

# **Bosnia, Kosova & the West**

**The Yugoslav Tragedy:  
A Marxist View**

**Mike Karadjis**

### **About the author ...**

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# A Note on Language

The term “Chetnik” was used by anti-communist, Serbian nationalist fighters during World War II, who fought Tito’s partisans. It was again used by the main parties leading the Serb nationalist movements of the 1990s, in Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia, to describe themselves. In most cases in Bosnia, its use is interchangeable with SDS or BSA, and in Serbia, with SRS. Its use in this book to describe such parties is therefore not a term of abuse, as it is their own. Its use distinguishes these political forces from others among the Serbian population of these countries who did not share their views or approve their actions. For this reason, general terms for whole ethnic groups, such as “Serbs” and “Croats”, have been avoided when referring to particular parties or armed groups, as is the practice in the mainstream media, in order to not give the impression that Serbs or Croats as a whole approved of the actions of particular political currents.

The Albanian spelling “Kosova” is used rather than the official Serb spelling “Kosovo”, which is used by the Western media, consistent with support for the right of nations to self-determination and self-identification.

The word “Bosnia” is generally used throughout as shorthand for the full name of the republic, Bosnia-Herzegovina. ■

# Abbreviations

ABH	Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina.
BSA	Bosnian Serb Army, armed wing of SDS.
CSCE	Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe.
FEC	Federal Executive Council, federal ruling body of former Yugoslavia, headed by the prime minister.
HDZ	Croatian Democratic Community, ruling party in Croatia after 1990 elections, led by Croatian president Franjo Tudjman; a wing of this party, with the same name, established among Croats in Bosnia, led in 1992-94 by Mate Boban; committed to right-wing Croatian nationalist ideology.
HVO	Croatian Defence Forces, militia of the HDZ in Bosnia.
IFOR	NATO-led military forces in Bosnia following 1995 Dayton Accord.
JNA	Yugoslav Peoples Army.
KFOR	NATO-led military forces in Kosova following 1999 war.
KLA	Kosova Liberation Army, military wing of LPK, formed in 1996.
LCY	Yugoslav League of Communists, ruling party of former Yugoslavia.
LDK	Kosova League for Democracy, main party of Kosovar Albanian non-violent resistance, headed by Ibrahim Rugova; formed mostly by branches of former Kosova wing of Yugoslav League of Communists in 1991, many branches then went over to KLA in 1998.
LPK	Kosova Peoples Party, radical wing of Kosovar resistance, established in 1982 with Maoist ideology; main core group of KLA.
SCC	Serb Civic Council, set up by Bosnian Serbs loyal to multi-ethnic Bosnian state.
SDA	Party of Democratic Action, main Moslem-based party in Bosnia, led by Bosnian president Alia Izetbegovic; advocated secular, multi-ethnic Bosnia.
SDP	Social Democratic Party, former Bosnian wing of Yugoslav League of Communists, committed to secular multi-ethnic Bosnia, took part in

	Bosnian government throughout war, often providing its Serb members.
SDS	Serbian Democratic Party, set up by minority Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia in 1990, led in Bosnia by Radovan Karadzic; committed to extreme right-wing Serbian nationalist “Chetnik” ideology; armed wing the BSA.
SPO	Serbian Revival Movement, moderate Serb nationalist “Chetnik” party in Serbia, led by Vuk Draskovic.
SPS	Socialist Party of Serbia, set up by Slobodan Milosevic, from ruins of the Serbian branch of the League of Communists, replacing former ideology with virulent Serb nationalism.
SRS	Serbian Radical Party, extreme Serb nationalist “Chetnik” party, led by Vojislav Seselj, based in Serbia but with militia active in Bosnia responsible for thousands of deaths; coalition partner with Milosevic’s SPS in 1991-93 and again in 1998-99.
RS	Republika Srpska, name of para-state carved out of Bosnia by SDS/BSA.
TDF	Territorial Defence Forces, popular-based defence forces of former Yugoslavia.
UNMIK	UN temporary government authority in Kosova following 1999 war.
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force, UN forces in Bosnia 1992-95. ■

# Timeline

- 1987** *October* Slobodan Milosevic seizes power in Serbian League of Communists.
- 1988** *May* The “May measures” — IMF-demanded changes abolishing socialist system in Yugoslavia.
- September* Milosevic forces topple Communist government of Vojvodina.
- 1989** *January* Ante Markovic becomes Yugoslav prime minister. Milosevic forces topple Communist government in Montenegro.
- March* Milosevic clamps down on Kosova and sacks provincial assembly.
- 1990** *January* League of Communists collapses.
- April* Former Communists lose elections in Croatia and Slovenia.  
Franjo Tudjman elected president of Croatia.
- November* Bosnian elections.
- 1991** *March* Milosevic and Tudjman meet and organise partition of Bosnia.
- June* US Secretary of State Baker declares Yugoslavia must remain united.  
Croatia and Slovenia declare independence.  
Yugoslav army launches limited attack on Slovenia.
- July* Beginning of Serbian/Yugoslav attack on Croatia.
- September* UN declares arms embargo on Yugoslavia.
- 1992** *January* UN envoy and former US defence secretary Cyrus Vance negotiates end of war; Vance plan allows Yugoslav army to take heavy weaponry into Bosnia.  
EC recognises Croatia and Slovenia.
- March* First EC Bosnia partition plan (Carrington-Cutilheiro plan).
- April* EC and US recognise Bosnia.  
Beginning of Serbian blitzkrieg on Bosnia.
- December* UN General Assembly calls for end to arms embargo on Bosnia, but call is rejected by Security Council.
- 1993** *January* Second EC partition plan (Vance-Owen plan).
- July* Third EC partition plan (Owen-Stoltenberg plan).
- December* Bosnian army defeats Croatian Defence Forces.

- 1994** *March* Moslem-Croat federation agreement.  
*June* Contact Group partition plan.
- 1995** *July* Chetnik forces seize Srebrenica and kill 8000 Moslem captives.  
*August* Croatia retakes Krajina and expels entire Serb population.  
 US air strikes against Chetnik heavy weaponry.  
*September* Bosnian army reconquers some of its territory.  
*October* US demands Bosnian army end offensive.  
*November* US negotiates Dayton partition plan ending Bosnian war.
- 1997** *October* Milosevic sells Telecom to Greek and Italian investors.
- 1998** *January* US and Milosevic cooperate to replace Karadzic leadership in RS.  
*February* US Balkan envoy Gelbard declares KLA a “terrorist” organisation.  
*March* Seselj and SRS rejoin Serbian government.  
 Serbia launches brutal counterinsurgency against KLA.  
*October* US pushes new limited autonomy plan for Kosova.
- 1999** *February* US-inspired Rambouillet negotiations — US plan rejected by both  
 Serbian and Kosovar delegations.  
*March* Second round at Rambouillet rejected by Serbia but accepted by  
 Kosovar delegation.  
 NATO launches air war on Yugoslavia.  
 Milosevic launches massive ethnic cleansing in Kosova.  
*June* NATO war ends, new UN authority in charge of Kosova, which is  
 to remain within Yugoslavia.  
*September* Disarmament of the KLA completed. ■

# Introduction

In 1999, the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) launched a devastating war against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, over the issue of the latter's repression of the ethnic Albanian population in Kosova. These powers, led by the United States, laid waste to factories, power plants, oil refineries, bridges, railway lines, electricity grids, and sometimes hospitals, passenger trains and refugee convoys.

The attack also gave political cover for the Serbian/Yugoslav regime of Slobodan Milosevic to launch an all-out attack on the Albanian majority of Kosova, making an ambitious attempt to empty the entire province of its Albanian population to stop it seceding. In a particularly surreal war, NATO bombers meticulously destroyed most of the bridges across the Danube river, 650 kilometres north of Kosova, while Yugoslav army and Serbian paramilitaries were meticulously killing, burning, destroying and emptying towns and villages throughout Kosova — virtually with impunity. NATO had attacked under the pretext of preventing genocide; yet its attack precipitated it, and it subsequently hit very little of the massive Yugoslav heavy weaponry in Kosova — the only thing giving the occupation forces superiority over the 90% of the population who wanted them out.

NATO victory became a question of getting the million or so refugees back to their burnt and destroyed homes before winter — refugees who were not out of their homes before the attack began — while ensuring that the Albanian fighters were disarmed and Kosova maintained as a province of the Yugoslav state that had attempted their annihilation.

Milosevic became a household name in the West, the name of a mass killer whom the “Western democracies” had no choice but to stop, lest a “new Hitler” dominate the region. Yet the same Milosevic had been ruling for 12 years, initially as a Western favourite, a “market reformer”, and even when Western powers began to take their distance, he had never been put on the list of leaders the West most loves to hate. Indeed, for many years, he was hailed as a factor of stability for his ability to put out the fires he had lit — i.e., having the sense to accept a limited victory, rather than risk all for a bigger one.

In the year before the NATO attack, Milosevic's counterinsurgency war against the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA) had claimed some 2000 lives, largely of civilians, and had driven from 250,000 to 400,000 from their homes. The first week of the NATO attack increased these figures dramatically, while also killing Serb civilians and destroying their infrastructure. Yet in the spring and summer of 1992, Milosevic's forces had swept across Bosnia, an independent republic recognised by the United Nations, had driven more than a million Moslems and Croats from their homes, had created another million refugees and killed some 150,000 people through open terror in cities they occupied, through herding people into death camps and through pouring thousands of tonnes of ammunition into Sarajevo and other population centres.

Western policy then consisted of an arms embargo against the Bosnian government, and one plan after another to partition Bosnia along ethnic lines, exactly what was being demanded by Milosevic and his henchmen. This benevolent Western policy towards Milosevic had already been practised in 1991 when his forces laid waste to much of Croatia, and in 1989 when he had ripped up the Yugoslav constitution, abolished the autonomy of Kosova and Vojvodina and placed the former under military repression.

The aim of this book is to demonstrate the agreement in fundamental interests between the Western powers and the Milosevic regime throughout this time. In the first phase, that of the collapse of Yugoslavia, all Western powers insisted on the maintenance of the "unity of Yugoslavia" at all cost. The centralising tactics of the Milosevic regime were the key weapon to maintain this forced unity against the wishes of various peoples for self-determination. In the second phase, the war in Bosnia, the Western powers insisted on Bosnia's ethnic partition, again in agreement with Milosevic and his new Croatian ally, Franjo Tudjman, but against the wishes of the bulk of the Bosnian population. In the third phase, the Kosova conflict, the Western powers insisted, like Milosevic, that Kosova remain within Serbia, against the express desires of the population there.

The conflict between the West and Milosevic was hence not over principle, but over the methods used by the latter. As a small scale tyrant, representing the interests of the up and coming Serbian capitalist class, Milosevic at times acted in ways that put at risk the greater stability of the region, which Western capitalist classes had considerable interest in. Because their interests were fundamentally similar, these differences could usually be compromised.

In the case of Kosova, however, the NATO powers became concerned that the stability of the entire southern Balkan region, including Greece and Turkey, could be at risk, due to either a massive outflow of Albanian refugees towards the south or the

victory of armed Albanian resistance leading to an independent Kosova. Just as opposed to the Kosovan struggle as was Milosevic, the Western powers were convinced that Milosevic's brutal approach had become counterproductive. NATO leaders felt they needed their own troops in the region to prevent excesses by both sides. And this corresponded to the upcoming 50th anniversary NATO summit, at which the US aimed to push through a new charter for the post-Cold War era, giving the organisation the right to take "out of area" actions. Yugoslavia became a perfect example.

For people on the left and opponents of powerful Western states policing the world, these issues presented a series of dilemmas. When, if ever, can we give some kind of support to Western intervention, if Western powers are pushed by their own interests to aid a people fighting against brutal oppression? Alternatively, if we concentrate on the enormous difference in power between Western imperialism and various repressively ruled states like Yugoslavia or Indonesia when one comes into conflict with another, do we cease opposing the repressive policies of such regimes?

Yugoslavia is not the only example of this dilemma. In 1999, Western powers that had connived with the Indonesian military dictatorship for 35 years were suddenly forced to take a stand against its attempted genocide of the East Timorese. The left had to decide whether to support the intervention of Western troops to help save the East Timorese from slaughter, at a time when their own armed organisations were far too weak to do it themselves. However, in this case, there was no threat by Western powers to bomb Indonesia and lay waste to the country.

The way NATO was waging its war was clearly not aimed at helping the Kosovars, but using their plight as a pretext; similarly, Milosevic's accelerated war against the Kosovars, while using NATO's attack as a pretext, obviously had nothing to do with defending Serbia from NATO.

Nevertheless, a prominent section of the left supported NATO's war. As the war became more and more destructive and obviously counterproductive, it was difficult to withdraw support: if you had concluded that NATO was finally acting on behalf of the oppressed, even if unwittingly, you could only insist it finish the job.

Leftists like Ken Livingstone hence found themselves on the same platform as the likes of Margaret Thatcher. Of course, that may happen in peculiar instances. Yet to be allied to a warmongering section of Western imperialism on the issue of war must surely be a worry. NATO was not being dragged in and reluctantly carrying out actions that helped the oppressed. On the contrary, once it decided on war, it launched it with all the destructiveness and callous disregard for civilian life that it usually displays, while assiduously not helping the oppressed Kosovars.

What this section of the left, which had a proud history of defending multi-ethnic

Bosnia for years, did not recognise was the essential *continuity* in Western policy. In Kosova, NATO essentially refused to hit the Yugoslav military forces carrying out the terror because to do so would have aided the KLA, something the Western leaders had been warning against for the entire previous year.

For Marxists, the defence of Bosnia and Kosova against reactionary Serbian nationalism was based on the same principles as our support for struggles of the oppressed everywhere in the world. The Western dealings with Milosevic were only to be expected; they were similar to Western connivance with Suharto, Mobutu, Marcos, Pinochet, the Turkish generals, the Zionist regime and the Saudi monarchy, to name just a few. Imperialism has continuously intervened against struggles of liberation movements that threatened economic control by Western monopolies.

Regimes which are the greatest violators of human rights have always been useful for enforcing the ruthless exploitation of labour. There was no fundamental Western interest in intervening in Yugoslavia just because of aggression and human rights violations. There were plenty of examples of non-intervention when it was simply a humanitarian concern (Rwanda 1994). This was even the case with Iraq when it was gassing Kurds, rather than occupying the Western protectorate of Kuwait.

From this one can understand that if the West does use “human rights” to justify a war against a tyrannical regime, it must really have some other interests in mind.

The support for NATO by a section of the left in 1999 had its mirror image in a very prominent section of the left which decided instead that, since an imperialist bloc like NATO was attacking Milosevic’s Serbia, the latter must be doing something right. The aim of this section of the left was to play down the crimes of Milosevic.

In the most extreme cases, this meant pretending, that ethnic cleansing was not taking place and that the Kosovar refugees were “fleeing NATO bombs”; more rational views condemned the ethnic cleansing but tried to put the actions of the Serbian and Yugoslav state apparatus, with all the massive weaponry inherited from the old Yugoslav People’s Army, on the same level as the guerilla attacks by the lightly armed KLA, or earlier, the resistance of multi-ethnic Bosnia. Since both sides were using violence, NATO intervention against Serbia meant that the West was “biased” against “the Serbs”. Inherent in this is the view that various peoples in the Balkans have always fought each other; in an essentially racist view, Balkan peoples are prone to violence, and the West should not choose sides.

This identification of the systematic crimes of the oppressor with individual crimes of sections of the oppressed in their liberation wars represents a major shift in analysis for many of these people who call themselves Marxists. Individuals or units of the Bosnian army did commit crimes against Serb civilians during the defence of Bosnia,

which, however, was led by a multi-ethnic army that included Serbs. Such violations are to be condemned, but Marxists understand the context of a struggle against an oppressive regime that was systematically terrorising the Bosnian population. Systematic oppression breeds an atmosphere in which the class solidarity of Bosnian Serb, Croat and Moslem workers began to break down, and traumatised, desperate refugees launched revenge attacks on innocent people. Class solidarity had already been destroyed in Kosova by the Milosevic regime years before the 1999 war, but the genocide of that year created an atmosphere of far greater vengefulness.

However, this is not different from struggles by oppressed peoples anywhere in the world. The Kurdish Workers Party, Hamas and other Palestinian resistance organisations, Tamil Tigers, the IRA and many other liberation movements that have long been supported by the left have been similarly accused of such violations. All such violations should be condemned; they do not, however, change the fundamental nature of the conflict.

Those on the left taking this “all sides are guilty” position, from the point of view of “anti-imperialism”, were repeating what had for years been expressed by imperialist leaders to justify their lack of support to Bosnia and their plans for ethnic partition of that state, as is documented in this book. Some prominent authors of books on Bosnia, such as Misha Glenny and Leonard Cohen, pushed these same views in order to justify Western policy, particularly advocacy of the ethnic partition of Bosnia: if the wars were a reflection of ethnic conflicts, there was little the West could do but try to mediate and separate the forces. Virtually every mention of warring parties in Bosnia by the bourgeois media called those fighting “Serbs”, “Croats” and “Moslems”, as if to suggest that the whole of certain ethnic groups were fighting with one political faction or another; the “neutral” section of the left essentially capitulated to this propaganda. Throughout the war, by contrast, the Bosnian government and media consistently referred to the Serb nationalists trying to rip up Bosnia by their correct *political* name, “Chetniks”, and refused to call them “Serbs”, so as not to demonise all Serbs.

Neutrality between oppressor and oppressed has never been a leftist policy. Struggling to oppose NATO’s war by pretending to find an equal amount of nationalism and ethnic slaughter among all sides in the Balkans will ultimately be a frustrating task, because it is simply nonsense. Even the prime example usually cited, that of Croatia’s reverse ethnic cleansing of its Krajina region in late 1995, driving out 150,000 Serbs, does little to justify such analysis. This was certainly a criminal action by a state that had turned oppressor like its Serbian cousin; yet the loss of the Krajina was agreed on between Tudjman and Milosevic as part of their final solution for the partition of Bosnia and the entire region between them, codified by the US-imposed Dayton

Accord.

Furthermore, those highlighting this event almost never refer back to the original seizure of the Krajina and other Croatian territory in 1991 by the Serbian paramilitaries, during which hundreds of thousands of Croats were expelled, who naturally aimed to return; nor do they attempt to explain why all conquered regions, and all theatres of war, were in Bosnia or Croatia, not in Serbia, even though the Serb minorities in Croatia and Bosnia were matched by Croat and Moslem (Bosniak) minorities in Serbia.

The real lesson of the Krajina, as with the Serbian exodus from Kosova in late 1999, is that policies of national chauvinism are not in the true interests of those whom the nationalist warlords claim to represent. For Milosevic and his Serbian ruling class, half of Bosnia and the most valuable northern section of Kosova were worthwhile gains; the fact that large numbers of Serb civilians lived outside of these regions, and were thus in the firing line for revenge, was of no consequence to these unscrupulous rulers. Thus, hundreds of thousands of Serb refugees have also been major victims of the criminal descent into chauvinism led by Milosevic. At least another half a million young and educated Serbs have fled *from Serbia* during this period, not wanting to live in the militaristic and chauvinistic hell being created by their leaders.

Much of this would be a fairly straightforward position for leftists — if we were not talking about Yugoslavia. Support for the right of Yugoslav nations to self-determination, regardless of their leaderships, should also have been a fairly straightforward position — indeed it was consistent with the Yugoslav constitution. Yet, for various reasons, a large section of the left became particularly confused on the question of Yugoslavia.

Whatever leftists thought about UN intervention in East Timor in 1999, for example, they had been virtually unanimous up till then in supporting East Timor's right to self-determination. The left had always supported such struggles for self-determination against repressively held together states — Bangladesh in 1971, the Palestinians, the Kurds, the Saharawi people, the Eritreans. Yet in the case of Yugoslavia, there was a strange reversal for a section of the left: those fighting for self-determination were accused of wanting to violate the "territorial integrity" of Yugoslavia; Western powers were condemned not for opposing self-determination and insisting on "Yugoslav unity", but for not supporting Belgrade's suppression of these movements vigorously enough.

For example, because Germany finally recognised Croatia six months after a referendum in which 94% had voted for independence, and following six months of unparalleled slaughter unleashed by the Yugoslav army, by which time there was no chance of holding Yugoslavia together, much of the left continues to insist, absurdly, that this constituted "hasty" recognition which helped "break up" Yugoslavia!

The peculiarities of the Yugoslav situation which led to these conclusions can be summarised as follows:

Firstly, much of the left assumed that the Yugoslav and Serbian Republic governments were “defending socialism” while the Croatian, Slovenian, Bosnian and Macedonian leaderships were pro-capitalist. The Milosevic regime was seen as a continuation of the Tito regime, rather than its antithesis. Such assumptions were utterly false.

Secondly, it was assumed that, therefore, Western imperialism wanted to “break up” socialist Yugoslavia, and so naturally “encouraged secession” among the other “pro-capitalist” republics. In fact, the West had no reason to break up Yugoslavia, whose leaders abolished the “socialist” system outright in 1988, while the movement of Croatia and Slovenia towards capitalism was no faster than that of Serbia or Yugoslavia as a whole

Thirdly, this was all mixed with a view of history that, for much of the left, cannot help seeing “Serbs” as a whole as progressive and “Croats” as a whole as genetically fascist, due to conflicts in World War II. Apart from the non-Marxist view that entire nations are one thing or another, rather than being divided into different social classes and political currents, this was also a completely false reading of what happened in World War II.

A number of left-oriented writers, while not as blatant as those mentioned above, have come up with the same “neutrality” between warring ethnic groups. The relevance of these writers is in demonstrating the large-scale Western economic intervention into Yugoslavia, particularly through the free market radicalism imposed by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, the dramatic effects of which played a role in driving people to nationalism. The same points are made in Susan Woodward’s *Balkan Tragedy*. However, the overwhelming emphasis on Western economic domination leads them to view the various actors within Yugoslavia as equally powerless pawns squabbling for their share of the shrinking pie; the inordinate power of the Belgrade regime within this context is ignored. Not recognising that it was the Serbian regime that had seized everyone else’s territory and violated everyone else’s rights, these writers saw any Western intervention, even to temper this, as anti-Serb bias. While not as blatant as those of the openly pro-Milosevic left, these views come down to the same problem: to oppose what they wrongly perceive as an anti-Serb policy of imperialism, they deny that oppression exists.

Furthermore, these writers, despite their economic analysis, miss the main economic point: that the dictates of the IMF and World Bank played the decisive role in shaping the Western policy of insisting on Yugoslav centralism, undermining traditional republican privileges. Some impressive works — Susan Woodward’s *Balkan*

*Tragedy* and Branka Magas' *The Destruction of Yugoslavia* — have documented this extensive relationship, correctly situating the rise of Milosevic in this context.

The Western policy of pushing Yugoslav “unity”, and further centralisation, while other internal and external factors were driving in the opposite direction, only made the eventual collapse more painful. The West continued to insist on centralisation even after the tactics of the centralisers were driving some republics to secession; this meant Western opposition to the democratic will of the populations of these republics.

Yet once there was no alternative but to recognise the new republics in 1992, the Western powers completely reversed policy towards the now independent Bosnia, insisting, even before the war began, on its three-way partition, a direct encouragement to Serbian and Croatian appetites. This is despite the fact that Bosnia had no traditional internal boundaries, and an almost total intermingling of Moslems, Serbs, Croats and others across the republic.

The only continuity was that both policies were in harmony with the goals of the Belgrade regime. Partition of Bosnia meant limiting the break-up of the region, as one part would eventually join Serbia and the other Croatia — Western leaders were very anxious about the economic “viability” of new small states. Maintaining a strong authority over as much of the region as possible was the goal. The Serbian and Croatian regimes, the new post-Communist classes being built around them and the new ethnically homogeneous states they were constructing would be the joint inheritors of the role previously occupied by the united Yugoslav state.

