favour of ethnic slaughter? Yes/No". Voting for ethnic nationalist parties legitimised secession – the secession of Croatia from Yugoslavia, of the Serb minority from Croatia, of the Serb and Croatian minorities from Bosnia and so on. In any nation state secession is an act of war.

Having won seats in the Croatian parliament the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) MPs did not take them up. Instead they formed the "Union of Communes of Luka and Northern Dalmatia" out of the six constituencies they had won. It had its own parliament, the Serb National Council, in Knin. Its first act was to declare its independence from Croatia. It immediately received the protection of the JNA which had already disarmed the territorial defence forces⁹ of Croatia and Slovenia (although Slovenia managed to keep a large part of its weapons). The creation of this mini-state constituted a major act of economic warfare against Croatia by Serbia since it cut major road and rail routes between Zagreb and Dalmatia, disrupting production and immediately wrecking the Dalmatian tourist industry. This pattern was to be repeated in Bosnia-Herzegovina with the SDS constituencies there.

These political manoeuvres were not enough in themselves to silence the working class – only heavy artillery and nationalist death squads could do that. In the meantime the class struggle carried on. For example, in April 1991, 700,000 workers struck in Serbia, almost a third of the Republic's workforce. Many had not been paid since before the December elections.

In March 1991 there was an impressive riot against the regime in Belgrade. The occasion was the calling of a demo on March 9 by the "opposition" parties in the Serbian Parliament, principally the SPO (*Srpski Pokret Obnove*, "Serbian Renewal Movement") led by Vuk Draskovic. They were protesting about bias in the official media. The demo was banned by the government and everyone knew it would lead to a massive confrontation with the forces of order. As such it attracted almost everyone who had a grudge against the regime. The nationalist supporters of the organising parties

AFGHANISTAN: A POTTED SOCIAL HISTORY

I

were undoubtedly out in force as they had travelled from all over Serbia but they were quickly joined by large numbers of workers who hadn't been paid for months, together with students, school kids and the unemployed. Most of the participants were not carrying flags or banners of any description and a few people even burned the flags of Yugoslavia and Serbia. The police had been preparing for the event for several days with thousands of them being returned from occupying Kosovo. They were all equipped with riot shields and gas masks. The demo was due to start at noon in Republic Square. Half an hour before this a major riot had already broken out in and around the square. The crowd initially drove the police out of the square. They then listened to nationalist speeches while the police reorganised to attack them with tear gas and water cannons. This in turn led to several hours of intense rioting in which shops and banks were smashed throughout the centre of town and police vehicles were torn apart by rioters armed with rocks and iron bars. A cop was killed, as was one demonstrator when the cops drew their pistols and fired on the crowd. Order was only restored when JNA tanks appeared on the streets in the evening. Draskovic was arrested and held for several days which worked wonders for his political credibility – leading liberal intellectuals to campaign for the release of a man who would later send his own nationalist militia (“The Serbian Guard”) to fight in Croatia and Bosnia.

The next day saw more rioting as students who had participated in a series of meetings marched toward the centre of town from Student City, a huge collection of crumbling high-rise concrete blocks situated across the Sava river. Fighting began on the Brotherhood and Unity Bridge and *simultaneously* in the centre of Belgrade – clearly a large number of non-students had immediately taken the opportunity to attack the pigs. This, though, was a more orthodox political demo with thousands of students carrying placards and banners calling for Milosevic to resign. After more fighting with the cops the demonstrators managed to occupy Terazije, a main thoroughfare south of Republic Square. This led to a week-long vigil involving hundreds of thousands of people which became a veritable tribune of the people with non-stop speechifying by students, academics, lawyers, famous actors and, apparently, even the odd worker. The demands put forward by this tribune were purely political. There were calls for the resignation of various top state functionaries and for the non-SPS media to be allowed to function without hindrance. Most of these were eventually granted and everyone went home.

Both these demos were highly politically ambiguous. They expressed both the depth of social discontent and the ease with which it could be recuperated into nationalist and liberal politics.

THE WAR BEGINS

The Croatian nationalist irregulars lagged behind their Serbian counterparts but by early 1991 the more militant elements of the HDZ, together with the more extreme Croatian nationalist formations, were distributing weapons and blowing up homes and shops belonging to Serbs. Throughout spring and summer 1991 there were numerous small provocative actions by both sides. The JNA was regularly intervening on the side of the Serb nationalists by safeguarding their territorial gains. As the ten-day war started in Slovenia there was a drastic upsurge in fighting in three areas of Croatia between Serb irregulars and the JNA on one side and the Croatian police and the Republic's embryonic army, the National Guard, on the other. In regions such as Eastern Slavonia and Banija nationalist militias arrived in the villages and carried out massacres according to ethnic criteria, forcing those of the “wrong” ethnic group to flee either to the large towns or to other rural areas where they would be under the “protection” of the rival militia. The people carrying out these actions were generally not from the local area. It was *not* a question of people who'd lived side by side for decades suddenly deciding to kill each other. Neither was it an eruption of long-suppressed ethnic hatreds, as the media make out. It was a well-organised state policy. Most of the Serb irregulars came from organisations led by well-known political figures in Serbia, such as the Chetniks led by Vojislav Seselj of the Serbian Radical Party and the *Arkanovci* (literally: “those who belong to Arkan”) led by Arkan, a mafia-style gangster

If the history of Afghanistan is about any one thing, it is about playing hard to get when capital turns on the charm: a mainly small-holding peasantry and artisanal population that spurns the joys of wage-slavery; saturated carpet bombings by external foes (sometimes in conjunction with the Afghani government) that fail to crush the smuggling operations of the mountain people; civil wars and the restricted nature of export crops making (non-drug related) industrial agriculture untenable; mountain bandits collecting taxes from all sides in return for protection, making the state's tax collectors green with envy; meticulous social engineering plans to divide the country into northern (oil, gas, and minerals) and southern (cheap labour) spheres of influence, overwhelmed by ethnic/tribal/religious complications.

Like the Columbian *comuneros* (common land), *minga* (festive labour and reciprocal labour exchange) and the Russian *obshchina*, the self-subsistence Afghani local *jirga* (now devoid of its communitarian village structures) proves a formidable obstacle to ‘progress’. The small amount of surplus secured by the state makes the seizure of power a dubious victory. Capital has almost given up creating modern structures of domination in Afghanistan, instead it tries to implant itself onto communitarian traditions.

II

If the history of Afghanistan is about any one thing, it is about the nauseating counter-revolutionary stitch up that is known as the “Congress of the Peoples of the East” (September 1920, Baku). Through the Congress, the subordination of proletarian interest to the capitalist Bolshevik state became entrenched. Essentially the circus intended to muster support (nutritional as well as military), amongst the region's proletariat, for the fledgling Russian state.

The Bolsheviks plummeted to abysmal depths of opportunism during the Congress by calling for a holy jihad to save the USSR, whilst adopting the Koran as a political platform. The Shariat (Islamic law) was credited with promoting the common ownership of land and *waqf* (charitable endowments) and at best an intra-classist mechanism of wealth distribution between the Muslim ‘church’ and state) hailed as a real gain for the poor.

The few dissenting voices from this policy of class collaboration were fighting a losing battle. Narbutabekov stopped short of calling Lenin, Trotsky, Zinoviev and Radek imbeciles, and John Reed criticised Bolshevik demagoguery. But perhaps M. N. Roy's attitude was the most clear-sighted. He saw the stitch up for what it was and simply refused to attend.

III

If the history of Afghanistan is about any one thing, it is about Ibn Khaldun's distinction between *asabiyya* (tribal solidarity) and *umma* (the false Muslim community). From time to time an integrationist wave of rural Muslims storm the citadels of urban power, which has become ‘weak’ through corruption, laxity, and the loss of warrior spirit. Once the state's booty is divided amongst the victors, the city's rulers undergo a fresh cycle of decay until they in turn are overthrown by the next wave of puritanical ‘incorruptibles’.

