

have some benefit after all? Then those who are tempted to take this path should consider the following.

Can the US (the leader of this operation) be entrusted with the well-being and rescue of the Kosovars, or for that matter of any other population? Have we forgotten Hiroshima and Nagasaki, or Vietnam where children are still born deformed because of the thousands of tons of napalm spread over the country during the war? or Nicaragua, Angola, Mozambique, Cambodia, Chile, Guatemala, Grenada, Panama, Iraq, Somalia[e.g., for Panama see (Independent Commission on Inquiry on the US Invasion of Panama 1991) and (Wheaton 1992); for Iraq see (Midnight Notes 1992) and (Clark 1994)]. What do people need to see and hear in order to distrust a power structure responsible for invading half the planet in the course of a few decades, directly or through proxies, and subverting any genuine attempt at self-determination all across the world? Again, shouldn't we be suspicious about the fact that the US allegedly wishes to protect the Albanians' right to self-determination, given that all throughout its history it has never granted this right to any nation -- certainly not to the Native American Indians, nor, more recently to the Palestinians, nor, to stay closer to the ground of the war, to the Serbs of the Kraina, who were brutally expelled from their homes in 1995, with a military operation comparable in its ferocity only to the Nazi invasion of Yugoslavia, amidst the deafening silence of the "international community"?

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THE WAR IN YUGOSLAVIA: ON WHOM THE BOMBS ARE FALLING?



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Introduction

As we are writing--June 7, 1999--in Kumanovo, Macedonia, the diplomats are negotiating the terms of the „agreement“ that is supposed to bring peace back to Yugoslavia. For many people this may signify the end of the war. This, however, is not our view. We believe that the war is not over, and the anti-war movement would be mistaken if it now folded up its tents and shifted its attention to a new issue. This is why this article, written at the peak of the bombings, is presented here in its original form. In our view, the analysis it provides, and the issues it raises are as valid today, when the talks seem to be of peace, as they were yesterday, when the bombs openly intended to destroy Yugoslavia were falling. It is an analysis that wants to contribute to the creation of an anti-war movement aware of long-term trends and patterns, and aiming not just to stop wars once they start, but to prevent their occurrence.

i. Prologue at 5,000 metres

From the cockpit of an F-16 flying at 5,000 meters, you can't see, nor smell, nor be sprayed with the blood of "collateral damage." The sensory reality of war has been detached, cleaned away from the "productive" activity of the warrior, as it has from the language of NATO's reports on the alleged "mistakes." Here we cannot fail to notice the institutional, racist cynicism of NATO, which weighs the lives of Serbian children and other civilians and finds them less important than those of Western soldiers; as we are told that "collateral damage" is "a price worth paying" to force Milosevic to concede defeat with a minimum of politically unsustainable allied casualties. This is trading the human rights of some, in this case mostly innocent civilians, for the human rights of others, with NATO as the self-appointed judge of their relative value.

the case of the Gulf War, in this Panopticon regime "where everything that occurs on the planet has to be seen, controlled and approved by the US government (or its representatives in an international agency it controls) . . . the US is not only aiming to be the `cop' of the world, as it did in the 1960s, but it aspires to be the `investigator,' `warden' and `executioner' of the `world' as well at the dawn of the 21st century."

The war on Yugoslavia thus is showing us that we are entering into a new stage of imperialism where the US and NATO-EU are claiming the right to violate the sovereignty of other nations for the most fraudulent excuses, and are now ready (as at the time of 19th century gunboat diplomacy) to just bomb their way to the resources or markets they want. This means that we need an anti-war movement that is not just concerned with this or that war, but with the whole "bloody neocolonial paradigm" that sustains, legitimizes and promotes each war venture. The opposition against the next wars to be fought for inhuman rights must start now with the opposition to it.

v. The deadlock of the anti-war movement

Against this background one has to wonder why the anti-war movement has failed so far to respond to the barbaric attack that has been launched against the Yugoslavian population, including the Albanian refugees, hundreds of whom have been carbonized by NATO bombs. Could it be that people are accepting the absurd logic whereby if they oppose the war they necessarily are making a stand in support of the Milosevic regime? If that is the case, then we encourage people to listen to the many appeals coming from those in Belgrade who have opposed the Milosevic regime, who repeatedly have denounced that the bombings only strengthen his position.