For those who support national liberation movements and oppose imperialist interventions into the affairs of smaller nations, a correct orientation to the Balkans cannot be reached by believing that imperialism has suddenly come over to the side of the oppressed, nor by denying that oppression exists or pretending that all Balkan states/peoples are equally guilty of oppression and nationalism. Rather, the fundamental similarity of the interests of imperialism and the Belgrade regime throughout these years must be understood, even if in 1999 the former finally aimed to replace a discredited Milosevic by some more pragmatic sections of the same nationalist movement representing the same ruling elite. ■

# 1. Yugoslavia in History

## Yugoslavia's nations

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Balkans were a collection of many different peoples, fairly interspersed. The whole region had been under the Ottoman Empire for 500 years, but in the course of the 19th century, independent bourgeois states had arisen in Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. A great swathe remained under Ottoman rule, including present-day Albania, Kosova, Macedonia, Thrace, Bosnia and the Sanjak. In 1908, the Austro-Hungarian Empire seized Bosnia, and in 1911, years of resistance by the Albanian people allowed them to set up a state on a part of Albanian ethnic territory. In 1912-13, the rest of the region was taken over by Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia, without regard for ethnic realities. Serbia now incorporated the Slavic Moslem Sanjak, Kosova with its 80% Albanian majority and 40% of Macedonia, with a solid ethnic Macedonian majority.

These borders, drawn by force, were recognised by the imperialist powers at the London Conference of 1913. Serbia was seen as a key ally of the British-French-Russian bloc in its impending clash with its German-Austrian rivals. Meanwhile, living under the Austro-Hungarian yoke were other south Slavs: the Slovenes, Croats and now Bosnians. In their own freedom struggle, the idea had emerged of the unity of all south Slavs, in a “Yugoslav” state. In practice, this meant that these Slavic nations would escape Hapsburg rule only to unite with the expanded Serbian monarchy.

The “Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes” was proclaimed in 1918 under Anglo-French auspices. It was a classic prisonhouse of nations. Macedonians were declared “South Serbs”, and a ruthless campaign of forced assimilation continued for the next 20 years. Montenegro, which had been a small independent state, came under direct Serbian rule. Its population is ethnically Serb, but with a strong sense of its own identity. Oppression directed against the Slavic Moslems of Bosnia and Sanjak drove thousands of them into exile in Turkey.

The worst excesses occurred in Kosova, where the Albanian majority were not Slavic at all, and, even worse for them, were Moslem in a land that Serb nationalists had declared the cradle of their nation due to the presence of a large number of

medieval Orthodox churches. The claim that Kosova has “always been part of Serbia” stems from this medieval tradition. Serbian nationalists used it in 1913 and again in the 1980s in much the same way as the Zionist movement claims Palestine — “We were there thousands of years ago, so it is ours regardless of who lives there now”.

In reality, there were no nations in the modern sense several hundred years ago. In terms of ethnic groups, the Albanians’ ancestors, the Illyrians, preceded the Slavs in Kosova by 2000 years; then in the 14th century a large empire, under the Serbian monarchy, ruled over many nationalities, including the Kosovan Albanians, just as the Bulgarian and Byzantine empires had before this and the Ottoman Empire did later. In the famous battle in Kosova in 1389, when the Serbian empire was defeated by the Ottoman Empire, Albanians fought on the same side as the Serbs.

Some modern Serb nationalists have attempted to turn history on its head by claiming there were far more Serbs in Kosova in 1913 than today, and that they have been “driven out”. However, according to Turkish statistics of 1911, of the 912,902 residents of the vilayet of Kosova, 743,040 (80.5%) were Albanians and 106,209 (11.5%) were Serbs.<sup>1</sup> The Albanians furiously resisted the occupation. The Serbian monarchy was pitiless in its suppression — according to the investigators of the Carnegie Commission, referring to the period after the Balkan wars in 1912-13, “Houses and whole villages reduced to ashes, unarmed and innocent populations massacred en masse, incredible acts of violence, pillage and brutality of every kind — such were the means which were employed by the Serbo-Montenegrin soldiery, with a view to the entire transformation of the ethnic character of regions inhabited exclusively by Albanians”.

Between the two world wars, the Albanian population dropped by half, with around 400,000 people forced to Albania or Turkey. The Yugoslav and Turkish regimes signed a convention in 1938 for the expulsion of 400,000 Albanians to Turkey — Turkey wanted to use the Moslem Albanians to colonise eastern Anatolia against its oppressed Kurds and Armenians. Some 15,000 Serb families were moved in from Serbia proper as colonists and given large properties.

In 1929, Serbian King Alexander dissolved parliament and the fiction of the state of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. In its place was a unitary Yugoslavia, which the Serbian monarchy ruled with an iron fist. This resulted in increasing oppression of the Croats as well, who resisted via parties such as the Croatian Peasants Party. Later, a more right-wing nationalist group, the Ustashe, based among Croatian émigrés, began violent attacks.

## World War II

In World War II, a gigantic resistance movement against Nazi occupation swept every part of Yugoslavia, led by Tito and his Communist partisans. The Communist Party advocated a new Yugoslavia, based on an equal federation of nations. The partisans were drawn from all nations of Yugoslavia. While the initial group was composed largely of Serbs and Montenegrins, it rapidly spread beyond them, especially following the crushing of a partisan revolt in Serbia in late 1941. From then, the overwhelming bulk of resistance activity occurred in Bosnia and Croatia. According to Yugoslav statistics, at the height of the war in late 1943, there were 122,000 partisans active in Croatia, 108,000 in Bosnia and only 22,000 in Serbia.<sup>2</sup> That is not the whole story, because many partisans in Croatia and Bosnia were ethnic Serbs. In Croatia 61% of the partisans were Croats and 28% Serbs. While figures for the ethnic breakdown of fighters don't exist for Bosnia, it's clear that a large proportion were Serbs, but a large proportion were also Moslems, because they were being slaughtered by both Croatian Ustashe and Serbian Chetniks, and only the partisans promised a Bosnian republic within the proposed new federation. The Moslem clergy in 1941 issued resolutions condemning atrocities being carried out by Ustashe and Chetniks, and explicitly condemned persecution of Jews and Serbs by the Ustashe. Bosnian Moslems suffered the highest losses per head of population of any nationality in Yugoslavia.

Just as partisans existed among all nationalities in occupied Yugoslavia, so did collaborators. There were two main puppet states, the Ustashe in Croatia and the Nedic regime in Serbia. The Ustashe regime was called the "Independent State of Croatia" (NDH), but was neither independent, nor a state, nor in Croatia. Virtually the whole of Croatia's Dalmatian coastline was annexed by Italian imperialism, and part of Croatian Slavonia given to pro-Axis Hungary. On the other hand, the whole of Bosnia was incorporated into the NDH, giving the Ustashe gangs the task of controlling this difficult mountainous region for the Nazis. The whole NDH was then divided into a German-occupied north and an Italian-occupied south.

The Ustashe was based among the Croatian émigré population, and had little base among local Croats. The Macek leadership of the Croatian national movement rejected the Ustashe and collaboration with the Nazis. While many Croats, after years of Serbian oppression, may have initially welcomed the idea of an "independent state", the shine wore off rapidly. The brutality of the Ustashe in its genocide of Serbs, Jews, Gypsies, Moslems and Croat opponents rapidly turned the mass of the Croatian population against it. It is estimated it had the support of only 2% of the population.<sup>3</sup> Approximately half of all victims of Nazi slaughter in Yugoslavia were in the NDH, where the Serb population in particular suffered a historic catastrophe. Initially, the

Croatian partisan movement sprang up in Dalmatia, resisting the Italian annexation. In this region, the Italians began using Serbian right-wing forces, the Chetniks, against the Croatian partisans.

The collaborationist regime of General Nedic contained the core of the prewar Serb monarchical state. As the Nazis invaded in 1941, 545 prominent Serb leaders, businessmen and bourgeois intellectuals issued an “Appeal to the Serbian Nation”, calling for collaboration with the Nazis in order to fight the nation’s real enemy, communism. “The duty of each true Serbian patriot is to thwart the infernal intentions of the communist criminals with all their might”, they proclaimed.<sup>4</sup> Of the signatories, 73 were later honoured in Tito’s Yugoslavia, 28 became members of the infamous Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences and 12 received high state honours. The Nedic regime’s terror was similarly unlimited, and Belgrade was the first city in Europe to be declared “Judenfrei” (free of Jews). Moslems, Albanians and Gypsies were also targets. The regime formed an organisation called the “Chetniks”, which spread terror against opponents.

There was also a Chetnik movement theoretically independent of Nedic, led by Draga Mihailovic. This was a Serb nationalist movement that advocated the return of the prewar royal family and had Anglo-American backing. Hence many Chetnik forces, outside of Nedic’s control, initially fought against the Ustashe regime, because their aims for a Greater Serbia conflicted with the Ustashe aim of Greater Croatia. However, as the Italian occupiers developed some differences with Germany, they came to use the Chetniks as their ally against both the partisans and the Ustashe. Before long, the Chetniks’ main war was against the partisans, and they eventually became full-scale collaborators with the Nazis. Their own program was for the elimination of the Moslem population, and they massacred tens of thousands of Moslem villagers. Mihailovic was executed after the war by Tito’s regime. The Chetniks’ barbaric aims were outlined as follows in 1941:

To cleanse the state territory of all national minorities and anti-national elements

To create a direct continuous border between Serbia and Montenegro and between Serbia and Slovenia, by cleansing Sandzak of its Moslem inhabitants and Bosnia of its Moslem and Croatian inhabitants.<sup>5</sup>

## New Communist-led federation

The new federation after 1945 consisted of six republics (Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia, Macedonia and Montenegro), and two provinces (Kosova and Vojvodina), which both had autonomy within the Serbian republic. Each major nation had its own republic or province. Four republics — Serbia, Croatia, Slovenia and Macedonia —

were clear nation-states, while Montenegro was something of a second Serb republic. However, only Slovenia was relatively ethnically homogeneous. Borders were established as fairly as possible, but the mixing of peoples made it impossible to establish ethnically pure states. Many Serbs, Croats, Moslems and Albanians lived outside of their assigned states. In the case of Bosnia, which was completely mixed between Moslem Slavs, Serbs and Croats, there was no dominant group, though Moslems were the largest.

The modern Serb nationalist movement claims that Tito's system "divided up the Serb nation", because Serbs (like Croats, Moslems, Albanians etc.) were scattered across a number of republics. It is ironic that the only six border changes, compared to the traditional pre-1918 borders, were *all* in favour of Serbia.

Vojvodina had a slight Serb majority but with large Hungarian and Croatian minorities; in a sense its existence recognised the Hungarian "national minority", not considered a "nation" because its nation-state was Hungary, outside Yugoslavia. Similarly, Kosova's autonomy signified the status of the Albanians as a "national minority", whose nation-state was Albania. However, Albanians were still the vast majority of the population of Kosova in 1945, despite the enormous expulsions of Albanians and colonisation by Serbs in the interwar period. And in numbers, they were bigger than many of the "nations" of Yugoslavia, and growing.

Albanian partisans had fought hard in World War II for the right to self-determination, including unity with Albania. In the first major violation of the impending new federal order, Tito gathered Serb partisans together with large numbers of former Chetniks and crushed the Kosovan partisans. Tito and Albanian Communist leader Enver Hoxha had aimed for Albania to become part of the federation, which in Tito's view would be a federation of all Balkan nations, not just of prewar Yugoslavia. Therefore, there could be no Kosovan republic, because it would eventually be part of the Albanian republic in Yugoslavia. Because this never came to pass, Kosova was stuck in the highly unsatisfactory situation of autonomy inside Serbia. This status, combined with Kosova's drastically poorer position than all Yugoslav republics, made the Albanians an unambiguously *oppressed nation* in the new Yugoslavia. ■

## 2. Keeping Yugoslavia United

### Yugoslavia's 'special relationship' with the West

Postwar Yugoslavia had a “special relationship” with the West, due to Tito’s break with Stalin. Even within the Non-Aligned Movement, it was regarded as part of the pro-Western wing — the Western countries strongly backed Yugoslavia’s candidacy to head the movement in 1979. Yugoslavia has even been described as a “de facto member of NATO”, as part of a Balkan alliance which had military obligations in the event of war in Europe.<sup>1</sup> NATO troops enjoyed “rest and recreation” stops in Yugoslavia. The US supplied Yugoslavia with around US\$1 billion in weapons from 1950 onwards, according to the Pentagon’s Security Cooperation Agency.

Western support remained firm as the Yugoslav regime grew more repressive in the 1980s, with more political prisoners than any country in Eastern Europe, of whom the bulk were Albanian. This was ignored by the US. According to the US Congressional Research Service: “... (while) human rights in Kosovo and elsewhere in Yugoslavia has been the subject of US concern ... its relative importance was reduced by many other factors. The most important of these was the fact that the USA saw Yugoslavia as a symbol of differences within the communist world ... its foreign policy was one of non-alignment.”<sup>2</sup>

If anything, the supply of US arms increased in the 1980s, reflecting the gradual shift away from “Communism”. In the 1980s, the US sold Yugoslavia \$193 million worth of air-to-surface missiles and air defence radar systems. After Milosevic came to power in 1987, US support continued, with \$96 million in arms and training supplied, including fighter aircraft, tanks and artillery.<sup>3</sup> All this weaponry was used against Croats, Bosnians and Kosovans in the 1990s. Officers of the Yugoslav People’s Army (JNA) were trained by the US until 1991.

Yugoslavia’s system of “market socialism” gave it another special relationship with the West. Far more economic cooperation was possible for Western business with Yugoslavia than with the more thoroughly state-controlled economies of Eastern Europe.

This includes both the considerable Yugoslav direct investment in the West and Western investment in Yugoslavia. The former dates from as early as 1947-48, when

the Anglo-Yugoslav Shipping Company and BSE-Genex were set up in London. By 1988 there were 372 such firms, most in the developed world (especially Germany, Italy, Austria, Britain and USA). The main concentrations of Yugoslav banks abroad are in Britain and Germany. Interestingly, “being a point of entry into the EC” seems to be as important as any other consideration in this investment. Foreign direct investment in Yugoslavia reached a total value of \$1.2 billion, 80% of which was concentrated in Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia. It was also largely from the five countries listed above, Germany by 1989 being both the largest investor and Yugoslavia’s largest trading partner. Trade with Britain tripled between 1982 and 1986, during the first stage of Yugoslavia’s “Long Term Stabilisation Program”. In 1988 Italy signed an agreement promising \$60 million in grants and \$325 million in credits to finance joint investments. Of particular interest was Italian investment in the Trieste industrial zone, which made Croatia and Slovenia nervous, given Italy’s historic claims to this region now divided between these two republics. In 1989, Prime Minister Michel Rocard of France brought officials to Belgrade to discuss a number of major investment projects, including for nuclear power plants.

The US had the highest share of foreign investment at 35%,<sup>4</sup> until surpassed by Germany in the late 1980s. The extent of the business connections between prominent US leaders and Yugoslavia, including with future leader Slobodan Milosevic and the JNA, was well documented by Ivo Skoric in an extraordinary piece written in 1992.<sup>5</sup>

Lawrence Eagleburger, deputy secretary of state under George Bush and US ambassador to Yugoslavia in the late 1970s, had “a well-tested working relationship” with Milosevic, who headed Yugoslavia’s main bank, Beobank, in both New York and Belgrade. Through Beobank, the JNA, Yugoslavia’s largest industry (based in Serbia), dealt in its annual \$3 billion arms exports program. Eagleburger was president of Henry Kissinger Associates, a US consultancy providing world strategic and economic advice, which had large contracts with Yugo America and other Yugoslav companies.<sup>6</sup> Eagleburger was also on the board of directors of Yugo America, which is owned by Zavodi Crvena Zastava, the major Serbian weapons producer, also a client of Kissinger Associates. The Yugo automobile was one of Yugoslavia’s important exports of the 1980s, selling cars in the US for half the Yugoslav price. In May 1990, following elections in Croatia and Slovenia which brought to power those advocating confederalisation of Yugoslavia, Zastava completely stopped selling weapons to these two republics, allowing the JNA to prepare war against them.

According to Eric Margolis, “Since the late 1970s, say Washington sources, Kissinger Associates channelled hundreds of millions of dollars in private US investments into Yugoslavia. By sheer coincidence, most of it was made after Eagleburger served as

American ambassador to Belgrade.”<sup>7</sup>

Eagleburger was also on the board of Ljubljanska Banka (LBS), Yugoslavia’s second biggest bank. LBS had significant business interests in the US, largely through connections to BNL bank in Atlanta, whose international department was headed by Kissinger. In addition to direct US arms sales to Yugoslavia, the JNA also bought licences for its arms exports industry for sophisticated new weapons from US arms manufacturers for years. Products were sold for oil or dollars, the oil going to Technogas, and the dollars to Beobank — Milosevic at one time or another being CEO of both. General Dynamics was involved in negotiations with the JNA to co-produce the Super Galeb light attack aircraft, a multibillion-dollar project, before war broke out in 1991.<sup>8</sup> General Dynamics confirmed that these talks were postponed only until the end of the fighting. The US-produced Super Galeb was already used by the JNA against Croatian forces at this time — with British-licensed Rolls Royce engines, despite Yugoslavia breaking Britain’s regulations by selling them to Burma. Cyrus Vance, onetime US defense secretary, who headed the UN’s Serbo-Croatian peace negotiations at the end of 1991, which allowed the JNA to withdraw all its heavy weapons into Bosnia, was a former member of the board of directors of General Dynamics.

The vice-president of Kissinger Associates was Brent Scowcroft, also formerly assigned to Yugoslavia, and then national security adviser under Bush. Scowcroft owned stock in virtually all the main defence contractors, including General Electric, Lockheed and Westinghouse, many involved in Yugoslav deals. Lockheed, for example, was planning to sell Yugoslavia two C-130 aircraft when the war broke out.<sup>9</sup>

Both Eagleburger and Scowcroft were heavily connected to the defence industry. Eagleburger was also CEO of ITT, another major defence contractor, heading ITT and Kissinger Associates at the same time, hence “consulting” himself and collecting bonuses from both. Following a meeting with defence industry executives in early 1990, he sent a memo to US embassies throughout the world requesting help for the US defence industry in marketing its products. Eagleburger and Scowcroft also proposed that the US Export-Import Bank (Eximbank) be used to finance \$1 billion in military sales. Eximbank, headed by John Macomber, an Eagleburger ally, gave special treatment to Yugoslavia.

Eagleburger and Scowcroft were instrumental in the “Friends of Yugoslavia”, which in the 1980s continually lobbied for further loans and debt rescheduling to Belgrade, the former flying from his Belgrade embassy to Washington in 1981 to campaign in Congress against condemnation of human rights abuses in Kosova. The so-called “Belgrade mafia” (Eagleburger, Scowcroft, Kissinger) was largely in charge of the Bush administration during the period of Yugoslavia’s unravelling. Britain’s

Lord Carrington, who negotiated the EC's first partition plan for Bosnia in 1992, also had strong Serbian business connections and was on the board of Kissinger Associates.

### **IMF & World Bank insist on Yugoslav recentralisation**

Woodward and others have claimed that with the “special relationship” coming to an end after the Cold War, the West no longer had an interest in “Yugoslav territorial integrity and independence”.<sup>10</sup> In reality, Western powers continued to insist not only on the maintenance of Yugoslav unity, but on the *strengthening* of the central apparatus, particularly the Federal Executive Council (FEC), which selected the prime minister, as Woodward, ironically, elsewhere demonstrates forcefully. This was due to the demands of the IMF and World Bank (organisations ultimately controlled by Washington) for greater central authority to force repayment of the \$20 billion foreign debt, to carry out a “free market” transformation and privatisation of the economy, to overcome republican barriers to an unrestricted Yugoslav-wide market for Western investments and goods, and to remove the republican veto on federal economic decisions dictated by the IMF. This stubborn insistence on centralisation eventually led to the Yugoslav break-up for the opposite reason — the non-Serb republics could no longer bear the increasing weight of the central regime.

The target of this IMF campaign was Tito's 1974 constitution, which had in effect set up a confederation, lacking any real central economic control. Yugoslavia's six republics and two “provinces” gained major economic powers compared to the centre. A “republican veto” existed over any federal decision, including macro-economic matters.

The “workers' self-managed” enterprises themselves were also given considerable independence. The Titoist model inverted the Stalinist model of overcentralised bureaucratic control. The intrinsically socialist idea of workers' self-management of the factories was introduced in the 1950s, but rather than combine this with the necessary degree of central planning, these enterprises were given considerable independence in economic decisions, especially following legislation in 1976. This even included decisions by both republics and enterprises about the use of foreign currency.

Decentralisation of economic power to the republics and enterprises seems to have been the face-saver for the denial of any real political power to the citizens, including workers managing their enterprises. The ceding of more power to republican bureaucracies and individual enterprises in the mid-1970s followed Tito's crushing of democratic reform movements and massive purging of the LCY in 1971. The LCY held a monopoly on power, ruling both at the centre and at the head of each republic. Since no opposition party was allowed, opposition to central government policy tended

to become “national” or republican in appearance, and so was reflected in increasing divisions between republic governments and LCY branches. This was accentuated by increasing economic decentralisation.

It is often pointed out that the economic independence of republics led to disasters when every republic tried to have its full range of industries, including steelworks, while the poorer southern republics did not develop their plentiful raw material resources. “Refineries and metal factories were plentiful, but not production of the oils and metals to use in them.”<sup>11</sup> Building huge and costly mistakes, and sometimes “prestige projects and political factories”,<sup>12</sup> may have looked impressive to the republican bureaucracies, but added to both the foreign debt and the impatience of the northern republics.

What is less often mentioned is the responsibility of Western investors for these disastrous decisions, which ultimately had to be paid for by Yugoslavia. The US financing of the FENI ferro-nickel plant in Macedonia misjudged the world market. Dow Chemicals’ joint construction of the INA petrochemical refinery in Croatia was another disaster that had to be abandoned at substantial loss in 1982. In the 1970s, the US and the IMF had advocated the very economic decentralisation they now attacked, believing it led to the “free market”.

Now, the priorities were different. According to the World Bank, the “lack of financial discipline” and the “difficulties of an effective reform program” were due to Yugoslavia’s “unique complex politics/administrative structure and the ... inability in carrying out necessary structural reforms”.<sup>13</sup> Political commentary in sections of the Western media known to be close to government emphasised the need for greater central authority far more than “democracy”. According to the *New York Times*, “the political will to carry it [economic reform] through has failed because of the absence of a political centre of power”.<sup>14</sup> The London *Financial Times* claimed, “The economy is bent out of shape in many ways, partly to do with its fragmentation ... along the lines of the country’s eight republics and provinces ... and partly to do with the vaunted system of self-management”.<sup>15</sup> Neither had anything to say about democratic reform. The US Congress assessed that “some strengthening of federal powers” would be necessary and that “unless there is a reduction in those geographic barriers [republican borders], economic reform in Yugoslavia will have to wait. Such an eventuality could be catastrophic.”<sup>16</sup>

This push for recentralisation began in 1982 with the first IMF stand-by agreement. Its victories included removal of national proportionality in cabinet appointments and changing the rules of the National Bank from consensus (among republican representatives) to majority decision making, as demanded by the IMF. These moves reveal the dangerous path down which the centralisers were treading — immediately

challenging aspects based on the equality of nations, the key to a federal structure. Such moves were resisted by Slovenia and Croatia, the former, for example, refusing to implement wage restrictions in the federal-IMF incomes policy in March 1987, responding to workers' strikes.

Republican autonomy need not have led to dissolution. What was needed was greater democratic control by working people over the levers of power, a country-wide challenge to the bureaucracy. However, two crucial factors were specific to Yugoslavia.

The first was the massive debt and the further austerity and deregulation which were part of the structural adjustment packages put together by the IMF and World Bank. The disaster had been created by the bureaucracy and was now going to be paid for by Yugoslavia's workers. The results were massive inflation, unemployment, wage cutting and complete collapse of industrial growth. "Socialist" Yugoslavia now had higher unemployment than anywhere in Eastern Europe or capitalist western Europe. This aspect was driving the republics apart, as each tried to fend for itself in an increasingly difficult environment. The gap widened between republics: Slovenia's per capita GNP was now seven times as large as that of Kosova. The gap also widened between rich and poor — "market socialism" and the "free market" allowed some to prosper while others went under. Officially, the poorest 20% of households disposed of only 6.6% of the wealth while the richest 10% disposed of 23%. But even in 1976 a study which included "earnings and privileges generated outside working hours" including in "speculation and trade in real estate and building land", had shown that "the spread of personal incomes in Yugoslavia today approaches 1 to 20".<sup>17</sup> This led thousands of impoverished people to fall prey to nationalist hawks, who explained their economic situation as being due to the "enemy" nations.