¹¹ In late August, in a meeting between Yeltsin and Magomedov (president of the State Council of Daghestan) the Russian government promised further help of 300 million roubles.

¹² In the town of Ryazan the Russian security forces were caught while planting explosives in an apartment building (in *The Economist* October 9th 1999)

¹³ The excuse of counter-terrorist investigations was not only useful for the Russian state at an external level. As soon as the bombs went off, the police used it as an excuse to arrest and interrogate hundreds of people in Moscow, most of which were not (surprisingly enough) Chechens but Russians.

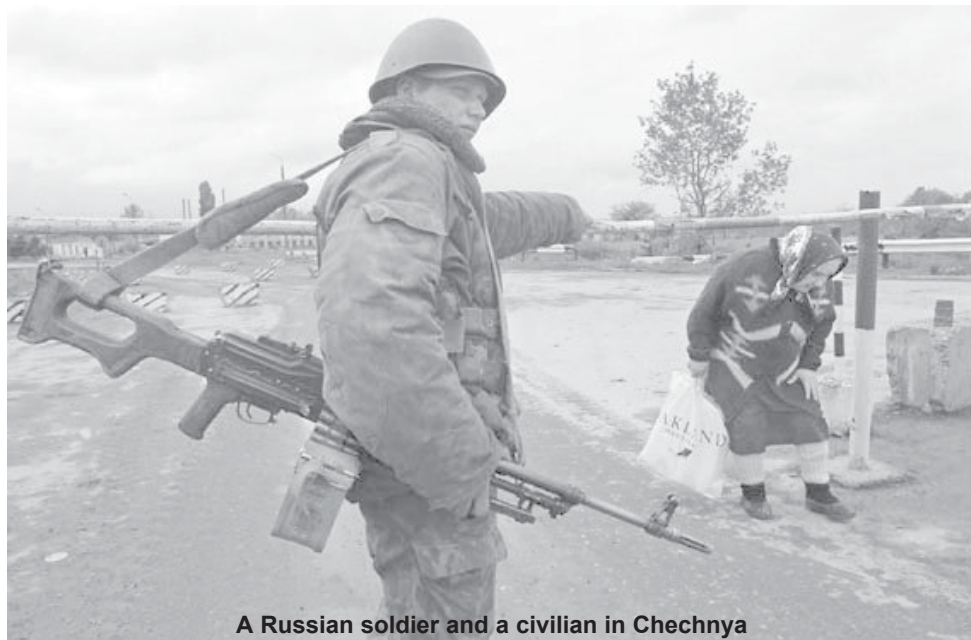
¹⁴ Opinion polls showed that 90% of the population did not feel very strongly about Yeltsin (see *Socialist Action*, December 1999, “Russia Prepares for Elections”)

¹⁵ This view was reinforced by the economic crash in August 1998 that many directly linked to the Western-imposed harsh economic reforms.

¹⁶ Even until 1993, Russia had not stopped the oil going into the refineries of Chechnya with the blatant excuse that such an action would threaten Russian interests.

¹⁷ A big scandal erupted in Moscow when it was proven that Boris Berezovski, the model self made Mafioso businessman of the Russian economy who controls major oil companies and most of the media in Russia, as well as being the major influence behind Yeltsin’s “Family”, has never stopped his financial connections with Chechnya and, more specifically, Basaev.

¹⁸ Money was being channelled to Western consultants rather to the needs of Russia’s people and their economy”, and “ ... Europe’s leaders have been guilty of pursuing short term interests, such as the disposal of the EU’s agricultural surpluses under the guise of food aid to Russia...” (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, December 1999). Of course it reaches the limits of stupidity to claim that any sort of economic policy could be aimed at meeting the needs of the population, yet the remarks are indicative of the EU’s attitude towards Russia.



A Russian soldier and a civilian in Chechnya

from Belgrade. Many of the Croatian irregulars were recruited from Croatian *émigrés* who had returned to fight for their endangered fatherland. Others were simply mercenaries.¹⁰ Many of the actions carried out by the JNA were not even ethnic cleansing – they would simply blow villages apart with heavy artillery, forcing the entire population, irrespective of supposed ethnicity, to flee wherever they could. These operations came to be aimed more and more at the big towns such as Osijek.

It is no coincidence that the first big town to be destroyed was Vukovar, which was besieged and bombarded by the JNA for three months, starting in July. There was almost certainly complicity between the two sides – in Croatia there were widespread rumours that the Croatian government had prevented arms getting through to the city’s defenders. Militarily the JNA needed a quick and easy victory to boost the morale of its increasingly mutinous troops and politically Croatia needed a spectacular Serb atrocity to show the world media. Both were happy to devastate a traditionally militant section of the working class which was proving to be resistant to ethnic segregation. The inhabitants tried to organise an armed resistance which was separate from that of the nationalists – when the JNA entered the town a whole series of corpses were found which had been shot from behind, summarily executed for refusing to join the National Guard or the Croatian nationalist irregulars.

RESISTANCE

In Croatia there was relatively little resistance to mobilisation orders¹¹ (except among those considered to be Serbs) but in Serbia and Montenegro there was massive resistance to conscription into the JNA. Significantly, *all* called-up Albanians refused to join the JNA – this was a significant blow in itself given that there are up to 1.5 million Albanians in Serbia. There was also widespread desertion¹² affecting *all* sections of the army, even military intelligence personnel! In December 1991, after numerous JNA victories, the Croatian forces began to achieve important successes. This signified that the JNA was beginning to disintegrate. The level of disaffection in the ranks became apparent in the form of a widespread petty insubordination similar to that of US troops during the Vietnam War – soldiers failed to wear proper uniform, refused to salute officers, drank alcohol and took drugs on duty... In the words of one JNA conscript who described an officer trying to tell him off for some minor infringement of regulations: “he knew he couldn’t make me do what he wanted because I had a Kalashnikov and six hand-grenades and he didn’t know quite what I was going to do with them”. One conscript in the Knin region stole a tank and drove it all the way back to Belgrade, parking it in front of the Federal Parliament as a protest against the war. For this eminently sane act he was confined to a mental hospital.

In Belgrade thousands of young men were regularly sleeping at a different flat every night to avoid the call-up and draft dodging became downright fashionable! When a mass mobilisation of reservists was ordered, only 10% of those liable turned up. In many villages whole communities cooperated in resistance by warning each other about the approach of the military.¹³ All over Serbia and Vojvodina young men hid themselves with the help of their families and friends, and tens of thousands fled the country. According to an article in *Le Monde Diplomatique* (June 1994) the total number of draft dodgers and deserters who have fled ex-Yugoslavia is over 100,000.

When stories began circulating that hundreds of Montenegrin reservists were being killed in Slavonia, resistance to the war developed even more swiftly than in Serbia. This was the reason for the JNA’s offensive into Eastern Dalmatia and its attack on Dubrovnik – the virtually non-existent Croatian resistance provided an opportunity for easy victories (and a great deal of plunder) for the Montenegrin conscripts.

In December the duration of military service was extended from 12 months to 15 months and the army admitted that more than 10,000 reservists had refused to join their units. The military authorities threatened draft dodgers and deserters with long prison sentences under Article 121 which even prescribed the death penalty for a deserter who left the country. Some draft dodgers who had made a public protest against being mobilised were grabbed off the street, imprisoned for 2 or 3 days, and then sent to the front to clear mine fields.