Or could it be that people believe that the pitiless, uninterrupted bombing of an entire population for 71 days so far, and the destruction of a century of people's work, can

iv. The world's Panopticon.

Projected on a global scenario, the war on Yugoslavia appears as the other side of the process of financial recolonization that has taken place in much of the world over the last decade, and the increasing subjugation of every aspect of life to the rule of money. By this rule markets have been introduced where previously there were commons, welfare provisions have been cut across the globe, workers' entitlements have been reduced or eliminated, poverty has been imposed worldwide (Chossudovsky 1997). This war that the World Bank, the IMF and other financial elites managing the global economy are waging, ultimately needs missiles and other deadly weapons, to keep people on course, producing for the global economy, at rhythms and retributions favorable to capital accumulation. In other words, globalization is not possible without the presence a military force capable of breaking the resistance to it worldwide, a resistance often expressed in confused and contradictory forms. Today, only the US has the military capability to pursue "flexible" punishing raids across the globe—hence the European subordination to it. However, the war on Yugoslavia has accelerated the urgency for Europe to match and complement the military strength the US, especially in those technologies that make prompt and flexible intervention possible (Nicoll 1999).

Today, war and conquest are not the outer manifestation of inter-capitalist rivalry, as the early twentieth century critics of imperialism like Hobson and Lenin claimed (Lenin 1967). In the late twentieth century inter-capitalist rivalry occurs within an alliance united by the determination to pursue economic globalization. Also, territorial conquest is not the objective of war. Rather, the goal is the construction of a global security prison, in which the rules of the market are unconditionally accepted, and every alternative is ruled out. It is a security prison resembling in spirit Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon, the total surveillance regime devised to increase the prisoners-workers' efficiency. As George Caffentzis (1998) pointed out in

ii. The (in)humanitarian war

There is now mounting evidence that the justifications and aims given for the war against Yugoslavia are not credible, and far from protecting Kosovar Albanians the bombings have worsened their plight. We know for instance that

-the Rambouillet Agreements was never meant to be accepted by the Yugoslavian government, as they were phrased in such a way as to ensure their rejection, demanding (among other things) that NATO have unlimited access to any part of Yugoslavia, by sea, air, and land, and be dispensed from any legal accountability (Pilger 1999).

-on the eve of the first bombings, the Yugoslavian Parliament had approved a resolution accepting the restoration of Kosovo's autonomy, and the presence of a UN peace-keeping force to monitor its enforcement.

-far from protecting the Kosovar Albanians the bombings have increased the rate of their expulsions, killed and terrorized many of them, including the large number of those who did remain in Kosovo, or fled from Kosovo into Serbia.

-the health of Yugoslavian people, ethnic Albanians included, will continue for a long time to be damaged because of the devastation and contamination to which the Yugoslavian territory has been subjected, with the release in the air and ground of immense amounts of toxic substances, including depleted uranium (Depleted Uranium Education Project 1997).

Indeed, as many critics have pointed out, if humanitarian reasons were the motive, then this war was a catastrophic failure. Moreover, how can we believe that NATO is fighting for the self-determination of the Albanian population in Kosovo, when it has denied the same right to the Palestinians and the

Kurds (among others), and when the US has subverted every democratically elected government in the world whenever it has suited its needs? Or, as Mumia Abu-Jamal puts it, "Isn't it strange that these same powers have, for half a century or more, turned a blind eye to virtual holocausts throughout the chanel houses of Europe? Where were the Western powers when the Kurds have been savaged, herded and decimated by the border states of Turkey, Iraq and Iran? The fate of the Basques in the borders between France and Spain is, for all intents and purposes, off the table. National ethnic minorities continue to be treated like the trash of Euro-states; consider the Roma (so-called Gypsies) who are seen, perceived and treated as the 'white niggers' of Europe. Even as we see NATO dropping metallic death on Serbia because of their mistreatment of "ethnic minorities," the cities and towns of Europe are doing all that they can to make immigration as difficult as possible for people seeking asylum." (Mumia Abu-Jamal 1999)

Last but not least, not only has the NATO bombings dramatically increased the flood of refugees, now reaching more than one million; the knowledge that this disaster would inevitably happen was well available before the bombing started. Why then has NATO decided to pursue this strategy? It is in answering this questions that we may find some hints on the reasons for today's war.

iii. The inhuman agenda of NATO (and G8, and WTO, and IMF, and OECD, and . . .)