## **Serbian domination of central apparatus**

The second crucial factor was that, while the new federation was initially a huge step forward for the other nations, in time the central administration, the military officialdom and the League of Communists had become overwhelmingly Serb-dominated. The root of the problem was that Tito's regime was a Stalinist one, in which the new economic base was saddled with a huge central apparatus with massive privileges, as in other Eastern European states, despite a number of more liberal aspects. Thus the formal equality of nations after 1945 eventually degenerated, if not to the extent of capitalist Yugoslavia. Since the bureaucracy was based in Belgrade, the Serbian capital, it became more Serbianised, while the lack of democratic structures meant that people living in the other national regions were not able to exercise political power.

Partisan activity was far more even among the nationalities than is often thought, with particularly large input from non-Serbs in Bosnia and Croatia. But Serbia was liberated six months earlier than the rest of Yugoslavia. In that time, Tito offered two amnesties to Chetniks and collaborators. Such large numbers came over that membership of the Serbian partisans jumped from 22,000 in December 1943 to 204,000 in December 1944. Tito needed this influx of rightists to suppress the 1944 uprising of Kosova partisans against the reimposition of Serb rule — the first major breach of wartime proletarian solidarity by the new regime.

By the 1970s, Serbs, around 40% of the population, made up 78.9% of personnel in the federal administration<sup>18</sup> and about 70% of the military officialdom of the JNA. By contrast, Albanians, with 8% of the population, were only 1% of officers. Similarly, within the Yugoslav League of Communists, between 50 and 60% of members were ethnically Serb, though this had declined from well over 60% earlier. Given that it was the only legal party, its composition reflected the relations between nationalities. Croats were 23% of the population, and in 1946 made up 31% of the LCY, reflecting their big role in the resistance. However, by 1978, this had fallen to 17%.

Attempts to recentralise to allow Yugoslavia-wide economic planning to take place would need to include a full-scale democratisation of the regime and the relations between republics, if the federal government was going to have the confidence of the non-Serb nations. As the complete opposite occurred — recentralisation was carried out via the repressive apparatus — it struck at the very basis of the federation, because increased central control meant increased Serbian domination.

As Branka Magas put it: “The grip which the IMF now exercises over the country’s economy needed a fulcrum and found it in the increased power of the federal state, not only over the republican and provincial centres, but also over the main levers of the economy. As the government in Belgrade becomes the main arbiter of who is going to prosper and who go under, national intolerance has once again been placed on the country’s agenda.”<sup>19</sup>

This centralising push by the IMF and federal government had an echo in the JNA, which was the strongest federal institution. Despite the JNA being sometimes depicted as “hardline Communists”, in fact the hard line was only about political power, not opposition to the neo-liberal economic changes, which the JNA strongly supported. In 1987-88 the JNA centralised its military command structure in mirror fashion, replacing the eight units based on republics with four which completely cut across republican borders. This was opposed by Slovenia, which claimed that it infringed the General People’s Defence system.

The legendary privileges of the central bureaucracy and military high command

were already a source of popular annoyance. While the average income in 1991 was \$400, the average army officer received \$2300 monthly, an apartment, medical insurance, early retirement and a pension 10 times the average.<sup>20</sup> With the increasing irrelevance of these institutions after the 1974 decentralisation, the central regime was little more than an economic strain, the JNA eating up two-thirds of the federal budget.

This increasing irrelevance did not diminish Serbian domination at the federal level. On the contrary, by transferring important functions to republican capitals, it left federal jobs to local Serbs and upwardly mobile Serb immigrants from poorer regions. Nor did growing irrelevance reduce the size of the federal bureaucracy — employment in the federal administration was growing at 16% annually, in contrast to 2.5 to 4.5% for the country as a whole, in the early 1980s.<sup>21</sup> Its IMF-dictated role in the mid-1980s recentralisation was not so much to conduct an economic plan as to funnel a greater proportion of export earnings to the foreign banks, rather than back to the republics or to pay for imports of manufactured goods. The JNA's role was seen as sucking money away from republics while serving Serbia's interests in cracking down on Kosova.

## Rise of Serbian nationalism

After the federal government and the JNA, a third force was pushing for centralisation — the Serb nationalists. This was contradictory, given that Serbia is a republic itself, and nationalism would have a fragmenting rather than unifying effect. Yet the difference was Serbian domination of federal institutions — increased central powers meant increased Serbian power. Whereas the JNA argued for unity from a pre-1974 Titoist point of view, the Serb nationalist intelligentsia attacked the entire postwar Titoist order. In 1986, the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences released its “Memorandum” which claimed that the Communist-Croat alliance represented by Tito had set out to destroy the “Serb nation” by imposing an “alien” (federal) Yugoslavia. The Memorandum demanded that the “Serb nation” now re-establish its full “national and cultural integrity ... irrespective of the republic or province in which it finds itself”. In particular, Kosova must be crushed, to prevent “genocide” against the local Serbs.

In reality, the so-called “division of the Serb nation” worked to its advantage. As Serbian academic Vojin Dimitrijevic points out, the way such alleged division worked depended “on the play of political forces ... the proliferation of ‘Serb’ federal units offered a chance to the Serbs, or the Leagues of Communists dominated by them, to appear in the organs of the federation under various hats.”<sup>22</sup> This applied not only to the two provinces and ethnically Serb Montenegro, but even to Croatia with its 11%

Serb minority: only one in 20 Croats were LCY members, while one in nine from the Serb minority were. Forty per cent of Communist Party members and 67% of the police force were Serbs.

Unfortunately, this Serb nationalist propaganda has rubbed off on some on the left. For example, Peter Gowan, in an otherwise very interesting article in *New Left Review*, claims “the Serbs were split up between Serbia proper, Croatia, Bosnia, Vojvodina and Kosovo”.<sup>23</sup> While admitting this was “more in form than in fact”, he claims that this division became “more of fact than of form in the context of Yugoslavia’s break-up”. The same points could be made about the division of the Croats between Croatia, Bosnia and Vojvodina, of Moslems between Bosnia, Serbia, Kosova and Montenegro, of Albanians between Kosova, Serbia, Montenegro and Macedonia (let alone Albania), of Macedonians between Macedonia, Greece, Bulgaria and Albania and of Hungarians between Vojvodina, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia. The only reason the Serb minorities elsewhere became more of an issue was, firstly, because, independence for the other republics would reduce the position of Serb minorities from a *privileged* one to an equal one, something not the case with the other nationalities; and, secondly, the fact that the Serbian element had overwhelming military dominance meant that they could force the issue in other republics.

### ‘Rich republics’

Ranged against this unwieldy IMF-federal government-JNA-Serbian coalition of centralisers were two different forces: the major non-Serb republics, above all Slovenia, and the multi-ethnic Yugoslav working class. Certainly the republican bureaucracies wanted to guard their privileges; however, their position has often been distorted, particularly by a “pro-Yugoslav” section of the Western left. In this view, Croatia and Slovenia were the “rich” republics that wanted to look after their own and not distribute any of their wealth to the poorer republics of the south. In trying to recentralise the federation, therefore, the Serbian regime was allegedly caring for the poorer republics. It was further alleged that the “rich” republics would then be in a position to join the European Union without the weight of the poorer south.

The label “rich”, as applied only to Slovenia and Croatia, was a sleight of hand: according to most analyses, Slovenia’s wealth per capita was nearly double Croatia’s, whereas Croatia was only slightly ahead of Serbia/Vojvodina. Virtually all analyses agree: Slovenia, with 8% of the population, accounted for 17% of the Yugoslav GDP; Croatia with 20% and Serbia proper with 24% of the population accounted for 26 and 25% of GDP respectively.<sup>24</sup> The three poor republics (Bosnia, Macedonia, Montenegro) had a GDP percentage well below their share of the population, while Kosova’s was

only one quarter of its share of the population, again revealing its oppressed state. Hence Serbia was one of the “rich” republics; the fact that its main victims, Kosova and Bosnia, were far poorer shows that the Serbian bureaucracy had the same competitive nature as its Croatian and Slovenian counterparts, but its domination of the federal government and JNA enabled it to pillage these poorer regions in a way that its rivals could only dream of.

Serbs emigrated from these poor regions *en masse* to wealthier north Serbia for economic reasons (as did Bosnian Croats to Croatia). Nearly 16,000 people per year left Bosnia in the 1950s and 1960s, most going to Serbia; they were fleeing a republic which, after Kosova, had the highest infant mortality rate in Yugoslavia, the highest illiteracy rate and the highest proportion of people whose only education was three



Figure 1. Yugoslavia showing dispersal of majority ethnic areas across republic borders. However, in some parts of Bosnia, such majorities were very small. Nevertheless, even based on such generalities, the problem with “Greater Serbia” is obvious: the main Serb majority areas of Croatia and Bosnia were in fact those which were the *furthest* away from Serbia; to join them to Serbia meant the forced removal of everyone else in between. Compare to the highly compact Albanian populations just outside the Albanian border; sometimes this ethnic Albania is wrongly called “Greater Albania”.

years of primary school.

The reasons for the growing gap between rich and poor republics — despite the fund for the south through which the wealthier republics subsidised the poorer — are highly complex, partly due to what happened to prices throughout the world in the 1970s and 1980s: prices rose for manufactured goods, which were produced more in the developed north, and fell for primary products, produced more in the south.

However, another reason was the diversion of considerable republican funds to the central bureaucracy in Belgrade and the bloated JNA. For example, in the late 1960s, Croatia created 27% of the federation's income and earned about 50% of Yugoslavia's foreign exchange, largely due to tourism on the Dalmatian coast, yet received only 15% of new investments; while Serbia created 33% of federal income and 25% of foreign exchange, yet Serb banks controlled 63% of total bank assets and 81.5% of foreign credits.<sup>25</sup> This created suspicion about "helping the poorer republics". Further, of the four poorer regions, only ethnically Serb Montenegro received well above its capital investment share.

Hence while the bureaucracies in Croatia and Slovenia strove to loosen bonds of solidarity, as they, like the bureaucracy in Serbia, moved towards capitalism in the late 1980s, this does not seem to have been the dominant concern among the masses in those republics whom they would need to win over. Rather, what aroused the masses was the diversion of their republican funds to pay for what they saw as a bloated, Serb-dominated, irrelevant JNA. This attitude strengthened following the JNA's crackdown in Kosova from 1981 onwards. Giving money to help the Kosovan economy was one thing; giving it to help Serb troops police the Albanians another. In 1989 Croatia and Slovenia withdrew their forces from the federal occupation of Kosova. It is noteworthy that Slovenia first refused to continue funding the federal defence budget, not the fund for the south; and when Milosevic suppressed the Kosova assembly in 1989, President Kucan refused to pay Slovenia's share for Kosova through the federal fund, but rather sent it directly to the embattled Kosova provincial government — an act of solidarity rather than greed.

## **Resistance by multi-ethnic working class**

Meanwhile, another force was resisting the economic policies of the IMF and central government — the multi-ethnic Yugoslav working class. Bosnian miners in Croatia launched the longest strike in Yugoslav history. Croatian and Serb workers from Vukovar in Croatia descended on Belgrade in 1988 to join other workers protesting the IMF package. This centre of multi-ethnic worker resistance, Vukovar, was levelled by the JNA in 1991 and brutally ethnically cleansed during Serbia's attack. Joint strikes

by Albanian and Serb workers occurred in Kosova before the upsurge of nationalism in 1987. Strikes doubled every year after 1980, reaching a peak of 1570 in 1987. Working-class membership of the LCY crashed.

According to Branka Magas in 1988, “Over the past few years, the federal assembly has been visited by striking workers from Macedonia, Kosovo, Serbia, Bosnia and Croatia. But their slogans included no specifically Macedonian, Albanian, Serb, Moslem or Croat national demands. The workers instead denounced their political dispossession as a class ... and demanded the removal of those responsible for the country’s crisis.”<sup>26</sup>

Combined with many other forms of political ferment, “by 1985-86, the preconditions for a revolutionary situation were apparent”.<sup>27</sup> The tendency for various oppositional social movements to cut across republican barriers resulted in police activities “with the special aim of trying to prevent alliances of intellectuals, workers or other leaders across republican lines”.<sup>28</sup>

Perhaps some of the more far-sighted Western leaders could see that the multi-ethnic traditions of Yugoslav Communism in its working-class heartland were a source of strength of anti-IMF resistance. If this movement gathered momentum, it might pose a federation-wide alternative. “The unrest is putting heavy domestic pressure on the Government at a time when contrary pressures are developing from its foreign creditors ... an unpublished report by the International Monetary Fund ... criticises the Government’s performance in enforcing economic austerity.”<sup>29</sup> Little wonder that Prime Minister Mikulic’s threat to use the army against the strike wave drew no protests from Western governments.

## **Milosevic begins drive to restore capitalism**

Meanwhile, the US was targeting the economies of eastern Europe. A 1984 “Secret Sensitive” National Security Decision Directive (NSDD 133) called for a “quiet revolution” to overthrow Communist governments, while seeking to “promote the trend toward an effective, market-oriented Yugoslav economic structure ... and to expand US economic relations with Yugoslavia”, with an important role to be played by the IMF. “Secret Sensitive” classification indicates the existence of confidential relationships with individuals or groups.

It was in the conditions described above that Milosevic — who had wide business experience in the capitalist world and direct connections to important US political and business circles — seized power in Serbia in 1987. Of the main aspects of his program — greater promotion of the “market economy”, greater recentralisation and the promotion of a virulent Serb nationalism — the first two were in accord with IMF dictates, while the

third diverted sections of the Serb working class from its joint struggle with other workers against the IMF program. Hence a “vertical” integration along the lines of a new bourgeois nation could develop, to cut through the “horizontal” alliance along class lines.

Milosevic gathered the cream of Belgrade’s liberal economists into the “Milosevic Commission” in May 1988 to push for further liberalising of the economy. Through 1988 and 1989 Milosevic worked closely with federal prime ministers Branko Mikulic and Ante Markovic, who pushed both neo-liberal economic measures and increased federal powers, even while having little time for Milosevic’s populist nationalism. Much of Markovic’s economic program had been blueprinted by Milosevic.

Markovic was strongly backed by the US, being described by the BBC correspondent as “Washington’s best ally in Yugoslavia”.<sup>30</sup> Washington saw these federal leaders as centralisers with a more “human face” than Milosevic, and its support for “united Yugoslavia” was more often expressed as support to the former. But the Western media also gave clear support to Milosevic, despite ambivalence about certain aspects.

The *New York Times* claimed top US policy makers were “torn between their appreciation of Mr. Milosevic as a catalyst forcing through sorely needed *political and economic changes* [emphasis added] and their fear that ... playing on nationalist passions might create unbridgeable antagonisms in Yugoslavia’s other republics”.<sup>31</sup> The reference to “political” as well as economic changes is revealing, because Milosevic had never even pretended to advocate “democratic” change — the “sorely needed political changes” US policy makers supported were the push for greater central power. Another *Times* article, which parroted Serbian nationalist charges about an Albanian plot to rape Serb women, also agreed the rise of Milosevic was a “rare opportunity for Yugoslavia to take radical political and economic steps ... Efforts are underway to strengthen central authority through amendments to the constitution ... the hope is that something will be done then to exert the rule of law in Kosovo ...”<sup>32</sup>

From May 1988, major changes, heralded by the Milosevic Commission, formally abolished what was left of the socialist system. These included sweeping privatisation and full ownership rights for foreign capital, deregulation of the banking system, equality of public and private ownership and abolition of “workers’ self-management” of enterprises — a key IMF demand. The Enterprise Law transformed them into private enterprises, with workers encouraged to become shareholders in their firms. The workers’ councils were replaced by “social boards” controlled by the enterprise owners and creditors. Milosevic called on these boards to “strive to create profits and constantly struggle for their share and place in the market”.<sup>33</sup> The Financial Operations Act allowed the closing of “bankrupt” enterprises; in 1989, 248 firms were steered into bankruptcy or liquidated, with 89,400 workers laid off.

Milosevic stressed the need for Yugoslavia to be “a unified economic area” and blamed the crisis on “autarchic republican economies”, attacking the 1974 constitution for turning Yugoslavia into a “loose confederation”. The Milosevic Commission proposed removing the republican veto on major economic decisions, with decisions in the federal Assembly to be based on “qualified majorities” rather than consensus. Markovic also advocated “functional integration” along the same lines, and proposed eliminating national and republican proportionality in government appointments.

Because there was resistance to this aspect of the IMF-Milosevic program by Slovenia and other republics, Milosevic began where Serbia had more authority — in Kosova and Vojvodina. Constitutional changes limiting their autonomy were pushed through in September 1988. Milosevic forced other republics into silence by whipping up Serb nationalism in what became known as the “anti-bureaucratic revolution”. Gigantic Serb nationalist crowds were mobilised to bring down the Communist governments of Vojvodina (September 1988), Montenegro (January 1989) and Kosova (March 1989). Among the crowds in these demonstrations were expressions of openly bourgeois and reactionary ideology, seen for the first time since World War II — Chetnik, royalist and Serbian Orthodox banners. Was this the (not so) “quiet revolution” desired by the US State Department?

Many of the people Milosevic was using in his nationalistic demonstrations were those most affected by the economic program — unemployed and others willing to grasp at the straw that their economic woes were due to various “corrupt bureaucrats” (other than Milosevic) who were “enemies of the Serb nation” and “obstructing” the economic program. This allowed him to use them against bureaucrats of other republics and provinces who opposed his plans. Mobilising members of the Serb ethnic group on a nationalist basis against others, such as the chronically poor Albanian masses in Kosova, divided and disarmed the working-class movement.

For example, when 2000 striking workers from the Rekord tyre factory in Belgrade broke into the National Assembly on October 5, 1988, protesting against the austerity caused by the federal government’s economic program, they were addressed by Milosevic. Ironically, he told them to place their trust in the proposed economic program, and they then dispersed chanting praise of Milosevic.

A similar process overthrew the Montenegrin government. A powerful workers’ demonstration erupted in Titograd, the Montenegrin capital, in October 1988, protesting against massive factory closures. The slogans included “We want to work and earn our living”, “We demand bread” and “Long live the LCY”. By nightfall, intervention of Milosevic activists, who linked Montenegro’s corrupt leadership to its opposition to Milosevic’s centralist drive and its slowness on “economic reform”, had changed the

slogans to “Long live the Serbian leadership” and “Slobodan, we are your soldiers — we shall kill or we shall die”. As the Montenegrin government collapsed, the steelworkers’ council, which had led the action, released demands that included those relevant to their situation (end to price rises, resignation of leadership), those irrelevant (suppression of the “counter-revolution” in Kosova, their fellow striking miners!) and those against their interests (speedy economic reform — the “reforms” which were hitting them). Milosevic’s people in the local party machine took power. A representative of this new guard, Ljubisa Stankovic, gave an interview in which he claimed that what was important now was the creation of a proper market economy.<sup>34</sup>

## Kosova

The key issue in this new Serbian nationalist push was Kosova. The 1974 constitution had left both sides unsatisfied. The Albanian majority still aimed for full republic status, which it considered would be formal recognition of its equality with other Yugoslav nations. Discontent was sharpened by unemployment hovering around 50%, two and a half times the Yugoslav average. In 1981, demonstrations at Pristina University were brutally crushed by the military, with considerable killing; thousands were arrested. This was followed by years of repression. Albanians, only 8% of Yugoslavia’s population, made up 75% of political prisoners in the 1980s. Between 1981 and 1988, 1000 Albanian teachers were sacked for allegedly not being committed to the fight against Albanian “nationalism”.

This crackdown only demonstrated to the Kosovars how frail their autonomy really was, and hence intensified their push for republic status (and, amongst a minority, for full independence or unity with Albania). An array of far left underground groups sprung up in the 1980s, supported by Enver Hoxha’s Stalinist regime in Albania. From these groups arose the core of the Kosova Liberation Army in the 1990s.

The Serbian bureaucracy and the nationalist intelligentsia who had released the “Memorandum” began a countermobilisation of Kosovan Serbs in the 1980s with the aim of abolishing Kosova’s autonomy, or at least reducing it to a meaningless pre-1974 variety. In particular, they believed, correctly, that there was a contradiction between Kosova being autonomous within Serbia and its having many features of a republic. In 1986, Vojislav Seselj (today leader of the extreme Chetnik Serbian Radical Party) demanded that this contradiction be fixed, through reduction of autonomy. Seselj had also called for the abolition of the Bosnian republic and its partition between Serbia and Croatia — clearly a nationalist ahead of his times.

Kosovan Serbs were mobilised on the pretext that *their* rights were under attack from an “Albanian” administration in Kosova, despite the massive police repression

of everything Albanian from 1981 onwards. Indeed, the Kosovan Serbs had a very high constitutional position for the small minority they were. According to Kullashi Muhaludin from Pristina University, “Throughout the institutions, from the lowest communal level to the highest instances of state and party, the leading functions were always shared between the two nationalities. If a school director, for example, was of one nationality, his deputy would have to be from the other ...”<sup>35</sup>

A considerable percentage of the Kosovan Serb population was able to be mobilised because it did indeed have “grievances” — like those of white South Africans after the end of apartheid. High-level autonomy, and particularly Pristina University, had resulted in a growing percentage of jobs in government and administration being taken by Albanians. While still not equal to the Albanians’ percentage of the population, this was a big change. The economic flight of Serbs to greener pastures in northern Serbia and Vojvodina was interpreted by nationalists as flight from a campaign of violence by Albanians.

The centrepiece of this propaganda was an alleged campaign by “backward, Moslem” Albanians to rape Serb women. Official statistics, however, showed that rape was at a lower level in Albania than in Serbia and Slovenia, and the overwhelming majority of victims were Albanian women. The larger families which poorer Albanians tended to have were interpreted as a deliberate strategy to outbreed Serbs. This then led to an anti-Moslem ideological crusade by the Serb nationalist movement and the cream of its writers and intellectuals, such as future prime minister Dobrica Cosic and Vuk Draskovic, now head of the moderate Chetnik Serbian Renewal Party (SPO).

As Milosevic sought to destroy the constitution of “socialist” Yugoslav, with its fine balance between the various nations, mobilising his supporters under reactionary Chetnik slogans, the Kosovan miners led a movement to defend the Yugoslav constitution in late 1988 and early 1989. In their gigantic march from the Trepca mines near Mitrovica to Pristina in November 1988, the miners chanted “Yugoslavia, Yugoslavia” and carried portraits of Tito and red flags. They were not calling for Kosovan independence. They warned that the violent crushing of the Kosovan people would lead to the bloody collapse of Yugoslavia. The Serbian leaders denounced the miners’ march as “counter-revolutionary”.

Three hated officials, who had no popular mandate, were put into the Kosova assembly by Milosevic. In February, a general strike erupted throughout Kosova. A thousand miners went on hunger strike underground for eight days, but were tricked into coming up with the pretence that their demands would be met. Prime Minister Markovic sent federal troops into Kosova, not to support the constitutional demands of the Kosovan working class, but to suppress them on behalf of Milosevic. A state of

emergency was declared, and 24 Albanians were killed in clashes with the occupation forces. Some 2000 Albanian workers were hauled before the courts, including former leaders of the assembly. The assembly was surrounded by tanks and helicopters and, under this direct threat, agreed to pass the constitutional changes and vote itself out of existence. The next day, Markovic congratulated Milosevic on this destruction of the federal order.