In addition to the steady individual attrition of the JNA there were numerous collective revolts, although these never coalesced into an organised movement. The biggest refusal took place at Kragujevac, a garrison town in central Serbia, where 7,000 reservists presented themselves at the call-up without their arms. They shut themselves in the camp and refused to move. The military authorities ended up exempting all of them from service and had to content themselves with just putting them on a local employers' black list. At the end of August 1991, 700 reservists from Smederevo refused to be taken from Bosnia to the war zone in Croatia. In November 1991, 200 reservists stood in front of the office of the district president in Valjevo until their commander signed their military books stipulating that their service was complete. On 18 December, at Markusica, on the front in Slavonia, 700 reservists refused to fight after already having done their 45 days of recall. A general ordered the arrest of their officers but backed down when troops threatened to shoot him. At the beginning of January 1992, 150 reservists deserted as a group from the front at Osijek after spending more than a month on the front line and returned to Belgrade to protest at their conditions of life. In March 1992, more than 700 reservists on leave at Gornji Milanovac revolted and refused to return to the front in Eastern Slavonia. There were also numerous revolts by reservists from Vojvodina who frequently mutinied or ran away, irrespective of whether they were "Serbs" or "Hungarians" or whatever. Thousands of soldiers were brought before courts martial.

The undermining of the JNA didn't stop the war but it definitely shortened it in Croatia – Milosevic and Tudjman were to sign a UN/US brokered peace treaty on 2 January 1992. When the war in Bosnia began in April 1992 it followed much the same pattern as in Croatia with the JNA protecting the territorial gains of the Serbian nationalist militias. But the JNA, now called the VJ¹⁴, withdrew from Bosnia in May, leaving large quantities of equipment and officers with the newly-formed Bosnian Serb Army (that is, the army of Republika Srpska). This army rapidly conquered around two thirds of Bosnia-Herzegovina but there followed a period of more or less stalemate between the competing sides which lasted until mid-1995. This undoubtedly constituted an incredibly gloomy episode in proletarian history – throughout former Bosnia-Herzegovina massacres, mass deportations, mass rapes and all the other horrors of capitalist warfare reigned on a scale not seen in Europe since 1945. But even in conditions like these *national unity is never as complete as the bourgeois media would have us believe*. This is shown by the fact that all sides have had to use terror to make proletarians participate in the armed forces – in besieged Sarajevo young draft dodgers have been seized from cafés by the military police and immediately taken to dig trenches on the front lines (*Guardian*, 2 November 1993). In the Serb nationalist held regions of Bosnia and Croatia in spring 1995 there were a whole series of summary executions of people accused of desertion, insubordination and stealing from the army (*War Report*, June 1995). Martić (the Knin leader) and Karadžić even had to issue a public appeal for deserters to return to their units by July 5 or face prosecution. Charity workers have reported their convoys being robbed by "armed ex-soldiers". The lack of national unity is also shown by the "moral problems" reported by military commanders on all sides and, particularly clearly, by events in Banja Luka in September 1993.

weakening. Although the nationalist tendencies of the Russian bourgeoisie were seriously impaired (as the election results show), Yeltsin's position was undermined since Russia's international position was undermined. In this way it is hard to see how *Aufheben* can claim that the result of the Kosovo war would be to pre-empt any alternative to the economic reforms of the IMF. Yeltsin's faction, which is seen in Russia as primarily responsible for the pro-Western policies, was discredited due to its inability to cope with the Kosovo crisis. Through its successful appeal to national unity the economic reforms imposed by the West have been prolonged rather than threatened. What the standpoint of *Aufheben* ends up with implying is that Western capital collaborated with Yeltsin to ensure that both Yeltsin's position, and the economic reforms, would remain unchallenged. Yeltsin's position after the war though, was not as safe as this view implies. In fact, the only thing that managed to save Yeltsin's *modus operandi* was the war in Chechnya, which managed to boost up the illusion of national unity, ie. the necessary prerequisite for the continuation of the economic reforms, by setting aside the social reality of exploitation, and neutralising its potential explosiveness, through appeals for national unity.

⁴ "In 1994 more than 250 Turkish firms were working in the Russian market, especially in the construction business. Russia was easily the most important trading partner Turkey had in the CIS accounting for about five times its volume of trade with all the Turkic republics combined", in *Contested Borders in the Caucasus*, Chapter VIII, "Turkey's Policies in Transcaucasia".

⁵ Although Turkey wished to support Azerbaijan and not Armenia (for historical reasons as well), it seems to be the case that the influence of the Armenian diaspora in France and the US was strong enough to 'convince' Turkey not to take any drastic steps.

⁶ Most of them preferred to sell their weapons to the Chechen nationalists rather than engage in war with them, something which provided the Chechens with modern weaponry and undermined the Russian army. In the most recent war on the other hand, apart from the barbarism of the thousands of murders, mutilations, rapes, of the destroyed houses and the looting, the trade of dead bodies and hostages is blooming. The Russian generals of the 'security zone' sell the dead Chechens to their families and the prisoners to the Chechen rebels who collect ransoms from their families, sharing them afterwards with the Russian officers.

⁷ On the one hand there were the mothers of the conscripts and the general outrage of the population, and on the other hand there was a faction of the ruling class (politicians, media, etc) which, frightened by the popular outrage, understood that the moment was not right for such a military expense. The war of 94-96 did not have the support of the majority of the Russian or Chechen population, and that explains why no nationalist conflicts from below appeared. In contrast, the Russian mothers which took to the Chechen villages, while the war was still going on, looking for their children, stayed in Chechen houses and often ensured the liberation of their sons. It is also hardly known that the Chechens named the main street of Grozny *Gorbachev*, honouring him as the father of democratisation and of perestroika.

⁸ Trained by the Russian army during the 92-93 war between Abkhazia and Georgia, Basaev fought with the Russians in support of the former. More than anything else, Basaev seems to be an opportunist: in the autumn of '96, a while after the victory of Chechnya over the Russian army, Basaev started created a cosmic image of himself, grooming his beard and appearing well-dressed for the interests of his electoral campaign, scorning the Islamic candidates for their 'newly-acquired' Islamism. This did not however stop him from invading Dagestan in 1999 dressed in the colours of the 'Islamic revolution'.

⁹ Some evidence suggests that a Texan based oil company approached the Chechen government, but was soon discouraged from making any deal by a dispatch of the US embassy in Moscow. After that, Chechen officials made many business trips to European countries, trying to make new deals. These were not met with any success though, either because of the incompetence of the Chechen delegates, or because no Western company was willing to invest in the uncertain economic and social environment of Chechnya.

¹⁰ G.M. Derluigan, "Che Guevaras in Turbans", *New Left Review* No.237.

of the regions resources, the West definitely prefers to have Russia in charge of both the existing resources and their further development.

The underlying principle is the fact that, although Russia's economy needs to be kept in check, it is crucial for Western capital that it develops enough to be opened towards Western investments and to be made a capable competitor/partner in the world market.

The war in Chechnya is a consequence of the nature of post-Soviet society, in the same way as the Yugoslav war or the war in Kosovo. It is an expression of the attempts to integrate the 'underdeveloped' parts of the capitalist world into the global division of power.

The outcome of the war might be favourable to either Russian capital or the Chechen ruling class, yet whether Russian or Chechen, wherever capital dominates *there are only slaves*. As such, the development of capitalism brings with it the subversive element that constantly threatens the established order and the explosion of class struggles is as unavoidable as capitalist society presents itself to be. In the current situation, this radical element has not been expressed, and thus to take either side in this conflict means to prioritise one form of capitalist development over another. To support that is, either the interests of Russian capital, or the national-liberation capitalism of the aspiring modernisers of Chechnya. This however, is the task of bourgeois ideology, not radical/revolutionary critique.