If the justifications given for the war against Yugoslavia are not credible, then what is the real agenda? To answer this question we must place the war in the context of the major developments that have been shaping politics in the Balkans and internationally since the fall of the Berlin Wall, that marked the end of the Cold War. Primary among them are:

The process of "economic globalization," by which

European workers will pay in another ways as well for the war. In addition to facing a stiffer competition on their jobs, they will also have to pay the bill for the reconstruction, for the "clean up," as Clinton put it, in his Memorial Day pronouncement on May 31, 1999 (New York Times 1999d).

Thus, the war in Yugoslavia, with its heavy demand on the military budget of the NATO countries, will also serve immediate domestic goals, by helping to complete (in the name of war spending and investment in the reconstruction) the dismantling of the European and US welfare systems (Wall Street Journal 1999). Put in other words, (and to paraphrase Martin Luther King) the bombs falling on Yugoslavia may indeed explode in Western Europe and the US, destroying, for instance, their pension and social security system, threatened by the rising cost of militarization.

Whatever the partition of financial responsibility (no matter which working class is destined to pay more for it) the IMF and World Bank are already providing some post-war reconstruction scenarios (IMF and World Bank 1999). It seems that grants will be provided only to support the basic needs of the refugees, while the inevitable gap in the balance of payments for 1999, for the countries of the region, will be largely closed by further debt. In other words: first the economic and financial elites imposed impoverishing neoliberal policies in the region, policies that shattered the social fabric and created the context in which brutal and murderous nationalisms have flourished. Then, they seized the opportunity for military action resulting in further deaths and enviromental devastation (since diplomatic options were left in a dead end, with the insistence, at Rambouillet, that NATO troops be present in the Yugoslav territory and NATO be allowed unchecked movement in any part of Yugoslavia). Soon, they will wear again the banker's hat to "help" in the reconstruction, cashing in new interest payments and, especially, prospecting a more "stable" environment for business, thanks to NATO's heavy military presence in the region.

state's resolve in supporting a client state in the face of a NATO attack, and the US determination to use any available means to make its interest prevail.

Last, the war cements the alliance between US and the EU, and confirms US leadership in the alliance, as well as NATO's role as western capital's only credible military force.

As already in the case of Bosnia (and we could add the Gulf War and "Operation Restore Hope" in Somalia), one of the casualties of this new military intervention is European independence. Trumpeted since the early 1990s with the Maastricht Treaty and the construction of monetary union, this has been increasingly sacrificed to the need of overcoming Europe's economic stagnation, whose solution is partly entrusted to a process of eastward expansion [(Martin and Ross 1999), (Ash 1999)].

As the growing flow of European capital to Eastern Europe demonstrates, Europe has much to gain from a "colonization" of the Balkans (Clark et al. 1998). This is possible, however, only through the military intervention of the US, the only country in the world that has, persistently, for many decades, been committed to, and prepared for world domination. It is on this basis that Germany and France have accepted the humiliation inflicted upon them at Dayton, and suffered their marginalization in the first major European crisis since WWII, and today they are participating in the destruction of Yugoslavia, despite the risks it involves for the future of Europe.

Finally, the refugee crisis and the prospected integration of the Balkan area's battered economies into the global capitalist circuit provide the European ruling class with a new source of cheap labor right at the heart of Europe. They promote further competition in the labor markets throughout the continent, likely to result in downward pressures on workers' wages-- a key objective at a time when European capital is much lamenting its slow growth, and striving to convince European workers to accept substantial cuts in social benefits (Singer 1996).

international capital has imposed a neo-liberal agenda enforcing debt and austerity on every region of the world, and placed much of the former state socialist countries and the Third World under the control of the multinational corporations and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank [(Chossudovsky 1997), (Midnight Notes 1992)].

The crisis of state-communism in Central and Eastern Europe (in part activated by the shift to market reforms) and the resultant eastward expansion of NATO [(Granville 1999), (Holbrooke 1995), (Kluger 1996), (The Economist 1989)].

The deepening capitalist crisis (reflected in the collapse of the Asian economies, the profit stagnation in Europe, and the increasing social opposition to further liberalization and austerity) which accelerates the rush to commercially exploit new areas of the world, and the effort by corporate capital to find new sources of cheap labor [(Chossudovsky 1997), (Gervasi 1998)].