Kosovan working-class resistance continued throughout 1989 and 1990. In January and February 1990, a further 32 Kosovan demonstrators were killed. In July, Serbia abolished what was left of Kosova's autonomy as it adopted a new constitution, reducing Kosova (and Vojvodina) to the status of any other administrative district. Locked out of the Kosova assembly, the majority Albanian delegates voted on an act of self-determination. On September 7, Kosovan delegates met and declared the Republic of Kosova as a "democratic state of the Albanian people and of members of other nations and national minorities who are its citizens: Serbs, Muslims, Montenegrins, Croats, Turks, Romanians and others living in Kosova". In 1991, Kosovans held a referendum, in which 99% voted for independence. From 1992 onwards, the main struggle was led by Ibrahim Rugova and his Kosova Democratic League, which consisted essentially of the former branches of the Kosovan League of Communists.

After that, a state of apartheid existed in Kosova. Albanians were expelled from all jobs in public administration, all Albanian police were sacked, and all municipal and communal councils were suspended, making Kosova a colony, with a powerless population ruled by an administration made up entirely of people from the small Serbian minority. Only Cyrillic script was allowed in official dealings. Thousands of teachers, who continued teaching in Albanian, were sacked, and school syllabuses were Serbianised. Half a million school-age children were thus denied an education. The same happened with Pristina University, where all names were changed to Cyrillic script. Hundreds of Albanian doctors were driven out of hospitals. All Albanians in the public sector — which in a state-controlled economy means nearly everyone — were sacked. In the Trepca mines, Albanians had formed 70% of the 23,000 strong work force; all lost their jobs. Names of streets and other locations throughout Kosova were changed to names from Serbian nationalist mythology: Pristina's Marshall Tito Boulevard was changed to Vidovdan Boulevard, after a Serbian Orthodox festival. Thousands of Albanians were hauled before the courts on the most trivial of charges; complete lawlessness characterised the relations between the Serbian authorities and the mass of the population.

Milosevic stooges were put in charge of the fictional "assembly" that was maintained as window dressing — the first major step in transforming federal

Yugoslavia into a unitary Serb-dominated state. Despite abolition of the provinces' autonomy, the new hand-picked "representatives" of Kosovo, Vojvodina and Montenegro maintained federal representation, meaning Milosevic now had four of the eight votes on the Federal Presidency and control of Yugoslavia.

However, the contradictions between the federal goal of Yugoslav unity and Greater Serb goals opened by 1990. The Serbian regime believed the federal government was too weak in pushing recentralisation, particularly against Slovenia, which was openly siding with Kosovo. Slovenia — party, government, citizens and working class — came out in solidarity with Kosovo in a huge mass movement in March 1989. What is often missed in commentary regarding the supposedly "pro-capitalist" Slovenia is that this was overwhelmingly a working-class movement, spearheaded by the strong solidarity of Slovenian workers for the striking Kosovan miners.

Economic warfare between the republics ensued, particularly after Markovic introduced the January 1990 IMF-World Bank package, which suspended transfer payments by Belgrade to the republics, redirecting it all to the foreign debt, advocated the closure of a further 889 enterprises with a work force of 525,000 and imposed a six-month wage freeze.

In December 1989 Serbia banned Slovenian imports, a measure which directly cut across the whole logic of opening the Yugoslav market. Indeed, this was one of the earliest steps indicating a drift from the goal of a more centralised Yugoslavia to Greater Serbia — the view had been growing that Serbia could perhaps do better without Slovenia's competition for domestic markets. This was followed by further measures from Serbia and counter-measures by Slovenia and Croatia. All three republics flouted federal restrictions on wages and budgets and ignored tax obligations to the federal government. This sharpening of inter-republican conflict undercut Markovic's reforms.

## Privatisation

Markovic's program proposed privatisation of the bulk of Yugoslav industry, by giving shares in firms directly to the workers and managers, thereby bypassing the republican bureaucracies. While the republican leaders had already carried out considerable privatisation, now the regimes of Milosevic, Kucan (who remained Slovene president despite the victory of his right opponents in parliament) and new Croatian leader Tudjman aimed to "re-nationalise" the enterprises as a step towards privatisation — that is, remove them from any control by their "self-managing" workers first, to ensure the ruling circles control over how the spoils of privatisation were to be distributed. Markovic claimed such "restatisation" was a step back compared to self-management, claiming "social ownership is a step forward" because by

distributing shares to the already “self-managing” workers, “ownership democracy” would be created — i.e., the bureaucrats’ families and friends would not be able to grab all the spoils.

The fact that the federal government advocated a more rapid privatisation than all the republics has been lost on some analysts, who see pro-Western governments in Croatia and Slovenia pushing more “free market” policies than the federal or Serbian governments. For example, Sean Gervasi argues, “The new separatist governments in the north wished to join Europe and the parade towards capitalism. The federal government and some of the republics, including Serbia, balked.”<sup>36</sup> In reality, the divide was the radical federal government versus the “balking”, for very non-socialist reasons, of the three major republics.

While the federal government pushed privatisation, Slovenia suspended its application, and then did not pass its own legislation until November 1992, the last country in Eastern Europe to do so. Even by 1995, only 200 of the 1500 enterprises scheduled for privatisation had passed into private hands. Croatia also suspended the federal scheme and introduced its own in April 1991, but its main results were with small enterprises, with a deadline of June 1992 for applications, relatively few of which were approved. Those not meeting the deadline were transferred from “social” to state ownership, i.e., “nationalised” and removed from workers’ control, as were the bulk of large “social” enterprises. As late as 1996, the World Bank reported, “The largest enterprises, accounting for some two-thirds of social assets and employment, remain in state hands, and their privatisation has virtually stalled”.<sup>37</sup> Bosnia did not even pass its own legislation and slowed down the application of the federal law.

Serbia was considered in some circles to be more advanced than Croatia — “There have been rather more economic innovations in Serbia ... There has been some sort of effort to privatise industries in Serbia, the like of which there has not been in Croatia.”<sup>38</sup> Serbia introduced its own privatisation legislation in August 1991, which, like the Croatian, was aimed mainly at small enterprises while taking large enterprises from social to state hands, to become “joint-stock companies” in preparation for privatisation. Employees were not automatically given shares, but could buy them at a 20% discount. The number of private firms in Serbia doubled in 1991 to 42,697, about 50% of all firms. In Belgrade, the number rose from 754 in 1989 to 21,182 by 1991. Further, “foreign capital has also made a contribution to the process of structural transformation of the Serbian economy ... In 1991 there were 370 private businesses fully owned by foreigners.”<sup>39</sup> In both Serbia and Croatia, the maintenance of considerable assets in “state” hands was a cover for illegal privatisation as members and relatives of the ruling parties, often owning private companies while “managing”

state ones, looted the former to build the latter, or came to own the latter when they were turned over to workers and managers as “shareholders”.

Hence there is no justification for assertions that Western policy favoured the northern republics for reasons of economic policy.

### Three paths

Three paths were now offered. Firstly, Markovic and the FEC offered a recentralised Yugoslavia and a federal economic program. Secondly, Milosevic and the Serb regime also offered recentralisation, and had already strengthened Serb domination of the central apparatus. If the process could not continue, the aim was a Greater Serbia carved out of as much of Yugoslavia as possible. Montenegro, Vojvodina and Kosovo had already fallen; according to Serb nationalists, the new state would include Macedonia, most of Bosnia and a large part of Croatia. All Serbs, wherever they lived, would live in one state. Thirdly, Croatia and Slovenia advocated formally turning Yugoslavia into a confederation of sovereign states with a weak central link. Essentially, Yugoslavia was already a confederation, but weakening the central link would make the federal government and the JNA more officially irrelevant. In December 1991, Slovenia held a referendum in which 89% voted to declare independence in six months if no progress was made on transforming Yugoslavia into a confederation.

In the growing rift between all-Yugoslav and Serb nationalist goals, all the Western powers officially supported the federal government. However, this support only highlighted the unreality of preserving Yugoslav unity: Markovic had no support among the ruling elites in the three dominant republics. With Serbian control of the federal apparatus, emphasising Yugoslav unity could only work in favour of Milosevic and Serb domination, even if Western leaders spoke against this. Further, Markovic was given little money by his Western backers to alleviate the suffering caused by shock therapy, unlike the billions given to Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary; the West lacked confidence that Markovic could subdue the republics to carry the reform through properly. According to US ambassador Warren Zimmerman, “The key reason was that those countries had strong central governments; Yugoslavia did not. The fragmentation of power among the republics left the prime minister with little influence ... Yugoslavia didn’t look like a good bet.”<sup>40</sup>

Did this imply some tolerance for the military solution proposed by Milosevic? Western moves suggest that keeping Yugoslavia together superseded other issues. If the Serbian regime, with control over the federal state, was the only instrument available to effect this aim, the West would at least implicitly support it.

The JNA had drawn precisely these conclusions from Markovic’s weakness — though

a “Yugoslavist” institution, it was moving to the Milosevic camp. Both confederation and democratisation were anathema to the JNA leadership, whose privileges depended on a united, centralised Yugoslavia. The growing alliance with Milosevic by late 1990 reflected a pragmatic view of who had real power to crush the rebel republics.

The “Pinochet model” — a repressive regime which has the power to drive through unpopular market “reforms” — was long the preferred model of the World Bank and the US. Repression in Kosova was difficult for the West to avoid, but even here, it tried. When it was taken up, the issue was limited to “human rights”, avoiding the abolition of Kosova’s autonomy, reflecting the background support to centralisation.

Even those concerned about Kosova were motivated by anxiety about the effects that resistance by Kosova’s Albanians might have on Yugoslav unity. According to the US Congressional Research Service, the alienation of Kosova’s Albanians might cause damage to the all-important “territorial integrity and stability of Yugoslavia” (which the US “has a strong interest in”), if the Albanians “increase the pressure for a change in the political and territorial *status quo* in Yugoslavia, either by forceful or peaceful means”.<sup>41</sup>

## West rejects confederation

While a looser confederation was the only serious alternative to the military option for maintaining Yugoslavia, it was explicitly ruled out by the US and the EC, because it was the opposite of the centralisation demanded by the IMF. The State Department cabled its diplomats in European capitals in April 1990 to convey to European leaders the US commitment to Yugoslav unity. It “warned that the elections [in Croatia and Slovenia] might bring to power those advocating confederation or even the dissolution of Yugoslavia”.<sup>42</sup> The EC similarly precluded confederation, as late as May 1991 declaring its “attachment to certain principles such as adherence to the existing institutional framework and respect for territorial integrity”.<sup>43</sup>

Tudjman’s visit to the White House in September 1990, to gain US support for the Croat-Slovene confederation plan and urging some pressure on Serbia/JNA to avoid a military intervention, was a complete failure. According to Slaven Letica, then Tudjman’s national security adviser, a meeting was offered with Eagleburger, which the delegation turned down because of his “material interests in Yugoslavia, namely Serbia”. General Scowcroft, after listening for 45 minutes to their views on confederation, “repeated coldly that his administration supported the unity of Yugoslavia at all cost. On the request to put pressure on Belgrade not to use force and weapons, Scowcroft answered that they supported the government of Ante Markovic and the unity of Yugoslavia.” Kissinger “did not show the slightest positive emotion

or support for our ideas. He too concluded that American policy would be and should be support for democracy, free markets, federalism and unity.”<sup>44</sup>

From 1990 to the outbreak of war in mid-1991, the US and EC released a deluge of statements stressing support for Yugoslav unity, despite what it meant in practice. At the Vienna preparatory meeting for the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe summit in Paris in 1990, the US delegation was “the only one tendering firm support and concrete aid to the Yugoslav delegation when it tabled a motion to include in the Paris Charter a broader conception of European security”. This motion got up with US help, despite “stubborn opposition” from “Germany in particular”. The motion, by committing the CSCE to cooperate “against any activities infringing upon the independence, sovereign equality and territorial integrity of the participating countries”, including by “outside pressure, coercion or subversion”,<sup>45</sup> outlawed the independence of Croatia or Slovenia. On the massive human rights violations in Kosovo, the worst in Europe, “Yugoslavia’s record had gotten off lightly at Vienna”, with a little help from the US.<sup>46</sup>

The Council for Cooperation between the EC and Yugoslavia in December 1990 declared support for the progress “in the direction of a free market economy” and the “preservation of the unity and territorial integrity of the country”, such conditions leading to “Yugoslavia’s closer integration within a European framework”.<sup>47</sup> The EC and US also advocated that elections based on “one person, one vote” be held “at a federal level”, which was backed by Milosevic and opposed by Slovenia because, with the numerical dominance of Serbs, the federal government would no longer be federal. The State Department issued a public statement again affirming support to the “territorial integrity” of Yugoslavia, declaring it “shall not encourage or reward secession” and that any “dismantling of Yugoslavia is likely to aggravate rather than solve ethnic tensions”.<sup>48</sup>

In May 1991, the EC committed itself to provide \$4.5 billion in aid, conditional on Yugoslavia remaining united. The IMF clearly put the strengthening of federal powers as a condition for new money. A week earlier, the EC had declared that maintenance of Yugoslav unity was a prerequisite for Yugoslav membership — on the very day after the Croatian referendum in which 94% of voters favoured independence.

Some in the West were more open about support for a military solution. London’s *Financial Times*, which normally registers British Foreign Office opinion, claimed, “The [Yugoslav] army now believes the imposition of a state of emergency is one of the few options available ... [its] role in this agenda should be clear. It should immediately disarm all paramilitary groups ... Once order has been restored, it should withdraw to the barracks ...”<sup>49</sup>

On June 21, US Secretary of State James Baker visited Belgrade and insisted on Yugoslavia's "territorial integrity and unity", calling unilateral secession of Croatia or Slovenia "illegal and illegitimate", "never" to be recognised by the US. On June 23, the EC unanimously voted not to recognise Croatia and Slovenia, and "to refuse all high level contacts" if they seceded. The next day, it signed an agreement with Yugoslavia to lend it more than 700 million ECUs until 1995. NATO's supreme commander, John Galvin, told *Politika* that NATO would not intervene in any Yugoslav war.

Even the JNA's attack on Slovenia on June 25 did not end the chorus. In Britain's House of Commons, Mark Lennox-Boyd, the under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, declared, "... the Yugoslav federal army might have, under the constitution, a role in restoring order if there were widespread civil unrest". When one MP claimed that the right emphasis was to call for a reformed Yugoslavia rather than "just blandly supporting the present attempts at imposing unity", Lennox-Boyd replied, "We and our Western partners have a clear preference for the continuation of a single Yugoslav political entity — those words are carefully chosen".<sup>50</sup> In similar vein, the US ambassador to Yugoslavia believed that "it wasn't accurate to talk about a JNA 'invasion', since the JNA was in its own country".<sup>51</sup>

In general, Western leaders supported the JNA's actions in 1990 in disarming what it called "republican armies", i.e., the constitutional Territorial Defence Forces. "The JNA's concerns were not imaginary", according to Zimmerman. "Yugoslavia was still one country, with one constitutionally approved army. Federal law was on the JNA's side. Moreover, the growing republican armies gave every indication of being hostile."<sup>52</sup> Evidence also exists that Britain and France were not averse to a military coup. This Western preference for one unifying military force, and suspicion of the militia structures, were to prove disastrous for the republics under JNA attack.

### Did Germany 'break up' Yugoslavia?

Western policy thus insisted on "Yugoslav unity" long after the central government had become dominated by the Serb party. Massive majorities in the two republics had voted for secession; self-determination, including secession, was guaranteed in the Yugoslav constitution. The constitution had been violated for several years by Serbia, particularly through the abolition of the provinces' autonomy, and it was now violating the territorial integrity of Croatia and Bosnia, using armed Serb nationalist proxies to take military control of ethnically mixed regions.

The primary cause of this policy was the West's preference for a strong central regime that could squeeze the debt out of the working class; extensive Western business links with the Yugoslav government and military were an additional major

factor.

However, in much left commentary, there emerges another imperialist bloc, opposed to the pro-Yugoslav US-Britain-France bloc, which wanted to break up Yugoslavia. “The forces eager to see the break-up of Yugoslavia through independence for Slovenia and Croatia were the Vatican, Austria, Hungary, Germany and, more ambivalently, Italy”, according to Peter Gowan in *New Left Review*. Unfortunately, Gowan’s source for this section is John Zametica, a paid publicity agent for Radovan Karadzic’s Bosnian Serb gangster “state” and a key link between Karadzic and the British ruling class. The supposed role of the Vatican says little about imperialist policy, except perhaps for feudal “imperialism”. The attitude of Hungary’s bourgeois nationalist Antall regime, which had its eyes on Vojvodina, says even less; Hungary is not an imperialist power. As for Italy, there was no “ambivalence”, it was among the most trenchant of the pro-Yugoslav camp, Foreign Minister Gianni di Micheli telling Croatia and Slovenia they should be under no illusions that entry to the EC would be eased by secession — only a “united” Yugoslavia could hope to join.

The charge that a newly united Germany “encouraged” Croatia’s secession has led to the most enduring left fantasies. However, Germany was no exception to the Western rule before the outbreak of war. German economic links to Croatia and Slovenia are often raised in connection with Germany’s allegedly “hasty” recognition of the two republics, if the word can usefully describe recognition in December 1991, a year after the Slovene referendum, six months after the Croatian referendum and after six months of particularly brutal attack by the JNA.

Woodward devotes many pages to German blame, without revealing a single fact *prior to the outbreak of war in July*. Subsequent to that, the German position was largely due to domestic considerations, but she sees German “economic interests” coinciding with this. The expansion of German economic interests throughout eastern Europe is unquestionable, but it is precisely because *Germany was the dominant economic power throughout Yugoslavia*, not just in the northern republics, that the last thing it wanted was a break-up of this market, economic turmoil and new state barriers. These links, however, no doubt made Germany’s rulers more sympathetic once the JNA’s attack began and any real hope of maintaining unity died, after which Germany pushed strongly for Slovene and Croatian recognition.

On the other hand, fear of German expansion in London, Paris and Washington was another major influence on their policy. German reunification had created a new European power with the potential to become both a stronger economic rival of the US on a world scale and of British and French influence within Europe. Fears were expressed about the new “void” in eastern Europe exciting traditional nationalist

appetites in Germany. Such views were particularly prevalent among the US foreign policy elite, expressed in publications like *The National Interest*. Burton Yale Pines, senior vice president of the Heritage Foundation, wrote: “America fought both world wars and the Cold War to prevent Europe from being dominated by one nation. It correctly was feared that such a nation eventually would turn Europe’s vast resources against America ... It is uncertain how Germany would respond to chaos in the Soviet Union and the Balkans ... the United States must remain involved in European security arrangements.”<sup>53</sup>

France was concerned that an independent Croatia and Slovenia would reinforce a German zone in central Europe, and about the new giant steering its own course as it looked east, rather than continuing with the European Union. It was felt that Germany needed to be “anchored” in the EC, and in particular under a new and more independent European security apparatus, which would be militarily dominated by France. The US also felt the need for Germany to be “anchored”, but under the US umbrella, NATO. The US strongly opposed the French push for independent European security; German economic power within such an independent Europe was considered the greatest danger. The prospect of the long French-German “special relationship” being transformed into an alliance of more independent French military power and new German economic power rang alarm bells in the US.

These fears were expressed by James Chace, former editor of the US foreign policy establishment’s *Foreign Affairs*: “... [there] arises the even more frightening spectre, to Americans at least, of a Fortress Europe dominated by great industrial groups that could freeze all competitors out of the market ... the risks to the United States would be huge ... The likelihood that Europeans will eventually form a pan-European security system of their own will further reduce US power and influence.”<sup>54</sup>

The Serbian regime took heart from this imperialist division and also pushed the line that Germany was breaking up Yugoslavia. An article in Belgrade’s *International Weekly*, for example, thought this was related to “the old dream of a renewal of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy”,<sup>55</sup> and pointed out, “... it is not only the Yugoslavs whose mistrust has been awakened by the latent German actions”, referring to Britain, France, Italy and others which continued to back Yugoslav “territorial integrity”.

While the country which economically dominated the Yugoslav market is blamed for wanting to break it up, there is more likelihood that the continued push for “unity” and centralisation was designed by Germany’s rivals partly in order to consolidate a “Greater Serbia” bloc over most of southern and eastern Yugoslavia and thereby thwart the German economic advance.

## Western opposition to self-determination

The other reason usually cited for Western insistence on Yugoslav unity was the interest in keeping the USSR together, due to the dangers of the spread of nuclear weapons following a collapse. A collapse of the Yugoslav federation was considered a bad example. The case is then made that, once the USSR collapsed in August 1991, it was no longer important to keep Yugoslavia together, and hence the EC's offer in December to accept applications for recognition from Yugoslavia's republics. This, however, was merely a coincidence of timing (and not a very close one). By November, any chance of keeping Yugoslavia together had been thwarted by the unexpectedly brutal attack by the JNA and by Croatia's ability to organise resistance. The gradual acceptance by some European powers (but not the US) of conditional recognition was more an acceptance of reality.

Opposition to both Soviet and Yugoslav fragmentation was part of a common Western policy of opposition to fragmentation in general. There was a simple logic among west European powers; many also encompass minority nations. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland threatened the "unity" of the UK; the Corsicans and Basques in France, the Basques in Spain, the ethnic Macedonians in Greece pushed in similar directions; Italy was confronted with a growing right-wing movement among north Italians to separate from the south; Belgium could be split in two.

Western countries have opposed the break-up of virtually every repressively held-together state in the world. In many of these cases, the dictator has been propped up for years with massive military aid to serve the role of "regional policeman", a ruler able to counter instability, uprisings, threats by revolutionary movements. The existence of oppressed minorities ties the dictator closer to dependence on Western arms. Turkey with the Kurds and Indonesia with East Timor are obvious cases.

Even in cases where a secessionist movement has been temporarily supported, with the aim of destabilising an unfriendly regime, once the regime has been overthrown, full unity has been restored and support for the minority dropped.

A crucial lesson to Milosevic occurred a few months before he launched his war. Following the US massacre of Iraq in early 1991, a mass uprising broke out against Hussein, centred in the Shiite south and the Kurdish north. The US made it clear that it supported the "territorial integrity" of Iraq, opposed "chaos", and supported maintaining "stability." While its forces were already on the spot, it allowed Iraqi helicopters to carry out massive aerial bombardment (the "no-fly zones" were set up after Hussein finished the job).■

# 3. Croatian War 1991

## —Transition Stage

The Slovenian war ended within a fortnight. The EC rushed in with diplomatic proposals to end the conflict, centred on the Brioni Commission, which called on both the JNA and the Slovenian TDF to return to barracks, and for a three-month moratorium on the independence declarations. This was an opportunity for Europe to show a united front and overcome the recent Gulf War divisions. This also reflected the growing view that the emerging Maastricht Europe must increasingly look after its own security concerns, rather than being totally reliant on the US.

Yet in reality the rapid end to the Slovenian war had little to do with the EC. Rather, it was due to two related facts. Firstly, the Slovenian TDF (unlike in Croatia) had managed to avoid being totally disarmed by the JNA the previous year; it put up a strong fight with 35,000 troops. The fact that an armed popular resistance was easily able to defeat an invading regular army was not lost on the later Croatian and Bosnian defenders.

Secondly, while Markovic and the “Yugoslavist” wing of the JNA were serious about preserving Yugoslavia’s borders, Milosevic and the Serb nationalist wing of the JNA were not. Milosevic and Kucan had already made a deal in January to allow Slovenian independence in exchange for freedom for the former to pursue “Greater Serbia”; Slovenia had no Serb minority, had no strategic interest for distant Serbia, and its expulsion was seen as an aid to constructing a more solid Greater Serb front within the rest of Yugoslavia. Milosevic told Zimmerman and British ambassador Peter Hall: “Serbia will present no obstacles to Slovenia’s departure. Markovic behaved stupidly with his half-way measures towards Slovenia. He should have put 100,000 troops into Slovenia or he should have put no troops there. *We would have favoured no troops.*”<sup>1</sup>

Conflict was escalating in Croatia, where the JNA sided with Serb nationalist irregulars led by the right-wing Serb Democratic Party (SDS) and various Chetnik militias from Serbia, who spread terror among the Croat population in mixed areas to force them out and create ethnically pure Serb areas to be annexed. By August, the JNA was massively bombing Croatian cities and turning over around a third of Croatia to the SDS militias.