NOTES

¹ "Daghestan has become the centre of illegal trade and smuggling. Ingushetia the peripheral centre of the illegal trade of gold and drugs. North Ossetia the main producer of illegal vodka and a point of transport for the tycoons of alcohol", (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, December 1999)

² Although even that seems uncertain since, for example, during the whole period of economic reform in Russia in which hundreds of uncompetitive industries were shut down, not one single factory or industrial plant has been built! ("Conkers or Bonkers? Humanitarian War in Kosovo" *Aufheben*, no.8, footnote 11, http://geocities.com/aufheben2/auf_8_kosovo.html)

³ For some (see *Aufheben*, "Conkers or Bonkers..."), these historical developments were used to explain NATO's recent war in Kosovo. However one-sided this view seems though, it proves to be useful when dealing with the war in Chechnya. In accordance with this view, put forward by *Aufheben*, Western capital was forced to realise that, faced with widespread dissatisfaction with Yeltsin's commitment to the Western-led economic reforms, and with the Russian economy even more seriously damaged by the financial crisis of 1998, their loyal subordinates of the Yeltsinite apparatus might not survive the next elections, and that the nationalist factions of the Russian bourgeoisie might take control of the economy and threaten the – necessary for the West – economic reforms, by imposing a re-nationalisation of the economy. By attacking the last ally that Russia had in Europe (Serbia), Russia's isolation would be firmly established, and the weakness of the ultra-nationalist faction of the Russian bourgeoisie exposed – they would not be able to support their 'Slav brothers'. Thus, the US's decision to embark on a NATO offensive in the 'insignificant' area of Kosovo was essentially an attempt to show Russia that there can be no alternative to the IMF imposed economic reforms and that military force will be used to demonstrate the isolation of Russia and thus the necessity for following the Western-led reforms.

The development and outcome of the Kosovo war however verifies that this view was problematic. On the one hand, this view ignores recent developments in the Balkans themselves and problematically focuses on *Russia* (and the US) to explain a war in the *Balkans*. On the other hand, and perhaps more importantly, although it is a fact that Russia's isolation was publicly demonstrated, the result of the war was not the strengthening of the Yeltsin apparatus, as the view implies, but rather its

MUTINY!

The mass revolt in the ranks of the Bosnian Serb Army in Banja Luka (the largest town in the Republika Srpska region of former Bosnia-Herzegovina) in September 1993 was the most significant act of rebellion by soldiers in the whole of the war. The political consciousness of the participants was almost certainly pretty reactionary. Their slogans and demands essentially corresponded to the usual patriotic whining about how "war profiteers" were having an easy life while decent patriots were giving their lives at the front. But even if what they were thinking about was "a fair day's pay for a fair day's killing", in their *actions* they undermined the war effort (and stopped it dead for several days) by putting their needs before the needs of capital's war economy.

On 10 September three units of the Bosnian Serb Army, the First Army Corps of Krajina, the 16th Motorised Unit and the First Armoured Brigade, mutinied on their return to the front. They drove into town in their armoured cars and took over the main official buildings, notably the local radio and TV stations, the town hall and the Head Quarters of the Army. They were led by an "emergency general staff" led by NCOs and sub-alterns.

Their demands were for an increase in their pay (which stood at around \$1 per month for an ordinary soldier) and the arrest of "war profiteers, who instead of standing watch in the trenches are getting rich with the blessing of those in power". A black list of 700 profiteers was drawn up and they began arresting them, including the mayor of Banja Luka! The insurgents seized the power stations and provided the town with an uninterrupted electricity supply, something it hadn't had for months. The rebels began broadcasting from the TV station but this was quickly blocked as the transmitters were located in other parts of Bosnia. Soldiers in other brigades began to send telegrams of support but the movement did not generalise in a practical way, although newspaper reports on 14 September said that rebellion had spread to other units such as in Sokolac near Sarajevo.

The movement was defeated by its acceptance of the trap of negotiations and even parliamentarism – at one stage the leadership of the mutiny called for the anticipated general election to be brought forward. In one unit pay was negotiated for, in another it was the question of the dismissal of certain "corrupt" officers or politicians... After a week the movement was over. The state gave the mutineers 10 days leave and a promise to address their social demands, while some leaders of the mutiny were arrested.

THE FUTURE

However inspiring the Banja Luka mutiny may have been (at least when it started), and however much all sides may have suffered attrition of their forces by desertion we must stress that it is the soldiers and potential soldiers of the JNA/VJ who have shown the most significant resistance to the war effort. This largely explains the lack of *direct* involvement by Serbia in the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina for most of the time that it has raged. Over the last three years or so there have been recurring panics about the VJ becoming directly involved in the war again, but these have proved to be the result of mere sabre-rattling by Milosevic. The attack on Krajina by the Croatian Army in August 1995 was the most recent example. This time there was a general mobilisation in Serbia and Montenegro with military officials knocking on the doors of potential recruits all over Belgrade. They knew that just sending out draft papers was a waste of time! Tanks were sent to the Croatian border. Once again there was widespread avoidance of the call-up. In Montenegro only 6% of those called up reported to the barracks (*War Report*, October 1995). Even in these parts of ex-Yugoslavia, though, the anti-draft resistance has not taken on any kind of organised form, apart from small knots of people who know each other well.

But it is no use simply bemoaning the lack of organisation of our class brothers and sisters in the Balkans. As long as proletarians remain trapped within the walls of nationality they will continue to be taken by surprise whenever “their” ruling class starts to send them to the battlefields, they will continue to look for some local solution to their problems, to hope against all reason that some peace agreement will hold or that some more humane fraction of capital will come to power. This war has been a great success for the bourgeoisie. Firstly, in the short term, they have crushed resistance to economic restructuring. Although the heavy guns are temporarily silent the war against the proletariat continues in its “peaceful” forms – millions of workers continue not to be paid and austerity deepens. Secondly, they have significantly advanced one of their most important projects of the last two centuries, the nationalisation of the proletariat. This is not only true within ex-Yugoslavia itself but also in the neighbouring states. For example, both Greece and Bulgaria have profited from the use of the “Macedonian question”¹⁵. In Greece the major political parties were able to organise two major nationalist demonstrations in 1992 which together mobilised around 10% of the Greek population. We cannot deny that *our* project, the re-internationalisation of the proletariat, has suffered a serious setback.

As communist internationalists the most important way we can show solidarity with proletarians in ex-Yugoslavia is, of course, by taking up the struggle against “our own” bourgeoisie. It was, above all, the isolated nature of the class struggle in Yugoslavia and, in particular, *the success of the introduction of the free market in the rest of Eastern Europe*, which enabled, and compelled, the bourgeoisie to impose such a bloody solution to their problems. However, this should not be an excuse for failing to create solid links of international solidarity. It is only by building such links that the rich experience of resistance to restructuring and war gained by proletarians in ex-Yugoslavia can be shared with the rest of us and that we can share our experiences of struggle with them. This may not sound like a very inspiring conclusion given the sheer scale of the crime against our class which the international bourgeoisie have got away with, but it is the only realistic course of action and the only way to prepare ourselves for the class battles of the future – battles which the bourgeoisie will undoubtedly try to win by means of the tried and trusted methods of nationalism and war.

NOTES

¹ This article takes its information from a wide variety of sources. A lot of information comes from tantalising single paragraphs in the mainstream bourgeois press of Britain and France and the numerous journalistic books which have been written about Yugoslavia in recent years. A small amount comes from British leftist publications. The only regular info we get from Croatia comes from the English language newsletter *Zaginflatch* which appears to be produced by anarcho-punks. The only info about the situation in Bosnia which we have, apart from the bourgeois press, comes from gossip relayed via Serbia and Croatia. Much useful basic info comes from conversations with friends from the region.

² According to a series of reports published in Washington in May 1995, the US was at that time a major supplier in 45 of the 50 regional conflicts, often to both sides (*Guardian*, 30.5.95).

³ In Yugoslavia the distinction is clearly made between Muslims (with a capital ‘M’) meaning people of the “Muslim” nationality and muslims (with a small ‘m’) meaning people who practice Islam. The Bosnian Muslims were considered to be one of the constituent nations of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, along with Serbs, Croats, Slovenes and so on. Although recognised as a “national minority” when Socialist Yugoslavia was founded at the end of World War II they were not granted the status of nation until 1971. This was done in order to reduce the power of both Croatia and Serbia within the federal state. In terms of ancestry, Muslims are mostly descended from Serbs and Croats (mostly Serbs) who converted to Islam under the Ottoman Empire. According to a survey carried out in 1990, only about a third of people in Bosnia who considered themselves to be Muslims also considered themselves to be muslims (*Le Monde Diplomatique*, December 1994).

knowledge however that its temporal prolongation could turn things on their head and render it a potential danger for social peace in Russia.