Viewed in the context of these developments, NATO's attack on Yugoslavia (the last act in the dismemberment of the country) has many objectives:

The battering of Yugoslavia, added to the entry of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic into NATO, continues the political transformation of the map of Europe initiated by the reunification of Germany. It serves to create a capitalist block, stretching from the Adriatic to the edges of the former Soviet Union, and is part of the eastward expansion of NATO, decided by the Clinton Administration since at least 1994, and increasingly urgent for the EU and the US, in the face of the growing social opposition to neoliberal programs in Central and Eastern Europe and Russia as well.

The war can be used to defeat the resistance of the Yugoslavian working class to neo-liberalism, which has forced the state to put a halt to the planned process of privatization, so that (until the bombings started) state-owned industries were still in place, and so were subsidies to farmers and unemployed workers [(Petras and Vieux 1996), (Dyker 1999),

(Judah 1999), (Kuzmanic 1994)]. Not surprisingly, the bombings have targeted all of Yugoslavia's productive structures, including the plant that produced the famous Yugo (a cheap car widely used in the country and exported), making sure that people will have no means to resist their forced integration into the global economy. The bombings are also sending a message to other resistant workers in Eastern Europe, as e.g. the coal miners in Romania, who, early this year had to be militarily defeated, because of their strong opposition to the closing of the mines demanded by the International Monetary Fund (New York Times 1999b).

The war also lays the groundwork for the encirclement of Russia which, although weakened economically and militarily, is still seen as a threat. Here too political and economic goals go hand in hand.

The US and IMF anxiety about Russia's "commitment to reform" is now obsessive, since Russia has so far failed to complete the "transition" process. It has not privatized land, it has not shut down its subsidized state-industries, it is resisting the importation of grain from the US. Worst of all, as of June 2, 1999, it has, for the second time in less than a year, defaulted on its international debt.

Equally worrisome (from the viewpoint of NATO and the US) are reports that the great majority of Russians regard the US-supported Yeltsin regime with unconcealed hatred, and among ordinary people such terms as "market reforms" and "market economy" have now the force of obscenities, because of the collapse in the standard of living the attempted privatization process has caused (Burbach et al. 1997: 123-124). The support given by the US to the Russian reforms has also generated an anti-American mood in the most diverse Russian circles, and strengthened the ties between Russia and other parts of the former Soviet Union, especially Belarus and the Ukraine. Thus, the possibility of a "nostalgic return," or of a new type of communism is real (Dawisha 1996). In this context, the defeat of Yugoslavia could be used to remind the world, and above all wavering leaders of 'transition

economies,' that there is no alternative to free-market capitalism and demonstrate the futility of resistance to it.

The war against Yugoslavia also gives US and European capital control over a region that is rich in mineral resources and is strategically located at the cross-roads between Western Europe, Eastern Europe and the Middle East, thus dominating some of Europe's most important trade routes [(Gambino 1999), (New York Times 1999e), (Flounders 1998)].

In particular, the battering and possible subjugation of Yugoslavia plays a role in the planned commercial exploitation of the Caspian Sea (Gervasi 1998), which has oil reserves comparable to those of the Persian Gulf and, accordingly, has been declared to be part of the US sphere of interest [(Levine 1999), (Financial Times 1999), (Finardi 1999), Chatterjee 1998), (Shenov 1999), (New York Times 1999a)].

As the Clinton Administration has repeatedly stressed, the stakes here are very high, since it is believed that on the control of the Caspian oil depends the fate of the post-communist world, and how much influence the US will have in determining its outcome (Kinzer 1998).

At stake is the ability of the US to attract into its sphere of influence the post-Soviet Central Asian republics of Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan, by giving them an independent economic basis, and thereby weakening their ties with Russia and Russia's influence in global affairs.

This the US plans to accomplish by building a pipeline transporting the Caspian oil to Western Europe--a pipeline that, moving through Georgia and Turkey, would by-pass Iran and especially Russia, so that both countries' ability to profit from the Caspian oil bonanza would be severely limited (Shenov et al. 1999). But to succeed Washington must assure the oil companies and the Caspian republics that it is ready to back their investments by military force against any possible Russian interference (Kinzer 1998). The bombings of Yugoslavia seal the deal, as the first test of both the Russian