Marxists respect the unambiguous popular will for secession expressed in the Croatian and Slovenian referendums, *regardless of our own opinion on whether it's a good idea*, and regardless of the leaders. To oppose it can only mean support for the “right” of the dominant nation to maintain others within their boundaries by force.

However, there were also a number of problems. The first was the nature of the regime of Franjo Tudjman and his Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ). Like Milosevic, Tudjman was a former Stalinist bureaucrat turned nationalist. He was routinely referred to by Milosevic (and many Western leftists) as a revival of the Ustashe, despite having been a Croatian partisan who fought the Ustashe.

Nevertheless, it was widely felt by Croats that their secondary position in Yugoslavia resulted from being unfairly singled out as disproportionately responsible for crimes by Nazi collaborationists. For decades, any expression of Croatian yearning for greater autonomy within Yugoslavia was routinely denounced as “Ustashe” activity. A certain nationalist symbolism returned under Tudjman — as under Milosevic. The most controversial was the revival of the traditional Croatian chequerboard flag. This flag had been used for hundreds of years in Croatia. However, many Serbs saw it as a “Ustashe” flag, because the Ustashe had also used the chequerboard as *part* of their flag. While not correct, the revival of narrow Croatian nationalism under a sea of chequerboard flags understandably reminded many Serbs of the horrendous brutality of the Ustashe, and this certainly helped kindle the Serbian nationalist movement, especially in backward areas like Krajina.

This was not helped by Tudjman's rapid changing of street names along nationalist lines, his rather direct methods of reversing minority Serb domination of the police and media and his bigoted statements. Clearly, after Milosevic and the Serbian nationalist movement, Tudjman's regime also bears a major, if secondary, responsibility for the descent of Yugoslavia into chauvinist bloodbath. The regime was right-wing, nationalist and anticommunist. However, it was up to Croatian workers to change it, not up to the equally reactionary regime of Milosevic to stop Croats having the government they voted for.

## Serb minority

The other complex issue was the 11% Serb minority, some 600,000 people. It was often alleged that the Serbs were transformed from officially a “nation” to a “minority” under Tudjman, and allegations were made about the denial of their right to use Cyrillic script. However, Croatia's constitution of December 1991 proclaims Croatia to be the “national state of the Croatian nation and the state of members of *other nations* and minorities who are its citizens: Serbs, Moslems, Slovenes, Czechs, Slovaks,

Italians, Hungarians, Jews and others...” Given the distinction in Yugoslavia between “nations” and “minorities”, the way this is worded would suggest that the first three (Serbs, Slovenes and Moslems) were the other *nations*, consistent with Yugoslav tradition, while the other four were the *minorities*. Article 12 states that the Croatian language and Latin script shall be in official use in individual local units (i.e. where another group forms a majority), while another language and the Cyrillic or some other script may also be introduced into *official* use. Article 15 states: “Members of all *nations* and minorities shall be guaranteed freedom to express their nationality, freedom to use their language and script, and *cultural autonomy*”.<sup>2</sup> Tudjman also offered the post of vice president to Jovan Raskovic, leader of the nationalist Serb Democratic Party (SDS).

However, what if these were just fine words, masking oppression of the Serb minority? In the abstract, the Serb minority should have the same right to self-determination as the Croat majority, meaning the right to declare autonomy, independence or union with Serbia, if they wished. Many leftists believed that, if they grudgingly accepted Croatia’s right to self-determination, the Serb minority must have the same right, and they interpreted the Serbo-Croatian war of 1991 through this prism.

Reality was not that simple. Regardless of Tudjman’s tactless and chauvinistic symbolic changes, his regime did not oppress the Serb minority. To suggest it did is to ignore who had armed power in Yugoslavia. Straight after the Croatian and Slovenian elections, the JNA had seized the arms of the territorial defence forces of the two republics, yet another violation of the federal constitution. By contrast, the JNA was funnelling arms to the right-wing Serb Democratic Party, which was engaged in an armed campaign for autonomy of the Krajina, a part of western Croatia with a Serb majority of 68.9%. The only attempt by Tudjman to bring the province under control was thwarted by the JNA. Hence far from a peaceful campaign for autonomy being suppressed by Tudjman’s forces, in fact the JNA was using its massive armed superiority to rip out a part of Croatia.

As a majority in the Krajina, the Serbs had a right to autonomy. They held their referendum on autonomy in August 1990, before Croatia had put proposals for confederation of Yugoslavia (later, the Krajina leaders declared independence in March 1991, before Croatia declared independence in June). The referendum (simply “Vote to Decide Serb Autonomy: For/Against”) had no clear territorial dimension. Until then, Raskovic had spoken merely of “cultural autonomy”, which was then granted in December’s constitution.

There were many problems with a territorial autonomy, apart from the 30% Croat and non-Serb minority in the region and the difficulty of drawing boundaries.

Even some Serb majority areas in Krajina, such as Korenica, opposed territorial autonomy, and these areas were brought under SDS control by force. Later Croat majority areas were also conquered and the Croat population expelled, such as the town of Kijevo, which was bombed until it was completely wiped off the map. Krajina, the only part of Croatia with a Serb majority, was separated from Serbia by entire republics and hence could not in practice unite with Serbia. It was situated right on Croatia's main road and rail links between Zagreb and the Dalmatian coast; if it was cut right out, it would be devastating for Croatia's economy. Likewise, those Serbs who had to be forced to obey the SDS recognised that their economic situation depended on maintaining good relations with Croatia as a whole. Further, only 26% of Croatia's Serbs lived in the region. Krajina itself had no economic value; for Milosevic the Krajina Serbs were cannon fodder with a strategic position from which to surround his real intended victim: Bosnia.

Those who view Tudjman's "refusal to grant autonomy to the Serbs" as a major contribution to the 1991 war miss the point that autonomy in Krajina was an established fact. There was no need to go to war over it. On the very day of the declaration of independence, July 25, a charter of the rights of Serbs and minorities was (belatedly) proclaimed. Even at the outset of the war, on August 1, 1991, Tudjman declared his openness to more than just "cultural autonomy." In much left commentary, the Krajina Serbs become equivalent to Kosova Albanians; this not only misses the point of who really had the power to oppress, but also that Kosova was also an issue of the violation of the constitutional rights of an existing federal unit. In Krajina, by contrast, new and messy borders which did not exist would have had to be drawn.

A better comparison would be with the oppression of the Croat minority in Vojvodina, and of the Moslem minority in the Sanjak region of Serbia. The autonomy referendum held by the Sanjak Moslems in August 1991 was ignored by Serbian authorities and the rest of the world. Much of the Sanjak has since disappeared, thousands of Moslems fleeing to Bosnia from Chetnik terror. Similarly, in March 1992, Albanians in several regions of southern Serbia proper (not Kosova) held a referendum; it was also ignored by the world. Only massive Serb military superiority allowed them to make their case more of an issue than could the minorities within Serbia.

## **Massive attack on Croatian cities**

Krajina had little to do with the war of 1991, which was a war of conquest for Greater Serbia. The massively armed JNA flattened virtually defenceless Croatian cities far from Krajina. Dubrovnik, a historic and beautiful south Dalmatian city with a 2% Serb population, was reduced to ruins, apparently in an effort to force an outlet to the sea

for Greater Serbia (although it already had very significant ports in Montenegro). Vukovar, a historic multi-ethnic (Croat majority) city on the Danube, was completely levelled by a three-month siege, during which large numbers of local Serbs fought in the Croatian army against the barbaric attack; thousands of Croats and Serbs alike perished in the slaughter. When Croatian forces capitulated in November, Chetnik forces completed the ethnic cleansing, including pulling 200 hospital patients out and shooting them.

Vukovar was a key centre of multi-ethnic working-class resistance during the 1988 strike wave. In that year, Serb and Croat workers descended on Belgrade together to fight the IMF packages; in 1991, the city was destroyed by the JNA. There is a widely held view among Croats that Tudjman did little to defend Vukovar.

The war did not result from any attempt by Croatia to subdue Krajina; on the contrary, Krajina itself expanded into Croat majority areas. Furthermore, two other regions were conquered for the Serb republic: Western Slavonia, where Serbs were a majority in only one of 11 districts, and Eastern Slavonia, which includes Vukovar, which had a population of 647,853, of which only 14.4% were Serbs,<sup>3</sup> but where the main theatre of war was located, because this region borders Serbia and has oil deposits; Chetnik forces joined the JNA in large numbers here, ethnically cleansing more than half a million Croats. Serbs made up a total of only about 25% of the population of the three regions as a whole.

## Western divisions

Such a major attack on European cities and defenceless populations showed up both the EC's inadequacy and its internal divisions. Intervention against aggression could not be countenanced because all Western powers still regarded Yugoslavia as a united state; hence it was a "civil war" rather than a war of aggression. While some states, led by Germany, began a push for recognition, this was strongly opposed by the US, Britain and France. Even the idea of sending in a peacekeeping force from the Western European Union (the military wing of the EC) was opposed by Britain, apparently still attached to its illusions in the JNA. This stance also reflected Britain's "special relationship" with the US, which remained strongly opposed to a European security system separate from NATO. While Germany and France were united in wanting a peacekeeping force, they had opposite aims: Germany was pushing for recognition of Croatia, while France viewed intervention as a means to preserve Yugoslav unity.<sup>4</sup>

The most decisive move came in September: UN Security Council Resolution 713 imposed an arms embargo on Yugoslavia. This move, strongly pushed by the US, France and Britain, was called for by Yugoslavia itself, encouraged into the move by British

Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd in a visit to Belgrade shortly before.<sup>5</sup> The JNA was massively armed, so an arms embargo would affect only the ability of Croatia and other republics to resist attack. Serbia is also a major weapons producer. Just before the embargo was imposed, Yugoslavia had bought an extra 14,000 tons of weaponry from the Middle East. These facts were well known at the time. By favouring one side, the major powers were completely consistent with their increasingly unreal insistence on recognising only a united Yugoslavia. Again, this was consistent with Western policy of maintaining only one military force across the region.

Nevertheless, in the course of the Croatian war there was a gradual shift from this hardline Western position to the realisation that, if Yugoslavia was going to remain some kind of entity, it would need to be restructured into a looser confederation—the war itself made continuation of the old order impossible. The EC set up the Conference for Yugoslavia, chaired by Britain’s Lord Carrington, in October. It proposed a loose confederation, based on the borders of existing federal units, with each such unit granting autonomy to areas where ethnic minorities formed a majority, and guarantees of minority rights in other areas.

Croatia’s acceptance of the plan meant that Milosevic’s alleged concern for the Serb minority in Croatia should have been satisfied. Slovenia, Bosnia, Macedonia and even Serbia’s ally Montenegro also accepted; yet Serbia rejected it. Serbia refused the same autonomy to the Kosova Albanians as it was demanding for the Croatian Serbs, despite the fact that, as 90% of the population was in far more ethnically homogeneous areas, and suffering real repression, the Kosovars had a much stronger case.

For the Europeans it was a last desperate chance of preserving some kind of Yugoslavia; for Milosevic, “unity of Yugoslavia” was a slogan covering quite different aims. The problem with the Carrington Plan was not its contents, but its timing; these were precisely the proposals being put forward by Croatia and Slovenia since 1990, rejected by the US, the EC and the IMF. Putting energy into such proposals then might have staved off conflict; now, the aim of Greater Serbia had advanced considerably in both theory and practice. Serbia and the JNA had the upper hand militarily, so why should they compromise?

The collapse of the plan and the war’s continuation led finally to possible recognition of independence. The Badinter Commission was set up to assess applications for recognition by former Yugoslav republics, based on criteria such as recognition of minority rights. While it has often been stated that Germany railroaded the EC into “premature” recognition, or even that recognition meant the EC was “dismantling” Yugoslavia, in fact a grudging and belated acceptance of reality is a more realistic explanation. By December a cease-fire was in place; EC recognition of Croatia and

Slovenia finally took place on January 15, after the war had definitively ended. Germany can be accused of breaking ranks with the EC only by recognising the republics three weeks ahead of schedule (on December 23).

## Milosevic saved by US

It may even be argued that impending recognition helped end the war, because it was more difficult for Serbia/Yugoslavia to maintain the attack on a state with international recognition—Germany’s argument all along. More likely, the question of recognition had little effect on Serbia’s war drive, because it expected no action from the West in any case. The main factors were the increasing organisation of the Croatian forces, their ability to capture weaponry and massive opposition to the war inside Serbia, reflected in mass demonstrations and large-scale desertion. For example, in December 1991, the Serbian Ministry of Defence reported, “Even those (Serbian) draftees who were thoroughly disciplined had abandoned their positions. There was a danger that Serbia would have to defend itself in Zemun [a suburb of Belgrade] ...”<sup>6</sup> Whole brigades deserted from Serbia and Montenegro, complaining “We are wondering what we are doing here and what we are defending”.<sup>7</sup> Even of the Croatian Serbs that Milosevic was “defending”, only 23,000 of the 127,000 of draft age had responded to the call-up, while tens of thousands fled to Serbia to escape fighting for anyone. Serbia’s defence minister, General Negovanovic, complained, “I cannot protect the Serbs of Croatia from genocide if they don’t want to defend themselves”.<sup>8</sup>

Croatia turned back the assault by besieging JNA garrisons and capturing weapons. According to Croat General Tus, Croatian forces captured 230 tanks and 400 artillery pieces from garrisons that surrendered. Such self-defence infuriated US-UN leader Cyrus Vance, who told Zimmerman he was “appalled by this shabby treatment of professional soldiers”, referring to the JNA, which had killed 10,000 people in six months. Zimmerman chimed in that “the JNA remained a proud institution that the Croats were trying to humiliate”.<sup>9</sup>

The US saved Milosevic with the Vance Plan. While Vance was chief UN negotiator, as a former US defence secretary with connections to the US arms industry, he was seen as indirectly acting for the US. Sending UN troops into the conquered regions froze the lines. In this “temporary” situation, the SDS was given control of these previously ethnically mixed regions (nearly one third of Croatia), with a “well-armed civilian Serb militia”.<sup>10</sup> Croat refugees were unable to return; in fact, they continued to be expelled. The plan also allowed the JNA to withdraw its heavy weaponry into Bosnia, and freed its hands in Bosnia, the UN guarding its back.

Not surprisingly, Yugoslav General Kadijevic was “singing Vance’s praises”,

contrasting “the road of Germany with its early recognition policy” which “leads to bloodshed” to “Vance’s road” which “leads to peace”.<sup>11</sup>

Croatia emerged with some 40% of its roads, bridges, railways and ports destroyed, its biggest refinery and only oil pipeline out of action and the agricultural plains of Slavonia devastated. Ten thousand people had been killed and some 700,000 made refugees—one-fifth of the population.

The plan allowed Western leaders with strong pro-“Yugoslav” views, who went along with recognition in the interests of EC unity, to recognise a truncated Croatia. The dominant view in the British parliament was that the UN forces would have to stay in Croatia “for many years” if not “permanently”; this view was put to them by Milosevic when he first requested a UN force, arguing this would “freeze the political status of those enclaves”. This call to freeze the effects of ethnic cleansing was relayed in a positive manner by the UK Foreign Affairs Committee.<sup>12</sup>

The Vance Plan reflected an even stronger commitment by the US to the “unity of Yugoslavia”. Zimmerman criticised the Carrington plan because it “treated Yugoslavia as no longer existing” and because “Markovic was ignored,”<sup>13</sup> the latter now a powerless figurehead. Absolute power was in the hands of the Milosevic-controlled rump Presidency and the JNA. Intentionally or otherwise, to be declaring support for Markovic in October 1991 was a cover for support to Milosevic and the generals. The US strongly opposed EC recognition and continued to insist that it “recognises only one government in the territory of Yugoslavia”, though Markovic himself had quit in November.

When the EC exempted the five republics (other than Serbia) from its limited economic measures (suspension of certain special privileges), in order to punish the responsible regime, the US did the opposite, maintaining them against all republics. This did not amount to much, merely shifting Yugoslavia from its “general system of preferences” status to the most favoured nation tariff rate, the total US “punishment” for Vukovar and Dubrovnik. ■

## 4. West Prepares the Ground for Assault on Bosnia

Bosnia was the most multi-ethnic republic in Yugoslavia. The 1991 census recorded 43% Moslems, 31% Serbs and 17% Croats; the remainder considered themselves simply “Yugoslavs” or “Bosnians”, as did a large proportion of those superficially assigned to the above “ethnic” categories, in particular in the cities, where some 30% of the population were of mixed parentage. There thus existed a Bosnian nation.

The rise of Serb and Croat nationalism produced political parties based on such views—the Bosnian wing of Tudjman’s HDZ, and the Bosnian wing of the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) established by Croatian Serbs, sponsored by Milosevic. The Moslems set up their own ethnically based Party of Democratic Action (SDA), which, however, was secular and dedicated to the continuation of a united multi-ethnic Bosnia.

In the 1990 elections, these three parties gained a majority of votes (and a bigger majority of seats), which is often interpreted as Bosnians from the three ethnic groups voting for different visions of Bosnia’s future. However, 28% of those who voted (only about three quarters of the electorate voted) did not vote for any of the three ethnic parties, but for non-national and social democratic parties—including many Serbs and Croats. The discrepancy between the 28% vote for non-ethnic candidates and the lower number of seats (about 15%) was due to voting rules mixing simple proportionality and ethnic voting. Even the votes for the SDS and HDZ did not indicate support for ethnic partition, which these parties advocated only much later, let alone war to achieve it. These three parties immediately formed a coalition, indicating that the major division in the country at that time was between the ethnically based right and the non-ethnic left, which included the former Communist Party and Markovic’s Reform Party, not between the ethnic groups.

During the Croatian war, the SDS, with active encouragement and arming by the JNA, set up four “Serb autonomous zones” in regions with “relative” Serb majorities. Power was thus usurped from the legal governments, elected only the previous year. How “relative” this was is indicated by the only large city they controlled, Banja Luka,

which had a 51% Serb majority. In September 1991, the SDS called for “protection” from the JNA, which promptly responded with hundreds of vehicles and thousands of extra troops. Troops from Montenegro seized control of eastern Herzegovina. Alarmed at this open violation of the constitution, the Bosnian parliament in October 1991 declared Bosnia a “sovereign” state—which in any case it was under the Yugoslav constitution—to prevent Bosnians being used for the war in Croatia. The SDS deputies set up a “Serb National Assembly” in the JNA stronghold of Banja Luka, and declared their zones independent in January 1992.

By now there was no question of Milosevic’s aim of creating Greater Serbia. The vice-president of the Serbian Socialist Party, Mihailo Markovic, spelled this out at the party congress on October 9: “In the new Yugoslav state there will be at least three federal units: Serbia, Montenegro and a united Bosnian and Knin region ...”<sup>1</sup> All western leaders were well aware of the threats and preparations for war coming from Belgrade and the SDS, and the meetings between Milosevic and Tudjman and their Bosnian proxies since May 1991 to plan the partitioning of Bosnia. The CIA knew that the JNA was digging trenches around Sarajevo in December 1991, and earlier, Borislav Jovic, Milosevic’s deputy, had told Eagleburger, “There’s going to be a war in Bosnia”.<sup>2</sup> SDS leader Radovan Karadzic had made it clear in the Bosnian parliament that if the SDS did not get its way, the Moslems would “disappear from the face of the Earth”.

Such actions would have been impossible without the active intervention of the JNA. Nevertheless, the West’s major moves from late 1991 through to April 1992 represented blatant encouragement of Serb and Croat nationalist claims and led Bosnia to disaster.

## Vance plan

Firstly, the Vance Plan allowed the JNA to move all its heavy armaments out of Croatia back to “Yugoslavia,” which in practice meant Bosnia. The JNA took from Croatia 300 tanks, 280 artillery pieces, 210 aircraft, tens of thousands of tons of equipment and supplies. The US State Department had decided to give Bosnia to Milosevic, as part of its strategy for a “Yugoslav” bloc to thwart the German advance. The JNA’s weapons belonged to all Yugoslavs, not just Serbia; yet Western leaders were quite aware that the JNA had become a Serbian rump. Croatia demanded that the JNA’s arsenals be placed under international supervision, warning that what had been done to Vukovar and Dubrovnik would be repeated on Bosnian cities; this was ignored by Vance and others who made “ultimatums and demands” on Croatia that the JNA be allowed to withdraw its heavy weaponry to Bosnia.<sup>3</sup> This was done in the context of all the evidence of what Serbia was preparing for Bosnia—it was hardly due

to ignorance. The Vance Plan thus bears major responsibility for the Bosnian catastrophe.

Secondly, the arms embargo on Bosnia was maintained. If it had been lifted in January, as the Vance Plan was being implemented, the Bosnian armed forces would have gained time to prepare for the coming onslaught; for Serbia to launch a new attack in the midst of the peace process would have been difficult. Even worse, apparently, *under US guidance*, Turkey, in granting diplomatic recognition to Bosnia in February, *encouraged Bosnia not to prepare militarily*.<sup>4</sup> Amazingly, Bosnia's President Izetbegovic allowed the JNA to confiscate the weapons of the Bosnian TDF, in a naive show of good will.

Thirdly, Izetbegovic called three times for a UN peacekeeping force to be placed in Bosnia, to no avail. Even Bosnia's request for the UN forces then being deployed in Serb-occupied Croatia also to be deployed in parts of Bosnia was refused by Vance. Three approaches by France in late 1991 for a preventive peacekeeping force were overruled by Eagleburger and Scowcroft. Even Zimmerman called for such a force, but this was refused by Vance and the US government. Izetbegovic further proposed that the CSCE set up a retirement fund for JNA officers, to prevent those anxious about the future from joining Serb plunder; this was ignored.

Fourthly, on recognition, the EC betrayed its own Badinter Commission, which had recommended that Slovenia and Macedonia be recognised, but Croatia and Bosnia needed more time. Slovenia and Croatia were recognised, and Bosnia and Macedonia were not. Non-recognition of Bosnia occurred even though on minority rights, according to the Badinter Commission, Bosnia was considered to have no problems, whereas Croatia still needed improvements.

With regard to Croatia, the commission noted that Croatia had confirmed its acceptance of the provisions of the Carrington Plan relating to "special status" for minorities, and had incorporated them into the "Constitutional Law of Human Rights and Freedoms and Rights of National and Ethnic Communities or Minorities in the Republic of Croatia" passed by the Croatian parliament on December 4, 1991. However, the commission claimed that the law "does not fully incorporate all the provisions" of the Carrington Plan relating to "special status" and therefore called on Croatia to "supplement" this law.<sup>5</sup> Such reservations, which it did not have with regard to Bosnian minority policy, suggest a double standard in recognising Croatia but not Bosnia. Of course, Croatia was recognised only when it agreed to allow one-third of its territory to be occupied by the UN, where it acted to protect a Serb nationalist regime. Under the four-year UN occupation, the Serb authority continued to expel Croats under the UN's nose.

Nevertheless, the double standards do indeed suggest that the EC, like Milosevic,

had accepted the *fait accompli* of Slovenian and Croatian independence, but believed the rest would be better served remaining inside a Greater Serb bloc of “Yugoslavia”—the EC on December 17 gave the other states (Bosnia and Macedonia) only *six days* to get in their applications for recognition, with all the attendant documentation.

Bosnia was thus not given the same international legitimacy and right of self-defence, to be able to organise itself against impending aggression. Non-independence allowed the JNA to continue to prepare on Bosnian territory while the arms embargo still applied to “all” Yugoslavia, including Bosnia. Croatian independence left Bosnia inside an even more Serb-dominated rump but allowed Croatia to begin its own preparations for its role in the partition of Bosnia.

### Carrington-Cutileiro plan

Fifthly, the EC attempted to attach conditions to Bosnian independence which amounted to the ethnic partition of the country. Its first partition plan—the Carrington-Cutileiro Plan of March 1992—was pushed before war broke out and hence before ethnic cleansing had occurred. The plan envisaged the whole of Bosnia being partitioned into “three constituent (territorial) units”<sup>6</sup> based on ethnic principles. The ethnic map of Bosnia makes clear the impossibility of such a vision, the three peoples being thoroughly interspersed; it would result in large-scale population transfer, and the plan disenfranchised those of mixed ethnic background as well as those who considered themselves Bosnian first regardless of ethnicity—possibly the majority of the population. It was a direct encouragement to the Serb and Croat nationalists, who were then legitimised in their attempts to make this plan a reality by any means necessary. The SDS had been pushing virtually the same plan for some months. Izetbegovic and his SDA rejected it.