Externally, the attack on Chechnya represents an attempt by Russian capital to maintain some control over the explosive region of the Caucasus, whose oil and gas resources are vital to Russian industry.¹⁶ Although the loss of dominance over the majority of oil resources in the Caucasus is now considered a given for Russian capital since two alternative oil pipelines are already being built which bypass Russian controlled land, Chechnya’s invasion of Daghestan threatened the last remaining oil pipeline which brought oil to Russia through Daghestan. Furthermore, by achieving military victory over Chechnya, Russia does not only pursue its immediate economic interests but also pre-empts any domino effect that could result from Chechnya’s insubordination, and which could potentially even lead to the demise of the Russian Federation. At the same time, this – so far -successful war gave Russia an opportunity to revitalise itself. Through the boosting of the morale of the army – the war was seen by many Russian conscripts as defensive – and its modernisation, Russia is given a chance to prove that she (as much as the West) can also act like an *exporter of protection in the periphery*, a very modern commodity.

Basically, the central problem in Chechnya is reminiscent to that of Kosovo in the Balkans. With a backward and unproductive agriculture, with the rising problem of overpopulation, with high levels of unemployment, and a severe lack of capital accumulation, the problems that Russian capital faces in the Caucasus go far beyond the ‘threat’ of Islamic fundamentalism or the loss of oil pipelines which, although important, have seen a big decrease of their production rates for many years. As in Kosovo, the problem of the reproduction of human capital is visible. It has become increasingly obvious that a future process of modernisation of the Chechen economy requires the abandonment of unproductive forms of agriculture, the suppression of illegal trade (which, although beneficial for individual capitalists, does nothing to accommodate the dominance of social capital) and the integration of the population into modern capitalist structures, i.e. their proletarianisation. As soon as it was clear that the wannabe modernisers of Chechnya (Basaev and Mashadov, etc) were unable to perform these necessities with considerable success, war presented itself as the only possible resolution of the contradictions of the Russian Federation.

The Russian attack has also had the effect of re-igniting Chechen nationalism and uniting the nation against the ‘common enemy’, something that Basaev himself jokingly admitted to as soon as Russia began its attacks. In the face of widespread dissatisfaction with the pathetic state of Chechnya, social peace was, in Basaev’s words, hard to maintain for much longer. For the aspiring modernising faction of the bourgeois class, whose links to Moscow are well established,¹⁷ the nationalisation of social antagonisms is the only positive development.

In general the west has kept rather silent during the war in Chechnya, a result of the west’s complex position. On the one hand, western interests in Caspian oil have led to an aggressive policy towards Russia which has effectively drawn Russia out of the south-central Caucasus. US presence in Azerbaijan – either directly or with Turkey as a middleman – and in the Ukraine, seriously influenced Russia’s decision to embark on another military expedition to retain some control in the North Caucasus. Similarly, the EU’s policies – such as aid programmes in Eastern Europe etc. – were aimed more towards the EU’s internal interests rather than the Russian ones,¹⁸ and were generally disastrous for Russian interests. In this way the West has forced Russia to acknowledge its loss of dominance over the Caucasus and thus to attempt to maintain at all costs the parts which she can still control. At the same time however, faced with the potential of an uncontrollable motley crew of armed-to-the-teeth warlords who dangerously flirt with the Islamic states of the Middle East, and who want a share

lose the 90% of their budget which at the moment comes from Russia.¹¹ And although industrial plants hardly function, agricultural production is in a pathetic state, and unemployment has risen to well over 30% (others speak of 80%!), financial help from Russia is seen as the only way to maintain the existing social peace which, at least, brings some wealth to the clans at the top of the hierarchy of Daghestani society. Furthermore, the possibilities of seasonal migration to Russia, which temporarily relieves the impoverished unemployed population, would no longer be possible. Not to mention the fact that unification with Chechnya would mean, if Islamic law were to be followed, a re-distribution of the existing wealth, something highly unfavourable to the chieftains of Daghestan.

In response to the Chechen invasion of Daghestan, Russia sent a considerable military force and managed to drive the Chechens out by the 30th of August 1999. The reason for Russia's decision was not, as it was claimed, a counter-attack against Islamic fundamentalism, but the knowledge that should Chechnya control Daghestan, the oil pipeline that was built through Daghestan to bypass Chechnya was going to fall into the hands of the Chechens. Moreover, Russia's other plan for another pipeline from Kazakhstan to Novorosisk, whose foundations were laid on May 1999, was also threatened.

As soon as this excursion was over, bombs started flying all over the place in Russia claiming more than 300 dead, and before anyone knew it, a full scale attack was launched against Chechnya, with the official aim of getting rid of the Chechen terrorists once and for all. Although the process of identifying those responsible for the bombs was surprisingly fast, and the real origin of the bombs is still highly contestable,¹² the result was the same: with the excuse of counter-terrorist activity, the Russian state gathered its forces and attacked Chechnya.¹³ Thus started the second military excursion of the Russian military into Chechen land which, in contrast to the previous one, has for the time being been much more effective, since it follows the example set by NATO in Kosovo, summarised by the cynical 'bombs good, body bags bad'.

So what does Russian capital have to gain from this military attack? On the one hand, it is important to look at the internal situation of Russia itself at the beginning of the war. With parliamentary elections coming up on December 19th, and presidential ones in the summer of 2000, it was obvious that Russian capital was reaching dangerous times. With a constant decrease in living standards and growing poverty, with unemployment reaching explosive levels, and with no visible prospect of any escape from the imposed economic reforms, there was a growing realisation that the period of economic reform was a mere disguise for setting the basis for capitalist dictatorship. And although Yeltsin's administration of post-Soviet Russia was a disaster, it had at least managed to retain some social peace. But Yeltsin's rule was coming to a constitutional end, and widespread dissatisfaction¹⁴ could well be channelled towards less stable factions of capital's administrators – be it the neo-Stalinists of Zuyganov or the incompetent centre-left. Any such election result was unwelcome by both the West and the local ruling class for reasons of stability. Combined with that was a feeling of isolation (summarised in the popular belief that "the whole world is conspiring against Russia") resulting in resentment towards the West, which has had the effect of fuelling a nationalist trend in *every single party* running for the elections in December. This resentment was pretty evident during the Kosovo war, yet its roots lay more in the ongoing process of economic reform which for the Russian proletariat is a process of growing impoverishment, and for which some see the West as responsible.¹⁵ Although this feeling of isolation could to a certain degree be channelled towards the *external enemy* (the US, the West, etc), and thus mystify the true nature of capitalist social relations, it was unable to provide stability *inside* Russia. A growing number of strikes and social turmoil testified that even the nationalism of the political parties could not accommodate the alienation of the disintegrating Russian society. Only the Chechen war managed to put the national above the social question, thus allowing Vladimir Putin to win the elections and continue with the economic reforms that Yeltsin started, with the

⁴ An article in the British newspaper *The Observer* (10 September 1995) is particularly revealing. It details how there were systematic attempts to destroy film showing the UN forces (in this case those of Britain and Holland) remaining passive while the Bosnian Serb Army organised the massacres which it carried out after capturing Srebrenica in July 1995. Apparently a video was destroyed on the orders of the Dutch Commander in Chief, Hans Couzy, and some film taken by Dutch troops was "accidentally" destroyed by the wrong chemicals being used in its development!

⁵ This is summed up beautifully in a passage in the book *Yugoslavia's Bloody Collapse* (Christopher Bennett, Hurst & Co., 1995):

"Before war broke out, Slovenia was in much the same position as the rest of Eastern Europe's former communist states ... major restructuring was necessary to transform the economy from planned to free market and this would almost inevitably entail a decline in living standards and a jump in unemployment. ... a prolonged period of labour unrest and strikes appeared on the cards, with potentially destabilising political consequences. However, as a result of the war, Slovenes were much better prepared psychologically to deal with the pain of restructuring and, in contrast to the rest of Eastern Europe, labour unrest never materialised.

War instilled a sense of discipline and national pride in the Slovene labour force ... Just ten days of fighting was more than enough to convince Slovenes to count their blessings ... While the Brioni Accord, the peace agreement which officially ended the war in Slovenia, was followed by a three-month moratorium on independence, it effectively gave Serbia, via the National Bank of Yugoslavia, three months in which to sabotage the Slovene economy. It was a continuation of war by other means and the economic downturn in Slovenia was immediate and sharp. However, this, too, proved a blessing in disguise, since it provided Slovenes [sic] with a perfect scapegoat for the economic crisis and, at the same time, compelled Slovene businesses to force the pace of reconstruction and aggressively seek out new markets. ... Surveys of public attitudes since independence have revealed profound changes. The idealism which characterised Slovene society in the 1980s ... has largely disappeared and been replaced by a hard-nosed realism and a virtual obsession with work."

⁶ The attempts by Serbo-Croat-speaking ethnic nationalists in Serbia, Croatia and even Bosnia to define their "languages" as separate is one of the more laughable aspects of the war. In Croatia an official "Croatian" has been created which has been purged of "foreign" words (apart from German ones) and which has incorporated many "Croatian" words not used since before the Second World War. The Serbian nationalists have interfered less with the language but *have* revived the Cyrillic alphabet for most official purposes. In Serbia itself this was not *so* ludicrous because most people had some familiarity with it. In "Serb" regions of Croatia, however, many people had never used it and had to learn it as quickly as possible to show that they were proper Serbs!

If someone tries to convince you that "Serbian", "Croatian" and "Bosnian" are separate languages *don't* say "Your ideas about Balkan linguistics are interesting but I must however disagree with them". Just say: "Crkni, nacionalisticki drkadzijo!" ("Drop dead, nationalist wanker!") – this should be understandable in all three "languages".

⁷ During Jansa's court case he was even supported by Western anarchists. The anarchists in Trieste organised a press conference with him to denounce the Yugoslav regime which "represses basic freedoms". In France the review *Iztok* circulated a petition for him.

⁸ These were: the Muslim SDA – Stranka Demokratske Akcije ("Party of Democratic Action") which also had a smaller branch in the Sandzak region of Serbia where many "Muslims" live; the Serb SDS – Srpska Demokratska Stranka ("Serbian Democratic Party") which also existed in Croatia; the Croatian HDZ – Hrvatska Demokratska Zajednica ("Croatian Democratic Community") which was an offshoot of what became the ruling party in Croatia.

⁹ The territorial defence units were the local organisations of national defence which were supposed to be capable of acting independently of the JNA in the event of a foreign invasion.

¹⁰ An idea of the complicity between Serbia and Croatia can be gained from the case of a young

aspiring mercenary from Britain whose knowledge of geography left something to be desired. Nineteen-year-old Neil Valentine arrived in *Belgrade*, where amused officials redirected him to Croatia!

¹¹ Admittedly we have little information about this. According to a report by the “Conscientious Objectors Group” of “Anti-War Campaign Croatia” from February 1994, there is an “unofficial and unverified estimate” that about 30% of reservists didn’t answer the call-up in 1991 and 1992.

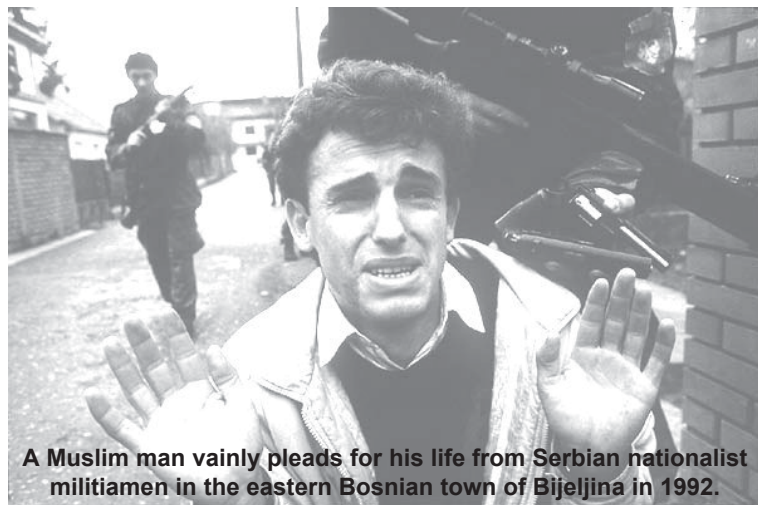
¹² We must make a distinction here between the real movement of desertion against the war and the tendency for the JNA to disintegrate into national sections – something which was going on at the same time. There were numerous instances of “desertion”, particularly by members of the officer corps, which were, in reality, just a changing of sides from one army to another. This was a result of the decentralised nature of national defence in Yugoslavia.

¹³ At this point we should mention a serious con trick which has been perpetrated against those attempting to show solidarity with the anti-war resistance. This concerns the “Zitzer Spiritual Republic”. This was supposedly a local anti-militarist initiative based in the mostly “Hungarian” village of Tresnjevac in Northern Vojvodina in which, following militant local demos against the draft, the Zitzer Club (a pizza parlour and pool hall) declared itself to be an independent republic and became a centre for anti-war organising. Its supposed activities were widely advertised in “alternative” and anarchist-leaning publications in the US (including *Anarchy* magazine), Western Europe and even in other parts of ex-Yugoslavia (we acquired its address in Tresnjevac from a Croatian fanzine!). In fact, as far as we can ascertain, this initiative was largely a publicity stunt by the Hungarian-nationalist party DZVM (Demokratska Zajednica Vojvodjanskih Madjara - “Democratic community of Vojvodinan Hungarians”). Using the name “Zitzer Spiritual Republic” they could approach various Western pacifist and civil rights organisations and get hold of large quantities of money and computer equipment. The contact name for the “Spiritual Republic” was Lajos Balla, a local politician involved in DZVM.

If nothing else this episode should serve as a terrible warning as to the dangers of the “send money to this address” style of pseudo-solidarity widely practised by Western anarchists.

¹⁴ Vojska Jugoslavije, “Armed Forces of Yugoslavia”. The name changed after the governments of Serbia and Montenegro declared themselves to be the Savezna Republika Jugoslavija, “Federal Republic of Yugoslavia”, (SRJ) on 27 April 1992. This was supposed to be the successor state to Socialist Yugoslavia and is sometimes referred to as “the third Yugoslavia”.

¹⁵ A very useful text on this subject was published by the Greek group TPTG (Ta Paidia Tis Galarias) in no.3 of their magazine. They can be contacted at: P.O. Box 76149, Nea Smirni 17110, Athens. The text is available in English from them or from us.



A Muslim man vainly pleads for his life from Serbian nationalist militiamen in the eastern Bosnian town of Bijeljina in 1992.

by selling them to the market. For that part of the population which did not (or could not) resort to this trade, the situation was worse. Even when Chechnya was still part of the Soviet Union, and subsidies were running high, the rural proletarians faced chronic unemployment of about 40 per cent, their survival being dependent on the possibility of seasonal migration to Russia. After independence however, this was no longer possible. As a result, most of them turned to primitive forms of agricultural production.