This plan contrasted sharply with EC suggestions for other parts of Yugoslavia. In contrast to ethnic constituent units, the October 1991 Carrington Plan for Yugoslavia had envisaged autonomy only for “areas in which persons belonging to a national or ethnic minority *form a majority*”,<sup>7</sup> and these areas would be demilitarised. In Bosnia’s case, vast areas would have fallen outside even the most minimal definition of “majority”. Furthermore, “autonomy” of certain areas within a *constituent* Bosnia was different from Bosnia being divided into “constituent units”. The West’s lack of interest in the oppression in Kosova is a further contrast; Western powers restricted the issue to “human rights,” not even demanding the restoration of constitutional autonomy. The oppression of Serbia’s Moslems in the Sanjak region, and of the Hungarians and Croats in Vojvodina (let alone the restoration of its autonomy), did not rate a mention.

A good example of this double or triple standard was the *EC Declaration on Bosnia*

*and Herzegovina* in May 1992. With regard to Bosnia, it stated that a “political solution can *only* be based on the principles established in the constitutional talks ...” i.e., the principle of “three (territorial) constituent units”; with regard to the Serb minority in Croatia, it called for an “agreement on special status for Krajina”; with regard to oppressed minorities in Serbia, it called for “respect for the rights of minorities and national or ethnic groups, including Kosovo and Vojvodina”, making no mention of either autonomy or special status, let alone constituent unit status, and no mention of the Moslem minority in Sanjak, suffering terror from the regime and its paramilitaries.

### Independence referendum

Bosnia’s independence referendum of March 1992, foisted on Bosnia by the EC, took place in the midst of gathering war and occupation of sections of Bosnia by the JNA. Of those eligible, 63.4% voted (99.7% in favour) and the rest abstained, which has generally been interpreted as the two-thirds who voted being “Moslems and Croats” and the one-third who abstained “Serbs”. In fact, the Serbs never had a chance to express their will freely.

Four sizeable regions were already under the control of “Serbian autonomous areas” run by the SDS and the JNA, who called a boycott and did their best to physically prevent the referendum from occurring. This included, according to the Helsinki Commission monitors, “local administration and election officials ... refus(ing) to cooperate”, “efforts to prohibit the referendum from being held”, refusal of permission by local authorities to use buildings, banning polling from entire districts, striking the names of all enrolled Serbs off voter registration lists, groups “taking to the streets on the eve of the referendum singing Serb nationalist songs and tearing down posters which supported the referendum”, the “circulation of inflammatory leaflets against the referendum” and “ads in newspapers ... calling Serbs who would participate ‘traitors’”. There were also roadblocks around entire SDS-controlled areas and several bombings.<sup>8</sup>

This means there is no way of knowing how the Serbs within these regions would have voted. Further, according to the Helsinki monitors, the intimidation and the physical impediments would have “discouraged many non-Serbs from going to polling stations to vote and in many instances made it more difficult for them to do so”; hence large numbers of Moslems and Croats in these zones also “abstained”. Since nearly everyone who did vote voted in favour, this includes the bulk of the Serbs in government-controlled areas—according to the Helsinki report, “many people had come (to vote) whom they personally knew to be Serbs or guessed were Serbs by their names.” Based on this official documentation, about a third of the people, mostly in areas controlled by the SDS, were obstructed from voting, while the other two-thirds,

consisting of Serbs, Croats, Moslems and mixed Bosnians, voted in favour of independence.

Interestingly, in a November 1991 survey of 900 students in the republic, 43% of Serb students expressed a positive attitude towards Bosnia's secession from the Yugoslav federation<sup>9</sup> (along with 55% of Moslems and 86% of Croats), indicating that Serb opinion, in the cities at least, was far more divided than the usual interpretations suggest.

EC and US recognition of Bosnia's independence in April 1992 is alleged to have "provoked" the massive Serb/JNA onslaught which began soon after. However, this was only the spark, given the year of JNA-SDS military partition on the ground and the open partition aims of Milosevic and Tudjman. Smaller scale aggression had begun before April 6. For example, at the end of March, Arkan's thugs had moved into Banja Luka and roamed the streets "with rocket propelled grenade launchers, AK-47s and Scorpion automatic pistols. In early April they moved into the Moslem town of Bijeljina in the north east, and within a few days the streets were strewn with bodies."<sup>10</sup>

Impending recognition of Croatia in January appeared to help end the Serb onslaught there. The problem was not that the West recognised Bosnia, but that it did so after having stacked up the military situation against it and leaving it with no means to defend itself.

The EC partition talks, while encouraging Serb and Croat partition plans, probably hoped to avoid a major destabilising war in its backyard; by giving those with the arms and the power what they asked for, the EC hoped that Bosnian "independence", of sorts, could be achieved peacefully, through Serb-Croat cooperation.

The US pushing of the Vance Plan perhaps had the same aim: by giving all of Bosnia to the JNA, it perhaps hoped it would not use its power in a genocidal way, despite all the evidence that it would. But in March 1992, the US made a dramatic turnaround. It suddenly began an "active push"<sup>11</sup> for Bosnian recognition by April, despite the fact that the EC was attempting to hold off recognition till it got agreement on its partition plan. Oddly enough, the US used the argument that recognition didn't provoke Serbian aggression, which had been going on for some time, the complete opposite of the argument it had used with regard to Croatia and Slovenia, and previously with regard to Bosnia. Further, the US apparently encouraged the Izetbegovic regime to reject the EC plan. From the most ardently pro-Serb position, the US had switched, within a few months, to the most ardent verbal defender of Bosnia, with a sudden appearance of anti-Serb statements and headlines in the US. This US push led to recognition in April. Yet once the Serbian attack began, the only US help to come Bosnia's way was loud rhetoric. It is difficult not to ask if the US not only wanted to wreck the EC plan, but also wanted a war. ■

## 5. Western Intervention in Bosnia: To Whose Benefit?

### Onset of the genocide

Bosnia came under attack from 100,000 JNA troops, along with thousands of irregulars from Serbia, many released from prisons, formed into racist, self-styled “Chetnik” militias. The JNA’s heavy weapons arsenal inherited from the Vance Plan was turned against all population centres resisting the onslaught: Sarajevo, Tuzla, Zenica, Mostar, Srebrenica, Zepa, Gorazde, Bihac. In May, the JNA withdrew about 20% of its forces, claiming the rest were Bosnian Serbs and so belonged there — something never checked. These 80,000 Serbian, Montenegrin and Bosnian Serb troops then changed their name to the Bosnian Serb Army (BSA), becoming the armed militia of the SDS.

The irregular Chetnik militias that fought alongside the BSA were usually even more barbaric, often going in for the kill after the BSA had finished “softening” a town with bombing. The major groups were the “Chetniks” of Vojislav Seselj, head of the ultra-right Serbian Radical Party, the coalition partner of Milosevic’s Socialist Party in the Serbian parliament in 1991-93; the “Tigers” of Zeljko Raznatovic, better known as “Arkan”, a criminal boss connected to the Serbian Interior Ministry and long wanted by Interpol for crimes throughout Europe; and the “White Eagles” of Dragoslav Bokan, connected to the ultra-right Party of National Renewal, led by Mirko Jovic.

These Chetnik forces were allied to the JNA but semi-independent of it. Their existence was part of the struggle within the ex-Yugoslav state between the remnants of the old Stalinist apparatus, like the JNA officialdom, and the nakedly reactionary forces which Milosevic’s capitalist regime had given birth to. In early 1992, Milosevic had retired hundreds of JNA officers. However, the Chetnik militias were set up by Milosevic through the arming by a small group of secret police of thousands of ex-convicts, who were then sent to loot and kill. “Pulling the strings ... was a small group of men from the state security department of the Serbian interior ministry, appointed by Milosevic and totally loyal to him.”<sup>1</sup>

Ideologically, these forces represented the furthest thing possible from nostalgic

Titoists in the JNA, who still paid lip service to “brotherhood and unity”. For Seselj, the solution to the Croatian problem was simple: cut the throat of every Croat. For Kosova: drive out all the Albanians, or infect them with HIV. Where Tito had identified with anti-colonial movements, Karadzic clearly stood at the opposite pole: “Bosnia has become like Algeria for the French in the 1950s. Life with the Moslems was very good prior to the appearance of fundamentalism. After that, peace is no longer possible.”<sup>2</sup> In 1994, Karadzic’s “Serb republic” annulled all decisions of the National Antifascist Council for the People’s Liberation of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ZAVNOBiH), the partisan assembly in World War II which gave birth to both Bosnia-Herzegovina and Communist Yugoslavia. By contrast, the Bosnian government continues to celebrate the anniversary of the first ZAVNOBiH session. In 1996, retreating Chetnik forces destroyed the memorial to partisan war dead and victims of fascism in Sarajevo.

Rapidly conquering 70% of Bosnia, the BSA/SDS set up a “state” called Republika Srpska (RS). The BSA and the Chetnik militia engaged in a policy of “ethnic cleansing”: murdering all non-Serbs or forcing them out of the areas they conquered. In the very first actions in Bijelina and Zvornik, towns in north-east Bosnia with a mixed Serb-Moslem population, many thousands of people were killed by forces loyal to Seselj and Arkan. According to a report by the mildly Chetnik Serbian Renewal Movement (SPO) of Vuk Draskovic, which was critical of such extremes, between 4500 and 7000 Moslems were murdered in Zvornik alone; they were “thrown in canyons and buried with bulldozers, the mosques were demolished, and the surviving Moslem population was robbed and then expelled”.<sup>3</sup>

Ethnic cleansing then proceeded throughout the country: herding non-Serbs onto cattle trucks to be taken to death camps, open killing sprees as the Chetniks entered towns, spreading terror and “encouraging” survivors to flee, or putting restrictions on every aspect of the Moslems’ lives, “hauntingly reminiscent” of Nazi restrictions on Jews, till they agreed to leave on Chetnik terms, usually a written surrender of all their property.<sup>4</sup>

Within a few months, 140,000 were estimated dead and more than a million driven from their homes. A glance at the prewar population figures of each municipality reveals that more than a million non-Serbs lived under RS control, virtually all of whom were expelled. In a large number of these municipalities, non-Serbs had been an absolute majority before the war — hence in no sense can we speak of “Serb areas” fighting for “national liberation.” By 1993, official refugee numbers reached 2.7 million, half the Bosnian population. Mass rape was used as a weapon—more than 30,000 women and girls suffered this fate, and 17 rape camps were clearly identified by terrified witnesses with remarkable consistency. The UN Security Council voted 15-0

to condemn the mass rape. These actions clearly violated the UN's Genocide Convention.

Genocidal intentions were further revealed by the wholesale destruction of Moslem religious and cultural buildings, historic libraries and museums. The Chetnik forces destroyed the National Library of Bosnia-Herzegovina, with "a million books, more than a hundred thousand manuscripts and rare books, and centuries of historical records" going up in flames.<sup>5</sup> At the Oriental Institute in Sarajevo, more than 5000 Islamic and Jewish manuscripts, from many parts of the Middle East, went up in flames. Much of the National Museum was destroyed. Between them, Serb and Croat nationalists dynamited up to 1400 mosques, including some many hundreds of years old. The "all three sides are guilty" school ought to meditate on the fact that a stroll down the main road in Sarajevo or Tuzla, before, during or after the war, would bring you to intact Orthodox and Catholic churches with crowds of Serb and Croat worshippers entering and leaving.

From mid-1992 onwards, the Croatian Defence Forces (HVO—the armed wing of the HDZ), emerged as allies of the BSA, loyal to the partition agreements they and their leaders had made. For the next two years, supplemented by regular Croatian troops, they also used massive terror and ethnic cleansing against the Moslems, seizing some 20% of Bosnia in the south and centre as a Bosnian Croat "state" called Herzeg-Bosna.

Chetnik forces put thousands of Moslems and Croats into concentration camps, where large numbers were starved, raped and murdered. Western leaders ignored the existence of these camps until journalist Roy Gutman thrust them into the international media in August 1992. A May 29 report by the International Society for Human Rights had already listed many camps with graphic details, and in July the Bosnian government issued a list of 105 such camps and of 9300 deaths in them. US intelligence had also been aware of the camps before this, and the US embassy in Belgrade had sent regular wires to the State Department, based on Red Cross and other information. The Red Cross had already visited 4000 people in 10 death camps from July 9 and had reported it all to the UN. Even after Gutman's revelations, the first reaction of US leaders was to deny their existence. Only when they became undeniable did Western leaders demand Red Cross examination of these camps; even then, they did not demand their closure.

In the US Congress on August 4, efforts to bring up the evidence amassed about the camps were met with the continual response by Thomas Niles, assistant secretary of state for European and Canadian affairs, that the US government "cannot confirm" such reports because "We do not have thus far substantiated information". When

asked, “Do you have confirmation that some killing and some torture has taken place?”, he replied, “No, I cannot confirm that”. “You cannot even confirm a single case?” “I cannot.”<sup>6</sup>

Every question throughout the session about what the US would do to ensure delivery of humanitarian relief was met with legalistic arguments about needing to get a consensus in the UN Security Council, even though the Security Council had already passed resolutions authorising the use of force. Asked about the arms embargo, Niles replied that delivery of food aid to Sarajevo was “the best guarantee that the Serbs will not succeed in conquering the city”.<sup>7</sup>

In September, Britain and the CSCE allowed everyone to let off steam at the London Conference. The conference named Serbia the aggressor, and resolved that the solution would have to be within Bosnia’s internationally recognised borders, but this still did not make Bosnia worthy of the right to self-defence. Milosevic and Karadzic were allowed to promise the camps would be closed and that heavy weapons would be removed from around the cities. Major was “confident” Karadzic would keep his word. Eagleburger talked tough, but when later interviewed about the conference, he came back to the same themes: there was a civil war going on, “all sides” were partly guilty, and the arms embargo could not be lifted because the Moslems “already have arms”—a blatant untruth.<sup>8</sup>

## Arms embargo on Bosnia

Thousands of Western troops were stationed in the country throughout the war. Field Marshall Sir Richard Vincent, Chairman of the North Atlantic Military Committee, proudly explained: “NATO integrated forces make the largest single contribution to the international effort in former Yugoslavia. Excluding forces serving directly under UN command, there are now over a hundred aircraft, more than a dozen highly capable ships and some 10,000 men and women from Alliance nations conducting NATO integrated maritime and air operations, in support of the United Nations efforts, 24 hours a day, seven days a week ... In addition, a further 15,000 personnel are contributed directly by Alliance nations to UNPROFOR operations.”<sup>9</sup>

But what were all these forces doing? The most effective aspect of Western intervention in the Bosnian war was the enforcement of the arms embargo. As the Bosnian government put it, the embargo was “an international intervention against our legitimate rights as a Member of the United Nations”.<sup>10</sup> Serbia had the massive arsenal of the JNA, while Bosnia had no arms. The Western embargo aimed to pressure Bosnia to accept its own partition as “reality”.

Nevertheless, the text of the UN resolution calls for a “general and complete

embargo on all deliveries of weapons and military equipment to Yugoslavia ...”<sup>11</sup> Nothing in the resolution states that it should apply to any state that became independent of Yugoslavia. Hence when Bosnia’s independence was recognised by the EC and the US in April 1992 and it was accepted into the UN as a sovereign state, no UN resolution imposed any arms embargo on it. The continuation of the embargo was hence a decision by the major Western powers. Given that Bosnia was immediately confronted by massive aggression from “Yugoslavia”, it was illogical to make such an interpretation if they had Bosnia’s interests in mind. Furthermore, it was illegal, violating Article 51 of the UN Charter, which says that nothing “shall impair the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence if an armed attack occurs against a Member of the United Nations”.

The embargo was *active intervention*. It involved the NATO navies stopping, inspecting and diverting ships on the Adriatic Sea—altogether, “approximately 74,000 ships had been challenged, nearly 6000 inspected at sea and over 1400 diverted and inspected in Italian ports”.<sup>12</sup> UN (mostly British and French) troops at Sarajevo and Tuzla airports did the same.

Examples of the enforcement include the interception by US officers, in September 1992, at Zagreb airport of an Iranian plane bound for Bosnia with 4000 automatic rifles, at the very time that the Chetnik-run concentration camps were coming to light; and the turning back by Western navies of a large shipment of Iranian arms to Bosnia in January 1993, when Bosnia faced the combined assault by Serb and Croat nationalist forces.

London’s Institute for European Defence and Strategic Studies showed that the Bosnian Serb army was only 80,000 strong, but with 400 tanks, 400 armoured vehicles (APCs), 50 combat aircraft, at least 1600 heavy artillery pieces, plus enormous potential backup from Serbia. The Bosnian Croat nationalists had some 40,000 troops, with 40 tanks, 25 APCs, four combat aircraft and 260 artillery pieces. The Bosnian army had at least 120,000 troops, but even by 1995 it had captured only 50 tanks, 30 APCs and no aircraft, with 450 artillery pieces—at the beginning it had virtually nothing.<sup>13</sup> The Bosnian government’s potential fighting force was much bigger, but the lack of weapons reduced the numbers that could be mobilised. It was estimated that in Sarajevo alone some 200,000 people of fighting age could be mobilised, but there were only about 3000 rifles.

Serbia and Croatia were in a far better position to defy the embargo. Aside from its Adriatic coastline, Croatia also has good overland routes to Slovenia, Austria and Hungary; Serbia kept up a weapons trade with Russia and the Ukraine via Danube ports and with Greece through overland routes. Serbia maintained an arms trade with

Israel as well. Bosnia, landlocked between two enemies, had no such opportunities.

The UN General Assembly voted to “exempt the Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina from the arms embargo ...” on December 18, 1992; the Western club running the Security Council simply ignored it. Motions were put to the Security Council by Islamic nations (e.g., May 24 and July 13, 1993), and other non-aligned countries, but were vetoed by the UK and France.

## Sanctions on Serbia

The balance to this military embargo against Bosnia was the imposition of UN economic sanctions against Serbia and Montenegro in May 1992. For the first five months, there was no mechanism to police these sanctions; then only the Adriatic Sea was patrolled. While this NATO patrol claimed to be enforcing both the sanctions and the arms embargo, it was well known that most imports to Serbia did not come via the Adriatic Sea but via the Danube River or overland. Greek and Italian oil companies continually sold Albania far more oil than it needed, and all the rest was sold across the Serbian and Montenegrin borders; in March 1995, Albania imported 9000 more barrels a day than it needed.<sup>14</sup> This reportedly supplied Belgrade with half its fuel needs; the other half was from oil wells in northern Serbia. Meanwhile, thousands of trucks crossed the Macedonian border into Serbia, largely from Greece.

Western powers aimed to use the embargo on Serbia as a form of pressure, so that it would in turn pressure the more extreme Bosnian Serb leaders to sign on to Western partition plans which granted them their ethnically cleansed Greater Serbia—though not as “great” as they wanted. Hence the tightening of the sanctions in April 1993, when Milosevic failed to get the Chetniks to sign on Vance-Owen, and the relaxing of them in June 1994, when Milosevic symbolically sealed the border to his former allies in Bosnia when they rejected the Contact Group Plan.

The effects of the sanctions were far more devastating on the ordinary Serb people than on the ruling clique. In fact, sanctions busting, black marketeering and flagrant stripping of “social” assets became the major forms of accumulation of wealth by the new ruling class gathered around the ruling parties. “An international study has indicated that the capital of large social firms has been transferred to hundreds of private accounts abroad, under the pretext that it was easier to do business that way because of sanctions ... Among the privileged few are also the former socialist managers who have become private entrepreneurs overnight ...”<sup>15</sup>

Thus the new plutocracy could afford to continue war for a few years before any desire to legitimise their wealth led them to compromise. The sanctions also had a devastating effect on the Serbian opposition, because they forced the closure of almost

the entire opposition media. For many months, until the Serbian elections in December 1992 which returned Milosevic, the US delayed approving an exemption to sanctions to allow a television transmitter for opposition television stations to balance Milosevic's stranglehold on the media.

Furthermore, the sanctions consolidated the regime, at least in the short term, as an economically battered population was even easier prey to nationalist propaganda that "the whole world" was against Serbia. According to an oppositionist, Nedeljko Vojvodic, from the Serbian Renewal Party, "I am no longer certain in the real intentions of those who imposed the sanctions ... they only prolonged the fall of the regime. They practically give an alibi for the consolidation of autocracy, for dictatorship."<sup>16</sup> This effect was admitted by British government researchers.<sup>17</sup>

It was through maintaining some kind of "civil society" in the main Serbian cities that the multi-ethnic forces in Bosnia would have been able to build alliances and pressure Milosevic from below. The peace movement had been massive at the outset of the war. Demonstrations, such as the 150,000 strong action on May 4, declared open solidarity with Sarajevo, making clear that this was not a "Serb" war. Large public shows of opposition declined following the imposition of sanctions. People took less part in political action and searched for personal solutions. Some 300,000 Serbs, largely young people and intellectuals, fled abroad to avoid the catastrophic situation, rather than stay and resist.

The combination of economic sanctions on innocent Serbian civilians with military sanctions on the Bosnian defenders was the worst possible mix.

## UN intervention

UN Security Council Resolution 761 authorised the UN to deliver aid to the besieged Bosnians. Sending in the troops under a "peacekeeping" (UN Chapter VI) rather than "peace enforcement" (UN Chapter VII) mandate, the UN had no mandate to protect Bosnian civilians, or even to properly protect itself. It relied on the cooperation of the Chetniks.

It is ironic that this "peacekeeping force" was sent in wartime, whereas when Bosnia requested a UN peacekeeping force in October 1991, when peace still reigned, it was rejected. UN Resolution 724 at that time stated, oddly, that "the conditions for establishing a peacekeeping operation in Yugoslavia still do not exist". It was true that they did not exist at the time in Croatia, where war was raging, but they did in Bosnia.

While humanitarian relief was welcome, for enormous numbers of Bosnians death from heavy weapons was also of immediate concern. Without the weapons to break the sieges, or at least to reconquer some essential supply lines, Bosnia would inevitably

remain dependent on this Western aid through the UN. Attacks continued on the airport and on deliveries of humanitarian aid, so the UN strengthened its mandate in Resolution 770, which invoked Chapter VII's "peace enforcement" provisions, calling on states to "take all measures necessary" to facilitate delivery of humanitarian aid. However, the Canadian, French and British leaders—those with the most troops in the UN force—continued to interpret the mission as if Resolution 770 had never been passed and they were still operating under the original peacekeeping mandate, requiring Chetnik consent to do anything and complete impartiality. British General Rose, for example, claimed that to use force against those blocking the passage of humanitarian convoys would be a "pure act of war".<sup>18</sup> Such views reflected a political interpretation rather than the limitations of the mandate. Attacking this "Chapter VI" interpretation of the Chapter VII mandate, Bosnia's foreign minister, Mohammed Sacribe, claimed, "The UN mission was reduced ... to nothing more than observers and truck-drivers".<sup>19</sup>

Dependency was then used as a form of pressure. Bosnian refusal to sign Western partition plans was met with threats of a pullout by the UN and hence starvation. Further, the safety of UN personnel became justification for continuing the arms embargo on Bosnia. The line went that if the arms embargo were lifted, the angered Serb nationalists would attack the UN forces.

The Bosnian government was willing to sacrifice the relief the UN supplied for its sovereign right to self-defence. On May 11, 1993, the government released a statement to the UN officially requesting that the United Nations withdraw "as expeditiously as possible, all UN personnel deployed on our territory for purposes of delivering humanitarian relief. We do so because concern over the safety of these personnel now constitutes a significant obstacle to the defence of this sovereign nation ... the UN presence has become an impediment to critical decisions by the international community ... It is our intention today, in requesting the withdrawal of relief personnel, to remove the final obstacle to the lifting of the arms embargo."<sup>20</sup> The Western powers dominating the Security Council took no notice of this demand. The Islamic states continually offered to send thousands of troops to the UN force to replace the British and French, but such offers were ignored by the Security Council.