In this disintegrating society, the Islamic religion found a foothold. Financially backed to a certain degree by Saudi Arabia and other Middle East Islamic states, Muslim preachers found their way into the mountainous region of Chechnya with the aim of spreading the word of Islam, and establishing Islamic law. Although the rise of Islamic fundamentalism is overrated and thus highly misleading when used as the *only explanation* of the situation in Chechnya (and the rest of the Caucasus, for that matter), it is significant as an indication of the ways in which the Chechens, faced with the devastating characteristics of post-Soviet society, try to *re-organise their everyday lives*. For the disenchanting and lumpen youth of Chechnya and Daghestan, which organises itself in gangs in order to face the increased poverty and the corrupt ‘nouveau-rich’, “...*Islam appears as the only force capable of replacing the old certainties and clear social order which was previously provided by the soviet system*”.¹⁰ As a result, Basaev and other Chechen warlords turned to Islamism during the 94-96 war, as Islamic shariah law proved an effective tool in providing the necessary discipline of the soldiers. Yet, after the war, the rising ruling class found itself torn between armed Islamic warlords – who saw in Islam a new collective identity which would guarantee the obedience of the population – and bureaucrats, supporting the continuation of the soviet institutions. The violent conflicts between them increased the confusion and uncertainty of the Chechen population whose initial collective expectations after ‘independence’ turned into the need for protection from the Islamic warlords through clientelist relations. Although it was firstly the marginalised youth, which grew up in the post-soviet chaos, that identified with Islamic fundamentalism, gradually, and since no coherent alternative appeared, Islam turned into a *new unifying ideology of the state* by integrating all political forces. Even Mashadov flirted with this peculiar Caucasian *wahhabitism*, a mixture of hardcore and militant Islamism that Saudi Arabia refuses to accept as a real descendant. If finally the ruling class chose Islamic fundamentalism as its ideological vehicle for the capitalist restructuring of Chechnya, the consequences of such a choice had the opposite effect. *The ‘moral economy’ that the wahhabites promoted did not contribute to a smooth reproduction of human capital. The ruling class sought the solution of the dead-end in imperialist expansion.*

In August 1999, a group of Chechen nationalists – or Islamic fighters if you wish – and mercenaries led by Basaev and the Afghani (or Saudi, opinions vary) Khattab invaded neighbouring Daghestan in an attempt to financially exploit the gains from direct access to the Caspian Sea and to escape from the economic blockade imposed by Russia after the war. The Chechen government kept an uneasy distance from this invasion, stating that it represented a ‘personal affair’ of the Basaev-Khattab duo, or an ‘internal affair’ of Daghestan, or even a ‘conspiracy of the West and Moscow’. The Islamic invaders were particularly polite to the Daghestani cops, whom they treated as ‘...brothers’ and to the local population, allowing them to leave if they wanted – something which they did *en masse*. In themselves, the leading Islamic clans of Daghestan were not particularly happy about this invasion, and even though the Chechens labelled the invasion ‘an Islamic revolution against the infidel Russians’, whose expressed aim was the destruction of the ‘corrupt apparatus’ and the ‘liberation’ of the population of Daghestan, the latter not only refused the unification with Chechnya, but was eager to join the Russian forces that were sent to fight back against the Chechens.

For Daghestan, a member of the Russian Federation since 1992, and one of the most heavily populated areas in the Caucasus, the prospect of unification with Chechnya was particularly undesirable. In a country of 2.1 million people and of 40 distinct ethnic groups, withdrawal from Russia would almost certainly mean civil war amongst the various clans. Furthermore, and most importantly, they would

SHORT ACCOUNT OF A PROLETARIAN CATASTROPHE: THE WAR IN CHECHNYA AND THE PROBLEM OF CAPITALIST RECONSTRUCTION IN THE CAUCASUS

with Armenia, since any mention of such an interference immediately received threats from Russia. Thus, it turned towards Russia, hoping that the latter would exert its influence on Armenia for a quick solution. In return, oil deals favourable to Russia were discussed.

Although Azerbaijan decided to join the CIS (Confederation of Independent States), it kept balancing between Russia and the West in terms of oil interests, seeking a solution to its ongoing war with Armenia and a favourable economic deal for its oil. In March 1993, and with the more dynamic entrance of Western companies into the “debates”, the decision was taken to build an oil pipeline from Baku to the Turkish port of Ceyhan, a result which seriously threatened Russian interests in the South-Central Caucasus.

In an attempt to restore some dominance over the region, Russia tried to maintain control – either militarily or politically – of the remaining countries (which were dangerously flirting with the West) and the regions’ oil and gas resources. When Chechnya blocked the pipeline which transferred oil from the Azeri port of Baku to the Russian port of Novorosisk, Russia decided to react in a dynamic way. A full-scale attack on Chechnya was ordered in late 1994, but the ridiculous organisation of the army, the lack of morale of the Russian conscripts,⁶ the internal resistance to the war⁷ and the fierce resistance of the Chechens led to a Russian military defeat in 1996.

The victorious Chechen ruling class tried to take over the task of modernising Chechen society to a degree capable of facilitating the dictatorship of capitalist economy. Although the former Russian army official Dudayev, aimed at establishing a special status for Chechnya *within* the framework of the Russian Federation, the experienced guerrilla fighter Basaev⁸ and the new president Mashadov, overwhelmed by the military victory over Russia, began the initial steps towards the formation of a proper nation-state, only to realise that any sort of economic restructuring proved to be an almost impossible task. The problem of the modernisation of the economy posed itself as a direct result of the development of history: the underdevelopment of the productive forces impeded the social structures which would make the transition to free market capitalism an immediate possibility. The expertise needed for the industrial plants to function was as gone as the Russian technicians formerly positioned in Chechnya, who fled due to the war and sought refuge in Russian territory. Economic assistance from anywhere else than Russia was highly unlikely.

In the aftermath of the 1994-96 war the only thing left in Chechnya was national pride – and that was definitely not enough for an economic recovery. Yet the problems that the Chechen economy faced were not simply a direct result of the destructiveness of the previous war. Even before the war, during the years of ‘independence’ (1991-1994), the new state mechanism had come across extreme difficulties in its attempts to escape the fate of Chechnya becoming a mere pathway for international illegal trade. Although president Dudayev himself seemed to have tried to maintain control over prices (at a time when prices were being set free all over the former Soviet Union), *the laws of the motion of capital* dictated that ‘good national will’ was not enough to halt the downward slide of the Chechen economy. Goods were being purchased in Chechnya *en masse* and then sold above their price anywhere across the 300 kilometres long border. Soon, and regardless of the measures erected to halt this development, the Chechen economy was nothing but a centre of illegal trade.

In terms of the oil in Chechnya the development was similar. Although production of oil had fallen drastically from the early 80’s, Chechnya still had three oil refineries which could have been used to boost the hard cash in the economy. In fact, Dudayev did try to make some oil deals with the West, however without any results.⁹ At the same time, entrepreneurs tried to extract oil for themselves by making holes in the pipelines, something which created an illegal trade in oil, but which, being beyond state control, damaged the budget rather than relieving it (so much for national unity!). On the other hand, proletarians trying to survive dismantled the refineries and tried to valorise their acts of sabotage

Only a few months after the end of the war in Kosovo, another war started in the Caucasus region. Russia staged a full-scale attack on Chechnya, with the official aim of destroying the terrorist cells functioning there. So far, the war has proved to be a steady, yet gradual, military victory for the Russian army. Its immediate result is the consolidation of the Yeltsinite apparatus in power, the reaffirmation of that disgusting element of contemporary social life called national unity in both Russia and Chechnya, the complete devastation of the population and the economic structures of Chechnya and the reassertion of Russian dominance over the north of the Caucasus.

The need to understand the ongoing war in Chechnya does not originate from a humanitarian concern about the catastrophe in the Caucasus. To take a humanitarian side means to set aside the class nature of capitalist society, and to appeal to a morality which is both misleading and useless in explaining the current situation. Rather, the need comes from the realisation that one form of violent resolution of social antagonisms in one part of the capitalist world corresponds to a ‘more peaceful’ one in another part, both constituting the different sides of the barbaric world of capital.

This war is neither a clash of the Christian and Muslim civilisation, nor – an even more stupid view – Russia’s attempt to get revenge for the previous lost war in 1994-96. Every war in contemporary society represents an attempt to violently resolve the contradictions and social antagonisms which appear all the time in a class society ruled by capital and its ‘voracious appetite’ for surplus value. In the peripheries of capitalism, such as Chechnya, these contradictions take the form of archaic and pre-capitalist production processes, combined with which is a lack of a modern state, the necessary mediation for the creation of the conditions of uninterrupted (until the next break up of class struggle, that is) capital accumulation. For the aspiring modernising faction of the bourgeois class in Chechnya, the need to find a way to facilitate the emergence of commodity production, and to break away from the isolation imposed by Russia’s dominance in the region, mathematically led to the boosting up of nationalism, i.e. the abstract community of capital. On its part, the Russian bourgeoisie attempts to hide the devastating reality of its economic reforms, whose only result is the impoverishment of the proletariat, through the unification of the population under the banner of the biggest of all lies: national unity.

The Caucasus region, which used to provide almost 45% of oil production for the Soviet Union, has been broken down into a mosaic of ethnic groups and semi-nations, and its relative stability stems from the fact that the interests of Russian capital force it to provide many of these semi-nations with big percentages of their budget in order to avoid their total disintegration. Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, oil production has drastically decreased, the industrial plants have been largely abandoned due to a lack of technical expertise formerly provided by the Soviet Union, and the economies are only sustained through the illegal trade of drugs and weapons.¹ The rapidly increasing population of these countries, when not involved in this trade survives through petty agricultural production. For the countries of the north Caucasus which belong to the Russian Federation, a minimal level of stability is maintained through Russia’s subsidies. For those who chose independence from Russia but were unable to create profitable links with the West – e.g. Chechnya – the only way out of this dead end is

the constant attempt to expand towards any direction which would give them access to some of the areas resources. This constant stirring up of trouble however gravely threatens Russia's interests.

Although the collapse of the eastern bloc in 1989 meant that the eastern industrial economies were to be gradually integrated into the Western free market, it was obvious from the very beginning that such a process was not going to be harmonious. Not all eastern economies had either the same impetus or the same financial capabilities to become fully operating economies of the type needed by Western capitalist development. It was seen as unavoidable that, at least for a long time, *many eastern countries would be left outside the parade of integration and would be dumped into the 'third world' providing a cheap and mobile labour force.*

Regardless of the peculiarities and potentials of the economies of each country as it was formed after the collapse of the eastern bloc, all were destined to go through a privatisation process, a short sharp shock of mass unemployment, and a steady decline of the living standards of the proletariat. On top of all that it was proven that in some cases integration to the Western market presupposed a break up of former countries, either in order to nationalise – and thus neutralise – the emergence of fierce class struggles (as was the case in Yugoslavia) or simply as a practical facilitation for the abolition of state subsidies from the richer parts of former republics to the poorer ones (as was the case for Czechoslovakia).

The abolition of state ownership of the means of production and of state control over the production process as hindrances to private capitalist accumulation also meant, by definition, that former notions of state protectionism or full employment were quickly abandoned. The mass of proletarians in the eastern countries had to suffer a steady decrease of their living standards, until the 'miracle' of the free market would restore all their previous aspirations towards the Western economies that Western propaganda presented them as so eager to join. Yet there is no miracle in free market capitalism. The fact is that capitalist accumulation and the full cycle of valorisation of capital cannot be realised at *any* given moment of time in *any* given place. It was considered as a given from the beginning of the process of integration that many countries would simply not make it in the world competition. And the fact is that so far only a few countries {Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech republic} have managed to integrate themselves – with low levels of economic growth – in the *fiesta* of Western capitalism. For the rest of them a fate even worse than capitalist development awaited – as we said in the previous issue, there is one thing worse than being subjected to capitalist integration and that is being redundant for capital.

The economic policies dictated by the West meant that economic growth was simply not a likely development for many of the Eastern states, and Russia seems to be one of them. Dismantling of 'uncompetitive' industries, drastic reductions of state subsidies, letting prices go free and thousands of proletarians off work has only managed to devastate the population. And even if the ideological propaganda of the West wants to see a positive – yet gradual – development, the reality is far from it. Life expectancy has dropped to levels similar to many 'under-developed' – to borrow a capitalist vocabulary – countries in Africa, wages have been frozen for massive lengths of time and in many cases not even paid (as well as taxes obviously), while health provisions are almost non-existent. It seems to be the case that so far the only thing achieved by the integration process is the formation of a corrupt state apparatus, for which the notion of capital accumulation refers to the pockets of old party officials and cunning entrepreneurs. The conditions for 'normal' capitalist development are strikingly absent. The recent scandals in which it was proven that IMF loan money was neither used for the repayment of old debts nor for providing potentials for future Western investments, alarmed Western capital to the degree of publicly admitting that even for a free market economy, a strong, stable and regulatory state is necessary to ensure that social and not individual capital is prioritised. And if the

objective of Western capital is to create the conditions for the 'normal' cycle of valorisation,² the necessity of some sort of organisation of production overseen by a stable state, which ensures the 'smooth' process of capital's creation of value is strikingly obvious. With the country's GNP at 50% of its former status, and with a political scenery as explosive as the bombs which hit Moscow last summer, it becomes increasingly surprising that the bourgeois press insists on calling Russia's development progress. In light of this, the over-optimistic utterings seem more like attempts to hide the fact that other possible alternatives to Russia's contemporary performance – be it a disintegration and collapse of the Russian Federation, a return to massive nationalisation or a proletarian uprising – are even less favourable for both Western and Russian capital.

Western policy towards Russia is contradictory. On the one hand, Western capital is blatant in its denunciation of the nationalist factions of the bourgeoisie, fearing that the rise of a nationalist party in power would jeopardise Russia's commitment to the IMF economic reforms. On the other hand, by constantly undermining Russia in their international dealings, Western capital creates the conditions for the rise of support for the nationalist factions, since Yeltsin and his lackeys are seen (for obvious reasons) as the pro-Western modernisers who have brought the Russian economy to the brink of total collapse.³

Already before the collapse of the Soviet Union, and with the soviet administration facing huge internal problems, the Russian policy towards the various republics was summarised by the Kremlin's statement in August 1990: "take as much independence as you can incorporate". By supporting the separatist/decentralising tendencies in the republics, the Moscow administration was hoping to get rid of the unnecessary spending of the Russian budget towards the republics. This selective federalist approach led many of the former Soviet Union states to take their chance in the world market, *something which presupposed the destruction of the soviet bureaucratic institutions and their replacement by new structures capable of legitimising the political power of the new leaders and incorporating the newly formed states to free market capitalism.* Yet, the adoption of integration policies to the Western-led world market were only made by those states which managed to gain control of the oil and gas resources formerly exploited by the Soviet Union (such as Georgia and Azerbaijan), whereas the rest chose to keep close to Russia which, although economically ruined, still provided many of them with the biggest percentage of their budget (e.g. 90% of the budget of Dagestan, 60% or so of Armenia, etc).

As soon as Russian capital managed to – even temporarily and with big problems – stand on its feet, it returned to the newly independent states and tried to reassert its dominance over the exploitation of the available resources. Major diplomatic and economic conflicts – primarily concerning the exploitation and transport of the oil in Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan – broke out between Russia, Turkey, Western oil companies and the oil-producing countries. Turkey had tried after the collapse of the Soviet Union to gain important influence over resources in the Caucasus, an attempt which was ideologically filtered with appeals to the 'forgotten Turks' of the region. Yet, its wish to retain good relations with Russia,⁴ the lack of incentive from its NATO allies and serious internal social problems (such as the Kurdish separatists) did not allow such a development to take place. The conflict between Azerbaijan and Armenia over the Nagorno-Karabakh area was seen as a chance for both Russia and Turkey to establish good relations with Azerbaijan (and its oil). Yet, Russia's unwillingness to accept Turkey as the mediator in the conflict, as well as pressure from the West,⁵ meant that Turkey's interference in the conflict was reduced to a mere diplomatic – and thus verbal – war. For the modernising faction of the bourgeois class of Azerbaijan, the issue was further complicated. On the one hand it was eager to assert its independence from Russia and to gain support from the West, a policy which resulted in the establishment of good relations with Turkey and Western companies. On the other hand, it soon realised that neither Turkey nor the West were going to provide military help for solving the problem