## Threats of air strikes

In late 1992, Western powers declared Bosnia a "no-fly zone" in order to deter Chetnik forces from bombing population centres from the air. Because this resolution had no teeth, Serbian and Croatian planes continued to fly while NATO watched. By March 1993, there had been 495 unpunished violations; following new "tough" measures in April to "enforce" the ban, this number increased by another 200 by July. (In January

1993, when Iraq made some minor violations of the no-fly zone imposed there, there was immediately a joint US-British-French bombing attack.)

In any case, virtually all the Chetnik aggression was taking place on the ground. Eagleburger admitted it was “not taking place” in the air, yet still underlined the “importance” of this measure. The UK also admitted “the resolution has only limited military significance (*since there have been so few air raids*) ... [but] the main purpose ... is to put pressure on the Bosnian Serbs and indirectly on the Serbian leadership in Belgrade to sign and comply with the Vance-Owen plan”.<sup>21</sup>

Occasional visible threats to carry out air strikes are part of the reason it is often considered that the West intervened “against the Serbs”. Yet the threats never became reality in the first two years, and very rarely after that; whereas the main intervention against Bosnia, the arms embargo, was not so visible.

Furthermore, despite alleged “practical” difficulties raised in carrying out air strikes, because Chetnik artillery was supposedly hidden in inaccessible places or in population centres, evidence points to the fact that “95% of it could be destroyed in a single day of air strikes”, but the evidence was hidden by the CIA and the Pentagon at the outset of the war.<sup>22</sup> When Clinton took power in early 1993, the first threats of air strikes took place, but the main aim appeared to be to wreck the Vance-Owen partition plan of the EC and UN.

Sending ground troops outside of UNPROFOR was never an issue for those governments with troops in that mission, Britain, France and Canada in particular. The UN force represented their favoured form of intervention. Only the US, which resisted providing any troops to UNPROFOR, occasionally raised the question of sending ground troops to back a “more forceful” approach. In reality all sides in the US leadership were totally opposed to such intervention. However, the way in which the issue was brought up is revealing. Bosnia emphasised that it had never asked for foreign troops, because it had more than enough troops to defend itself but just no weapons. Yet US leaders engaged in ridiculous arguments about how many hundreds of thousands of troops would be necessary if intervention became necessary. By massively exaggerating the need, intervention of any kind could be knocked on the head. As Eagleburger put it, nothing existed between “doing nothing” and “massive US intervention”<sup>23</sup>

## Partition plans

Throughout this period, the main Western powers pushed a series of “peace plans” based on the ethnic partition of Bosnia. This was justified by the argument that partition was simply recognition of reality, designed to stop the fighting. However, the three peoples were so intermingled that reality made it impossible to create separate ethnic

cantons, and the 30% of the population of mixed ethnic background could not fit into such cantons. Further, the first plan, that of early 1992, was pushed before war broke out and hence before ethnic cleansing had separated anyone.

Even after war broke out, large areas still remained multi-ethnic. Assigning such areas to ethnic Serb, Croat or “Moslem” cantons or republics had the effect of validating Serb ethnic cleansing, encouraging Croat ethnic cleansing in areas assigned to Croat cantons, and undermining the multi-ethnic character of “Moslem” cantons. The setting up of “Moslem” cantons or republics when the Bosnian government continually emphasised its multi-ethnic character could only encourage those among the Moslems who did advocate a sectarian Moslem solution, in order to make way for the hundreds of thousands of Moslem refugees. There was no attempt to include multi-ethnic cantons in the plans, despite this being the main “reality on the ground”.

The London Conference had declared support for the territorial integrity of Bosnia, and declared Serbia the aggressor. Yet as soon as the “Geneva Peace Conference” was set up under EC and UN auspices straight afterwards, it announced that the peace plan for Bosnia would be based on negotiations among the “three warring factions”, placing the legal government on the same level as the aggressors. The multi-ethnic government was reduced to being the “Moslem faction”, while the SDS and the HDZ — political parties with particular programs — were declared to be the representatives of the “Serbs” and the “Croats”, something they were never elected as. Nearly every *official* reference to the conflict used these incorrect terms, so it was not just tabloid simplification.

Meanwhile, Western negotiators completely ignored non-nationalist political forces that tried in vain to be included in negotiations. When representatives of the anti-nationalist parties turned up in Geneva in August 1993 to demand representation at the partition conference, they were treated with contempt by Owen and Stoltenberg and refused participation, disenfranchising the 28% of the Bosnian population who had voted for them (more than had voted for the HDZ). If their votes are added to those of the SDA, then the great majority of Bosnians had voted against ethnic partition. “We thought the negotiators should come up with a fourth republic where all the *normal* and mixed-marriage people could live”, a woman of mixed Serb and Croat background told a reporter in Sarajevo, referring to the plan being discussed to partition Bosnia into three ethnic republics.<sup>24</sup>

## Vance-Owen plan

Following the failed Carrington-Cutilheiro Plan of March 1992, the next stage of partition was the plan produced in January 1993 by British EC negotiator Lord Owen and UN special envoy Cyrus Vance. This set up 10 ethnically based regions with a

loose central regime. They claimed officially that the regions would be mixed, though based on an ethnic majority. Despite their protestations, it remained an ethnic partition plan, dividing Bosnia into three Serb-majority, three Croat-majority and three Moslem-majority provinces. Since policing of each canton was assigned to the nationalist militias, there was no way expelled people would return. The three armies would withdraw to “their” assigned cantons. Moreover, the entire constitutional structure at all levels was ethnicised. For example, Banja Luka province would have to have a Serb governor, a Moslem vice-governor and an interim government composed of seven Serbs, two Moslems and a Croat. How alien from Bosnian society this was can be seen from the 1990 elections, when, for example, the Croatian HDZ won a majority of seats in Mostar, a city with a Moslem “relative” majority, and a Serb was chosen as municipal president.

Apart from Sarajevo, there was no recognition that considerable areas were first and foremost mixed Bosnian, rather than a sum of their ethnic parts. The Serbs and Croats in Tuzla, despite their absolute loyalty to that area’s multi-ethnic institutions, were now placed in a “Moslem” zone, despite the insistence of both the Tuzla local government and the Bosnian government that they were not “Moslem” governments.

In terms of territory, the plan was iniquitous: 43% of the land was given to the “Serb” areas, far in excess of their 31% of the population; the “Croat” areas were assigned 25% (compared to 18% of the population); these “Croat” areas included large regions with Moslem majorities in central Bosnia. The Moslem plurality of the population got only 27% of territory.

A vast array of plans was on the table at the time, involving some form of regional decentralisation, some based partly on ethnic considerations but fairer than Vance-Owen, others not based on ethnicity at all. Owen and Vance chose the one that was most attractive to the Serbian and Croatian leaderships — the one based *entirely* on ethnicity, the one *most* unfair to the Moslems and mixed populations, and the one that recognised some ethnic cleansing in deciding ethnic areas.

These rejected plans included a Bosnian government plan in December 1992 for 13 multi-ethnic regions which would dilute Serb and Croat majority areas in a way more consistent with the actual population percentages; one by Sarajevo intellectual, Zdravko Grebo, which included decentralised provinces and extensive rights for the national communities in Bosnia, but without such rights being “territorially based”;<sup>25</sup> and others completely rejecting ethnicity as the major factor, including one proposed by the Belgrade-based Ethnic Forum, for “natural regions” which would take into account economic and historical, as well as ethnic, factors.

Even if a “three ethnic region” model was to be chosen, if it was based on which

group in reality had a majority in Bosnia's 100 administrative districts, then "Moslems" would have got 43% and "Croats" only 13%,<sup>26</sup> and no-one would have got an important chunk. As well as such "three-region" models, there was also a "four-region" model on the table which at least included 25% of Bosnia as an ethnically mixed canton, based on regions with no ethnic majority.<sup>27</sup>

Accusations were made that the Croats were granted such large areas deliberately to encourage the HVO to break its official alliance with the Bosnian government and go on the offensive, as Owen and company were frustrated with the Bosnian government's "intransigence" (refusal to accept partition). Whether true or not, that is what happened. In April, the HVO stepped up its attack on Bosnia, demanding the Bosnian army withdraw from the Travnik region of central Bosnia, because, although it had a Moslem majority (and a strong multi-ethnic heritage), it had been assigned to the HVO under Vance-Owen. Indeed, a number of such areas in central Bosnia with a traditionally peaceful mix of Moslems and Croats had been assigned to the "Croatian" zones. Moreover, Novi Travnik, Busovaca and Vitez in this region contained important arms factories — all the more reason the Bosnian government, suffering under the arms embargo, would want to prevent them falling to its Croatian enemies, and perhaps one of the reasons they were not assigned to the "Moslem" zones.

Croatia's minister of defence, Gojko Susak, crossed the border and demanded that a Croatian flag be flown in Travnik. It was from this point on that the HVO's attack on Bosnia imitated the same genocidal practices that were carried out by the Chetniks. The HVO immediately accepted the Vance-Owen plan, while the Bosnian government and the SDS rejected it for opposite reasons.

When the new Clinton team came in, it proposed two concrete steps — lifting the arms embargo on Bosnia and selective air strikes on Chetnik heavy weaponry. This stepped-up verbal activity encouraged the Bosnian government to resist the plan — Owen blamed the US's promises to help Bosnia for the plan's collapse. For Owen, the plan was an ultimatum, he wanted Clinton to "make it clear to Izetbegovic that he's got no real alternative".<sup>28</sup> The US administration was completely ambivalent, one moment signalling support for the plan, then opposing it in the UN Security Council in February, a few weeks later promising Bosnia to lift the arms embargo if it signed the plan, pushing Bosnia to sign it on March 25, then still refusing to support it in the Security Council five days later! Bosnia finally accepted in March under intense EC pressure.

From the Chetniks' point of view, there was no reason to withdraw from the 70% of Bosnia they occupied by force to only 43%. They viewed the plan as inadequate because they wanted even more territory and even less central government, and because the major Serb regions were not connected with one another. Above all they

wanted the overwhelmingly Moslem and Croat Brcko-Posavina region north of Tuzla, which connects Serb-occupied regions of eastern and western Bosnia. Milosevic and Yugoslav President Cosic accepted the plan and took on the role of pressuring the SDS to sign. They could see that the relationship of armed forces, and indeed the economic connections of the Serb and Croat regions to their “motherlands”, meant that whatever the plan said on paper, Greater Serbia in time would be achieved through it in fact.

President Cosic, one of the intellectuals from the academy that had launched the entire Serb nationalist program in the 1980s, believed the plan fulfilled his ideological program. According to Cosic, “the entire project of provinces and Bosnia-Herzegovina is historically temporary ... In the places where a Serbian house and Serbian land exist and where the Serbian language is spoken, there will be a Serbian state.”<sup>29</sup>

In the week that the Bosnian Serb “parliament” was set to vote on the plan, the US stepped up aggressive bombing threats. On the very days the “parliament” was meeting, Secretary of State Warren Christopher was visiting European capitals trying (unsuccessfully) to sell “lift and strike”. Whether it was just stupid timing, whether the threats were designed to pressure them to sign, or whether the threats were aimed at producing a nationalistic reaction and hence the plan’s rejection, is difficult to say, but the result was the last. The Chetniks saw US rhetoric as an expression of enmity rather than a serious threat, because they understood the incongruity of the US threatening to bomb them if they did not sign when the US itself opposed the plan.

Publicly, US opposition to the plan was based on a pro-Bosnian assessment that the plan “legitimised the ill-gotten gains of ethnic cleansing”.<sup>30</sup> Yet when the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations drew up its plans for “lift and strike” and outlined its disagreements with the Vance-Owen plan, it pointed out that “with territorial delineations that deny the creation of a contiguous Greater Serbia, it [the plan] has underscored to the Milosevic regime that it can attain its aspirations *only* by force”.<sup>31</sup> This suggests the plan was a rejection of ethnic cleansing. For the committee, the suggestion was that the US should in any case use force and lift the arms embargo — but to enforce the Vance-Owen plan, or despite it? And once it became clear that the US would do nothing, did this translate into the need for a more viable partition plan that *did* allow the creation of a “contiguous Greater Serbia”, so that the Milosevic regime would have other options than force in order to “attain its aspirations”? Later developments, such as the final US partition plan in 1995, suggest this.

## US policy reversal

As the plan collapsed, the British government attempted to salvage it by bringing in Russia. Owen and Russian Foreign Minister Kozyrev made a joint statement calling

for the “progressive implementation” of the plan, beginning with the regions currently under Bosnian government or HVO control (only about 30% of Bosnia), to be enforced by a UN implementation force. Such a plan might have enforced a partition, with the Chetniks consolidating their military control over the rest of the country. Its advantage was that the war between the Bosnian government and the HVO might have been averted, so they could concentrate on dislodging the Chetniks — if they were not held back by the UN force, a likely prospect, and if the arms embargo were lifted, an unlikely prospect. The US scuttled the plan, putting the view that a new plan was needed which would *temporarily accept Serb gains* — precisely what it had been arguing against until that point.

Overnight, as the Bosnian Serb assembly rejected the plan, the US had performed a reversal no less dramatic than that of March 1992. The aim then had been to kill an EC partition plan; now that it had killed a more substantial one, it dropped all its supposedly principled reasons for opposing partition. The proposal to lift the arms embargo was gone; Christopher emphasised that there would be no “unilateral” US action, that the war was Europe’s problem, that it was about “ancient hatreds” and that “there are atrocities on all sides”.<sup>32</sup> To deflect attention from this policy failure, Christopher launched an attack on Germany, claiming Germany “bear(s) a particular responsibility” for the crisis due to its “early” recognition of Croatia and Slovenia.

The new line became “containment”, and Clinton sent troops to Macedonia to prevent the conflict spreading south. This was of far more interest to the US than Bosnia: a major upheaval in Kosova threatened to spread to Albania and Macedonia, bringing in Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey and destabilising NATO’s “southern flank”. Clinton repeated a warning made by Bush in December that the US would draw the line on ethnic cleansing in Kosova.

In Bosnia, “containment” meant the establishment of “safe havens” for Moslems in the ghettos they were crowded into. On May 22, the US, Russia, Britain, France and Spain announced the Joint Action Programme, completely devoid of action. Six “safe areas” were accepted, based on UN Resolution 824 — Sarajevo, Tuzla, Bihac, Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde. The Bosnian government condemned the plan as a betrayal, while Karadzic lauded the “more realistic approach” adopted by the West.<sup>33</sup>

These areas were to be made “safe” by the UN; yet in fact the UN troops had no mandate to defend the Bosnians in these areas, only themselves. As a UN official said, “We have no mandate, no ability and no intention of defending Srebrenica by the use of force”.<sup>34</sup> The sieges of all these areas continued relentlessly for another two and a half years. The effect was more on those being “protected,” the resolution states that the areas “and their surroundings should be treated as safe areas *by all the parties*

*concerned*". There was thus no distinction between aggressor and victim, and in practice it was over the victim that the UN forces had control, preventing any rearmed Bosnian force from retaking areas of their country.

The original "safe area" agreement for Srebrenica further included the clause that the Bosnian militia in the town be *disarmed*. Two years later, General Mladic led in his Chetnik army unimpeded, the UN fled, and 8000 defenceless Bosnian men and boys were kept behind and cold-bloodedly killed.

### Owen-Stoltenberg plan

The British Foreign Office now decided that if the SDS was not going to accept Vance-Owen, then they would offer it everything it wanted — a full republic within a loose Bosnian confederation of three republics. Milosevic and Tudjman, the Serb and Croat paramilitary leaders Karadzic and Boban, and Owen and the new UN envoy, Thorvald Stoltenberg, met and agreed on principles. Izetbegovic was not invited to any of these meetings. By late July, a Serb republic covering 52% of Bosnia and a Croat republic covering 18% was agreed on. A landlocked "Moslem" republic, which Bosnia would be reduced to, was offered 30%. Bosnia rejected it in principle, while bargaining for more territory.

The two imperialist UN negotiators showed astounding ignorance and prejudice. Owen claimed the Serbs owned 60% of Bosnia before the war, an assertion that is in stark conflict with Bosnia's land registers, which show that Serbs owned 23% of private land, and that around 50% of Bosnia was not owned by private individuals, but by the state. Stoltenberg, who had spent 12 years in Belgrade, claimed the population of Bosnia were "Serbs", some of whom later converted to Islam or Catholicism, and that the Moslems used all to be "rich landowners" backed by Saudi wealth, whereas Serbs were "poor peasants".<sup>35</sup>

The US changed policy many times in its attempt to thwart the EC's success, while in theory accepting the partition plan. Just as agreement had been reached on a ceasefire, and the Bosnian government was about to agree to the dismemberment of its country, the US announced on August 2 it was ready to unilaterally launch air strikes against the Chetniks. According to the *New York Times*, "Diplomats and officials [in Geneva] asserted that it was the Clinton administration's renewed talk of air strikes that emboldened Izetbegovic to withdraw from the talks". Its European NATO partners nullified this, drawing up a resolution threatening air strikes against both sides, which would be carried out only "under UN auspices, and then only within the framework of Security Council resolutions concerned with the safety of UN forces".<sup>36</sup>

Bullied again, Izetbegovic signed the plan on September 20, but the Bosnian

parliament rejected it. By now, the Bosnian armed forces were growing more confident, had developed greater organisational capacity and were gaining some arms from Iran and by capturing Chetnik weaponry. By late 1993, important defeats were being inflicted on the HVO in central Bosnia. Owen struck back by encouraging Moslem leader Fikret Abdic, who headed the western enclave Bihac, to declare his own “autonomous province” and accept ethnic partition. Owen had courted Abdic since December 1992. This aggressively anti-Bosnian British diplomacy was countered by a softer touch by the French and German foreign ministers, Klaus Kinkel and Alain Juppé, who put a new proposal that the “Moslem” republic be given one-third of Bosnia, and sanctions be eased on Serbia if it cooperated. As new partition maps were drawn up, a newly confident Bosnia flatly rejected them in late December. ■

## 6. Western Policy in Bosnia

### Official explanation for ‘non-intervention’

A plethora of reasons were given by Western leaders for not intervening to help the Bosnians, for maintaining the arms embargo and for plans to dismember the country. The first concerned the idea that it was a “civil war” between Serbs, Croats and Moslems (despite their official stance that recognised aggression against Bosnia). The view was based on the idea that the three ethnic groups were more or less homogeneous, each fighting for its own ethnic community. The view of British minister of state Douglas Hogg, that the conflict in Yugoslavia was “ethnic and historic”, though expressed during the Serbo-Croatian war, was arbitrarily transferred to Bosnia with its utterly different circumstances, in particular its much larger non-ethnic and non-nationalist constituency.

This was totally false. The facts cited above on Bosnia’s ethnic mix were reflected in its institutions. The three ethnic groups were equal in the constitution and had veto power over major decisions. While President Izetbegovic is a Moslem, his SDA was in a minority in the Presidency, which consisted of two Moslems, two Serbs, two Croats and a “Yugoslav”. When the SDS leaders quit the Presidency to launch their bloody attack on the country they were part of governing in April 1992, they were replaced by Serb leaders Nemanja Kecmanovic (from Markovic’s Reform Party) and Mirko Pejanovic (from the former Communist Party), whose parties had received a quarter of the votes of all Bosnians in the elections.

The Army of Bosnia-Herzegovina (ABH), which the Bosnians managed to pull together out of the disarmed Bosnian Territorial Defence Force and thousands of volunteers, was thoroughly mixed, and at an officer level, was led by one Moslem, one Serb (General Jovan Divjak, who led the heroic defence of Sarajevo) and one Croat (General Stjepan Siber). In the early years of the war, up to one-third of the Bosnian army consisted of Serbs. Sixty to 70 thousand Serbs remained to defend Sarajevo, and several times that number in government-controlled territories as a whole.

The situation in Bosnia’s second city, Tuzla, should have been a special case if the West had been interested in multi-ethnic Bosnia. War did not change its nature — in

the first year of war, 22% of all marriages were mixed. Even as late as 1995, when thousands of desperate and embittered Moslem refugees expelled from Srebrenica descended on Tuzla, some of them thought they should be allowed to take over the homes of local Serbs who had remained throughout the war. Tuzla Mayor Selim Beslagic told his fellow Moslems, “Anybody who wants the house of a Tuzla Serb must take mine first. Anyone who wants to kill a Serb must kill me first.”<sup>1</sup>

There was never any hint or possibility of Serbs being oppressed in an independent Bosnia, which even Milosevic at times admitted. Indeed, to the extent that any group was in a stronger social position within multi-ethnic Bosnia, it was the Serb minority, due to their position within Yugoslavia as a whole. For example, in the Moslem majority town of Zvornik, there were 465 Serb and only 65 Moslem teachers. The first important inter-communal clash there occurred because the local Moslems demanded the nomination of a minimum percentage of Moslem teachers to correct the imbalance, which was rejected by the Serb party.<sup>2</sup>

Observers as late as 1991 maintained that Bosnians remained relatively immune from the nationalism in other republics. For example, James Gow notes: “... the inhabitants ... seemed better able to get along with each other, despite the shadow cast by other republics ... Bosnian cultural characteristics seemed to imply, despite ethnic divisions ... a Bosnian identity ... [which] emerged in characteristics such as communication and cooperation.”<sup>3</sup> There was no war between Moslems, Serbs and Croats, but rather a war to defend a multi-ethnic society against two ethnic chauvinist armies that aimed to partition Bosnia between them.

For some, however, the question arises: who had the right to self-determination in Bosnia — the Bosnians as a whole or the separate Serb, Croat and Moslem components? Peter Gowan claims there was no Bosnian nation, so the component ethnic groups had the right to self-determination; he then accuses the US, through its verbal opposition to EU partition plans, of denying self-determination to the Serb and Croat minorities. By implication, the EU was on the right track with its partition plans. In reality, this “anti-imperialist” argument was a key argument which European (and later US) imperialist leaders used to justify partition.

While the fact of a Bosnian nation has been touched on above, if the principle is that areas with an ethnic majority have the right to *autonomy*, that had already been agreed to by the Bosnian government in October 1991. If it means they have a right to independence or to join their respective “fatherlands”, the reality is that there were very few areas of any size, let alone adjoining their “fatherland” borders, that could have exercised this right. Bosnian Serb and Croat self-determination was never an issue in the war. The war consisted of Serb and Croat nationalist militias, backed by

powerful outside states, driving Moslems (or other non-Serbs/non-Croats) out of the regions they aimed to conquer, regardless of who was in the majority.

For example, Serbia and the SDS/BSA wanted the whole of eastern Bosnia because it contained the Drina River valley and directly adjoined Serbia. Yet the overwhelming majority of the population throughout eastern Bosnia were Moslems. Apart from eastern Herzegovina (adjoining Montenegro), the only regions with substantial Serb majorities were far from the Serbian border — in the far west adjoining the Krajina region of Croatia, with its Serb majority. The north around Banja Luka was far more mixed — while the city itself is usually thought of as an obvious “Serb” capital, this is recognition of ethnic cleansing — its Serb majority was only 51%. It was a city of dozens of centuries-old mosques — all of which were dynamited. Further, to link ethnically cleansed east Bosnia with the conquests around Banja Luka in the north and west, the BSA had to carry out ethnic cleansing on an enormous scale to cut out a “corridor” across a region overwhelmingly populated by Moslems and Croats.

Western leaders, however, insisted that all three sides committed crimes. According to Carrington, “Everybody is to blame for what is happening in BH, and as soon as we get the cease-fire there will be no need to blame anybody”.<sup>4</sup> The former and current editors of *Foreign Affairs*, William Hyland (also former deputy national security adviser) and James Hogue, insisted the war was “a fight among gangsters” and “there are no good guys in this battle”.<sup>5</sup> This was justified by a completely false view that there was a “long experience of ethnic hatred” among these “three distinct tribal [sic] groupings”, according to General Barry McCafferty.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, according to a leading Republican, “These people have fought each other for not hundreds of years, but thousands of years for religious, ethnic and cultural differences”.<sup>7</sup> The groups had not even existed for “thousands of years”. The foreign policy elite’s *Foreign Policy* was also full of this “historic ethnic conflict” drivel.

President Clinton asserted: “The killing is a function of a political fight *between three factions* ... I don’t think the international community has the capacity to stop people within the nation from their civil war until they decide to do it.”<sup>8</sup> Christopher in 1993 publicly insisted all sides were equally guilty of committing atrocities, even though this contradicted the State Department’s own research. In fact, around 95% of reported incidents were committed by the Serb nationalist forces. The First Report in June 1992 reported 47 crimes committed by Serb nationalists, two by Croatian nationalists and one by Bosnian forces (that one, reported by the Belgrade newspaper *Vreme*, showing there was little discrimination in sources). Moreover, Chetnik atrocities were usually far larger, including hundreds or sometimes thousands of deaths in single incidents. US leaders continually made public statements at complete variance with their own

internal reports *in order to justify not intervening*. The essence of these reports corresponds closely to reports by Amnesty International, Helsinki Watch, the UN Commission of Experts and others.

This concern about “all sides” committing crimes excluded not only air strikes to help lift the sieges of Bosnian cities, but also lifting the arms embargo. Allowed to have arms, “Moslems” would do the same as the nationalists, and Bosnia would become a “level killing field” in the words of British Defence Secretary Douglas Hurd.

However, according to the UN Commission of Experts, “The manner in which [Serb and Croat nationalist] acts were carried out, the length of time over which they took place and the areas in which they occurred combined to reveal a purpose ... and a coordination from higher authorities”, whereas, atrocities carried out by individual Bosnian soldiers or unit commanders were not only “significantly less”, but “did not occur as part of a policy of ethnic cleansing”; there was no evidence of a systematic policy to forcibly expel non-Moslems.<sup>9</sup> The same points were made by James Bishop, deputy secretary of state for human rights and humanitarian affairs, who, rebuking his boss, Christopher, claimed the State Department reports revealed an “absence of support by the Bosnian government for the relatively few atrocities that have been carried out” by Bosnian forces.<sup>10</sup>

The irony of the claim is that the longer the war continued without Bosnians having the right to self-defence, the more it became a self-fulfilling prophecy. The one and a half million Moslems expelled from the 80-90% of their country naturally tipped the scales of ethnic balance dramatically inside the government-controlled areas, even if many Serbs and Croats remained. These embittered refugees, largely from the countryside, crowded into the Bosnian army in a desperate attempt to return to their homes.

In such a situation, it is hardly surprising that some “individual soldiers and unit commanders” did commit war crimes. Analysis of the best known cases of Moslems committing atrocities, however, suggests they were committed by forces acting outside government control, in desperate situations, and in each case, when it regained control, the government took action against the perpetrators.

The Bosnian government was the only party which agreed immediately to cooperate with the War Crimes Tribunal, and Bosnian Moslems were sent to trial for a camp they had run in Celibici in central Bosnia.

The inability of the Bosnian government to defend itself would have driven a certain percentage of Serbs and Croats to the heavily armed nationalists for “security”, especially since the latter carried out the same atrocities against Serbs who refused to collaborate with them, and threatened worse against the “traitor” Serbs and Croats

who remained behind. If the government had been able to arm itself and fight a defensive war, large numbers of Serbs and Croats, until then either scared or uncommitted, would have flocked to join the multi-ethnic Bosnian army, and the army would hardly have been in a position to turn them away.

Another popular claim was that Western forces could not fight in Bosnia because the “terrain” was difficult and so they would be bogged down for years. “We do deserts, not mountains”, according to US General Colin Powell. In addition, history was against it, because former occupiers, like the Nazis, had been beaten badly by the partisans. Apart from the fact that no-one had asked them to send in their armies, this also showed complete ignorance of who the “partisans” were in this case. Far from showing any ability to launch guerilla warfare, the BSA and Chetniks were launching cowardly bombing attacks on defenceless cities and villages with long-range heavy weaponry — the role of the Nazis, not the partisans. The only guerilla struggle that was building up in the partisan tradition was the re-emergence of a Bosnian fighting force from the disarmed TDF.

(This odd confusion of the Bosnian Serb chauvinist forces in the 1990s with the partisans of the 1940s is also common among “Yugo-nostalgic” sections of the left. Yet the bulk of former Bosnian partisans, of all ethnicities, strongly defended multi-ethnic Bosnia against Chetnik chauvinism, and saw this as self-evidently part of the same struggle they had previously engaged in.)<sup>11</sup>

The Western powers’ worries about a “partisan” resistance if they intervened was related to a more general overestimation of the abilities of the Serb forces. These suffered massive evasion and desertion; hundreds of thousands fled to Serbia proper or Europe to evade being drafted. In early 1993, there were 53,000 registered draft age Serbs from Bosnia living in Serbia, but there would have been far more unregistered, given that registration meant being coerced to go back and fight. In one case, Serb General Lisica confronted a unit which had deserted and tried to shame them by giving them the choice of taking off their uniforms or returning to the front. All but one shed their uniforms and walked home bare. In another case, 50 troops on the strategic Posavina Corridor mutinied and returned to headquarters. They rejected appeals about the need to defend “Serbian culture” from “frenzied Islam” and instead complained “You are holding us in the trenches like cattle” and “We have a family and land; allow us to return to work”.<sup>12</sup>

Studies throughout the war showed a fairly constant level of 70-80,000 BSA troops; since this is the same number the JNA is estimated to have left behind in 1992, it suggests a near impossibility in recruiting from the local Serb population. The extended Chetnik-held territory meant that their smaller and less motivated forces were

distributed over a 2000-kilometre front line. There was almost no possibility of sending in extra forces from Serbia proper, where hundreds of thousands evaded the draft or fled abroad — the call-up was obeyed by only 12% of draft-age Serbs in Belgrade!

This is in stark contrast with the high level of motivation of Bosnian forces, who were defending their lives and their homes. The massive difference in weaponry was thus all important; with relatively few casualties, the BSA could keep up their cowardly actions. Faced with a better armed opponent, they would have suffered even worse war weariness.

Other excuses for either not attacking Chetnik heavy artillery or maintaining the arms embargo included the claim that the Chetniks would retaliate against UN forces; as we have seen, the Bosnian government ordered them out for this reason, unless they could defend themselves, and Islamic nations offered more useful replacements. It was further claimed that if the embargo was lifted, the Chetniks would “go for broke” and step up attacks on “safe havens” which the UN was supposedly defending. Of course, the very fact that the UN had disarmed the people in the “safe havens” made this even more possible. Yet there was not a lot more the Chetniks could do, overstretched and unmotivated as they were. They had already been “going for broke” for years. While some more isolated spots like Srebrenica and Gorazde might have been at risk, the arming of the First and Second brigades in nearby Sarajevo and Tuzla could have allowed them to break through Chetnik-occupied (formerly Moslem) regions to save these enclaves. Not lifting the embargo did not stop Srebrenica and Zepa from being overrun and genocide from occurring.

Further excuses included the alleged difficulty of getting arms into Bosnia, because unless flown in, they would have to come through Croatian ports, and Croatia was an enemy. However, while Croatia began attacking Bosnia in late 1992, it still remained officially allied until early 1993; it continued its open attack until March 1994. Before or after these dates, Croatia could have been pressured to deliver arms supplies to Bosnia if the West had wanted; Croatia was far more vulnerable to Western pressure than Serbia, being partly under Serbian/UN occupation itself. Croatia always played a double game — at the times it was officially “allied” to Bosnia it continued to conspire with Serbia to partition Bosnia; but even at the times when it was openly “allied” to Serbia in this pursuit, it still wanted to liberate its own territory from Chetnik control. Croatia’s overwhelming concern was with the occupation of its own country — continual letters were sent to the UN on this matter. As the West gave Croatia no hope that it would ever get back its own territory, but then openly encouraged Croatian appetites on Bosnian territory through the partition plans, it is small wonder Croatia’s opportunistic Tudjman chose the path he did. In any case, many attempts *were* made to get arms

into Bosnia through sea ports or airports; it was the Western armies and navies that turned them back, not “practical difficulties”.

Yet another “concern” was that without a major sea port, Bosnia could be sent only light arms, whereas what it would need would be to match the Chetniks’ heavy weaponry. Of course, heavy weapons could have been shipped through Croat ports or flown in by the US if it had so desired. However, even light arms would have allowed the Bosnian forces to impose more casualties on the little-motivated invaders, increasing desertion; moreover, they would increase the ability of the Bosnians to capture heavy weaponry themselves, as normally occurs in guerilla warfare. For example, in September 1992, Bosnia had only two tanks and two armoured personnel carriers; by September 1993, using the trickle of light arms they had gathered through circumventing the embargo, “they had captured up to 40 tanks and 30 APC’s; in one spectacular operation north of Tuzla in May, an entire armoured column was seized”.<sup>13</sup> Without an arms embargo, they would have been able to seize much more.

Furthermore, military experts claimed that certain light arms would have been ideal against heavy weaponry. According to a senior strategist from the RAND corporation, “available all over the world, at dirt-cheap prices” are “anti-tank missiles, such as the Sagger, *which can be carried by one person*”. Also widely available are simple grenade launchers — if “light forces can get close enough to Serb artillery and mortars to disable them with grenade attacks”.<sup>14</sup>

Any excuse was used: if the Bosnians could buy their own arms, they would need training in their use! In fact, as the ethnic Serb commander of the Bosnian Army in Sarajevo, General Divjak, pointed out, this “is merely an excuse for inaction. Armed systems are everywhere much alike. What is more, the majority of our soldiers underwent high quality military training in the former JNA”<sup>15</sup> (and the TDF); the Chetniks did not seem to need special training for their use of all kinds of heavy weaponry.

Finally, it was asserted that Russia or others would step in and arm the Serb nationalists if the arms embargo on Bosnia were lifted. British leaders claimed “We could not abrogate the arms embargo in respect of the Muslims alone ... The supporters of the Serbs and Croats would pour additional weapons in.”<sup>16</sup> But it was difficult to see how even more heavy weaponry could be usefully employed; the rate of desertion was such that often only half their forces could be properly employed in operations. Further, both Serbia and Croatia, with their long borders, were receiving plenty of weapons despite the embargo anyway.

Western powers used allegedly “pro-Serb” Russia to cover their own actions. The image of “historic Serb-Russian friendship” was a myth. Russia recognised Croatia

and Slovenia *before the US did*; it was one of the first to recognise Macedonia despite its alleged “historic friends” in both Serbia and Greece; it voted for UN sanctions on Serbia, the Vance-Owen plan and other actions. The Russian concern was more with the US push to put NATO ahead of the UN or the CSCE, which would leave Moscow out of the picture. While Russia (like Britain and France) vetoed certain anti-Serb moves in the UN, it made it clear it would “never” enter into confrontation with the West over Bosnia if there was action.<sup>17</sup>

## Western interests

Thus, the progression of events, the nature of the interventions, the massive presence of Western troops anyway and the hollowness of the excuses, point to the dismantling of Bosnia via Serbo-Croatian partition being the Western aim rather than an unfortunate “reality”.

Why did the Western view jump from stubborn insistence on a centralised federal Yugoslav state, rejecting confederation along established republican borders, to insisting that the Bosnian state could not even come into existence unless it was partitioned into three ethnic cantons, in a loose confederal set-up, whose borders did not exist and would be impossible to draw? The only consistent aspect of this inconsistency was that both policies coincided with the interests of the Belgrade regime.

The British Foreign Affairs Committee, in putting together its major report on Yugoslavia, had extensive discussions with Serbian and Croatian leaders but none with Bosnian leaders. This was hardly an oversight — it consulted with those it had the best connections with and who mattered most; British and French business and diplomatic connections had long been to figures in the Serbian and ex-Yugoslav regimes. Meanwhile, growing German economic interests were stronger in Croatia. On a Yugoslav-wide scale, neither the Moslems nor Bosnia as a whole figured very prominently. The Serbian market and strategic position were often noted by Western leaders as central to the economy of the region. “The road to a peaceful and prosperous Balkans will have to go through Belgrade”, according to a former US national intelligence officer. “It will be the key power in the Balkans by virtue of its central location, *newly acquired size, Serb ethnic cohesion, cultural ethos, military capacity and strong-willed leadership.*”<sup>18</sup>

The Milosevic-Tudjman plan for the dismemberment of Bosnia therefore offered something for everyone in the EC. Partition could be a source of stability not just in ex-Yugoslavia, by satisfying the appetites of both regimes; it could also be a source of stability for the new Europe, to mend the Croatian war divisions. Such a compromise would help Yugo-nostalgics in the British leadership lose some of their terror of the

“German drive” for “lebensraum”.<sup>19</sup>

War and instability were not good for business — a good reason for it to end as soon as possible, which would mean on Belgrade’s terms. “US interests require an end to the fighting. *The war is draining the effort at reform in the Balkans and Eastern Europe.*”<sup>20</sup> “Reform” here means capitalist economic penetration. Allowing Bosnia the right to self-defence would only have made the war drag on. Multinationals were waiting in the wings, far more with Belgrade than with Sarajevo. General Dynamics, for example, only put its multibillion-dollar Super Galeb deal with the JNA on hold until the war ended. After war broke out, the US sent the Serb-American millionaire Milan Panic over to become Yugoslav prime minister in agreement with Milosevic, attempting to steer an “inside” solution and maintain traditional business connections for when peace arrived. Until the war ended, traditional business ties would be disrupted by the sanctions imposed on Serbia.

### Avoiding ‘small states’

The IMF’s desired central authority to squeeze out the debt no longer existed; it needed to squeeze the debt out of the individual republics. The previous logic of maintaining Yugoslavia could now translate into unity and strong central authorities in each of the new republics, including Bosnia, or into a strong authority over as much of the region as possible via those with the “stability” of military power, Belgrade and Zagreb, requiring a partition of Bosnia. The official position was for the former, but the partition plans and the military disarmament of Bosnia in the face of the JNA were in harmony with the latter.

The West’s needs to keep as much of the area as possible under one or two roofs coincided with the plans of Milosevic. Hence a modified version of the previous IMF policy, essentially due to the same fears about the “economic viability” of the republics, seems a major factor in Western policy. Britain’s Foreign Affairs Committee commented, “The domestic market even of Serbia, the biggest of the Yugoslav republics, is far too small to support any autarchic economic development”.<sup>21</sup> Not to mention Bosnia, Macedonia or Kosova! Independence of the weaker republics was not even considered — the three possible future states mentioned were usually Slovenia, “rump” Croatia and the rest of “Yugoslavia”.

Further, “an inability to produce and market commodities in demand in Western markets in sufficient volume *to service debt*” was deemed a major problem in Eastern Europe.<sup>22</sup> It was believed that a “tight trading bloc” between the new republics was necessary. Otherwise, they would attempt to increase trade individually with western Europe, and try to join the EC. However, the EC had no intention of pouring subsidies

into potential small competitors to help them get into the EC.

Susan Woodward's discussions with the IMF had earlier revealed its fear of the prospects of the smaller republics paying off their debts. International creditors "insisted the country should be held together because only with the export earning capacity of Slovenia and Croatia were the other four republics able to get reasonable credit terms ... and without those two republics, banks had little prospect of having their outstanding loans to the other four republics paid".<sup>23</sup>

Foreign Secretary Douglas Hurd expressed the same anxiety about a "series of small states quarrelling and all depending ... on the west for economic support ...".<sup>24</sup> Failure to maintain the maximum economic unity in the ex-Yugoslav area would result in "an absolute disaster area from the economic point of view".<sup>25</sup>

Further, the Western preference for one dominating military force in the region now coincided with determination "to avoid a build-up of weapons and armies in the region", as the "availability of weapons of all kinds is a frightening new aspect of international politics in the area".<sup>26</sup> Western leaders preferred weapons in the hands of "stable" repressive regimes: Turkey, Indonesia, Israel. Hence the standard refrain that the arms embargo could not be lifted because there were too many weapons in the region, regardless of the fact that they were mostly in Belgrade's hands.

### **The 'key to stability' versus the ultra-right**

The problem was that encouragement of Milosevic led to a far greater land grab than planned, and genocidal actions far exceeding what was expected, creating massive instability. The enormous difference in the military balance made a stable partition difficult. The EC plans usually awarded 40-50% of Bosnia as a Serb canton/republic. While this was far in excess of what they would be "entitled" to, and hence a victory for Greater Serbia, on the ground the BSA/Chetniks had conquered 70%. The remaining 30% was far too little to offer Croatia something to achieve the required new balance and also to allow a little living space for the Moslems so that they were not squeezed into a "Gaza" situation, with mass refugee outflows and Palestinian-type radicalisation. So the Western powers had a tactical disagreement with Belgrade within an in-principle agreement.

Because Milosevic had created monsters who went beyond his own ambitions, he was seen by Western leaders as the one to bring them back into line. This could not occur if Milosevic came out of it with nothing — what was required was a certain victory for Greater Serbia, but less than that advocated by the ultra-right forces. The main such forces were Karadzic's SDS, the leading Serb force in Bosnia, and Vojislav Seselj's Serbian Radical Party (SRS) within Serbia. Between 1991 and 1993, the SRS was

part of the ruling coalition in Serbia alongside Milosevic's "Socialists".

From the time of Milosevic's acceptance of the Vance-Owen Plan in early 1993, he became the key to stability. On the Vance-Owen, Owen-Stoltenberg, Contact Group and Dayton partition plans, the Milosevic regime was in full agreement with the West; the "Serbs" the West had a conflict with were the radical right forces, who headed the BSA, who demanded an unrealistically large Serb share in partition. An open split occurred within the Serbian nationalist camp after Vance-Owen. In 1993, Milosevic threw Seselj's SRS out of the ruling coalition; later in the year Seselj was jailed. The Serbian media began depicting the Karadzic forces as a corrupt bunch of drunkards, gamblers and womanisers, and even "war criminals". The Western goal therefore became to bolster Milosevic against the ultra-right, which excluded military support for Bosnia, whose military victories might have brought down the Milosevic government.

The experiment with Panic did not pay off, and it was decided to stick with Milosevic. The US refused to allow a television transmitter to bypass sanctions to allow the Serb opposition a voice before the December 1992 elections. Just four days before the elections, Eagleburger suddenly lashed out and declared Milosevic a war criminal. This worked well for Milosevic, who used it to provoke a nationalistic reaction to "Americans" like Panic. Milosevic won the election (though with Panic getting 35% of the vote, and with half the electorate abstaining, it was no large mandate). Many analysts claimed both the sanctions and Eagleburger's outburst helped Milosevic. Eagleburger said when asked: "I'm sure it helped ... I think he would have won anyway, but yes, I think I gave him some more votes."<sup>27</sup>

Lord Owen revealed, "Vance and I always sought him [Milosevic] out, even when he was electorally unpopular, because we could see he was potentially a very powerful figure ... Milosevic is the most important person in the whole region." It was "unrealistic to expect him to have helped the peace process in December, *which would only have benefited Milan Panic*".<sup>28</sup> When, following his re-election, Milosevic came over to the Vance-Owen partition plan, adopting the line of Panic before the elections, Owen declared, "He is heading towards leading Serbia back into the European family. I have no doubt about that."<sup>29</sup>

## Multi-ethnic Bosnia

There were other reasons the West preferred not to seek "stability" through giving political, economic and military support to the democratic, multi-ethnic institutions of a united Bosnian state. In fact, Bosnia's multi-ethnic nature may have been one of the problems. In a Yugoslavia where bourgeois nation-states were reconstructing

themselves on a chauvinist basis, there was no room for multi-ethnic Bosnia. These new nation-states, based on the “free market”, would be led by new elites — often the same old elites, now converting themselves into quasi-capitalist business people. But in Bosnia, the prevailing nationalism had divided this elite — the Bosnian Serb and Croat wings had essentially joined the elite in their “motherlands”. The Bosnian Moslem elite had no such option, so its best hopes lay in preserving Bosnian unity. Nor did this Moslem elite have the strength to create a nationalist “Moslem state”, because, with only 43% of the population, Moslems would be unable to dominate Bosnia.

This division of the elite showed that multi-ethnic Bosnian society was not elite based. A multi-ethnic society was a solidly working-class tradition. This was logical, not only because the ideology of Titoism emphasised “brotherhood and unity” as a working-class tradition, but because, working together in factories and mines and living together in cities, their common interests were more apparent.

This Bosnian working class had a particularly militant tradition. It was in the Mining and Metallurgical Combine Self-Management Organisation at Zenica, one of Bosnia’s most ethnically mixed cities, that the principle was established that “no worker would be made redundant due to modernisation or the reconstruction of production workshops”.<sup>30</sup> Founded in 1969, the Zenica combine, where the workers council was the management team, employed 35,000 workers across three republics, and had the third highest gross earnings in Yugoslavia. This principle cut right across the main demand of all the “economic reforms” — in the view of the UK Foreign Affairs Committee, “a working environment which ... guaranteed employment for its workers” was one of the major problems left over from socialism in eastern Europe.

In the 1980s, Zenica’s steel and coal plants were experiencing financial problems related to competition on the world market. The Yugoslav government commissioned British Steel to draw up “modernisation” plans — which meant closing many plants and sacking tens of thousands of workers. But the militant Bosnian workers would not let them do it. Perhaps it was better for future British investment that Milosevic’s thugs destroyed Zenica in the 1990s. Just as British capital was coming to the aid of the Yugoslav bureaucracy, the Bosnian Miners’ Union was likewise giving internationalist solidarity to the British miners’ strike in 1984-85; the 10,000 miners at the Kreka colliery decided to give up one day’s pay every month to the British miners, an example soon followed by other mines throughout Bosnia.

In the giant strikes of 1987-88, ethnically mixed Bosnian workers launched the longest strike in Yugoslav history, the two-month strike at the Labin coalmine in neighbouring Croatia. This led to calls for a “new trade union federation” and a “new communist party” from workers in the Zenica combine in November.

The maintenance in 1992 of this multi-ethnic working class “horizontal” alliance in Bosnia and its resilience against the growing “vertical” alliances based on ethnicity elsewhere in ex-Yugoslavia was reminiscent of those heady days of 1987-88. Politically, it expressed itself as continuing reverence for Tito’s heritage and votes against nationalist parties in working-class centres. For example, in Tuzla, the centre of a broad industrial zone including Zenica covering perhaps a million people, the non-ethnic, left-oriented parties won the 1990 elections and maintained control of the local government right through the war and afterwards.

As the war threat mounted, many tens of thousands of people throughout Bosnia from all ethnic groups took to the streets until April 1992, carrying Tito’s picture and “Brotherhood and Unity” slogans. In one such demonstration, the crowd was addressed by a miner from Tuzla, who claimed, “Our national identity is miner.”<sup>31</sup>

In the final mass multi-ethnic peace demonstration on April 6, “One could see old Yugoslav flags with the red star, flags of the Yugoslav League of Communists, dissolved in 1990, and even portraits of Tito”.<sup>32</sup> Outright war began when one such demonstration was fired on by Karadzic’s Chetniks from the hills surrounding Sarajevo. It is not hard to imagine which group Western leaders would have had a closer ideological affinity with.

The multi-ethnic, working-class Bosnian heartland was the major part of former Yugoslavia where what was progressive in that Yugoslavia had not yet been destroyed by the “anti-bureaucratic revolution”. Despite the repressiveness of Tito’s regime, Yugoslavia had never experienced the full-scale smashing of the working class of Stalin’s great purges and Mao’s “cultural revolution”. The working class remained a powerful force. The destruction of class unity through violent partition between the Milosevic and Tudjman regimes thus represented a necessary stage in the destruction of working-class Yugoslavia, and so could only be supported, regardless of the occasional squeamishness about tactics, by imperialism.

Working-class Tuzla played a key role in the defence of Bosnia against Serb nationalist aggression throughout the war. The first decisive defeat of the JNA occurred at the beginning of the war in Tuzla. The Trade Union Council there participated actively in the defence, continually emphasising the multi-ethnic nature of the workers’ movement. In a declaration in 1994 signed by three representatives, one Moslem, one Serb and one Croat, it declared: “In Tuzla the workers firmly support our multiethnic way of life. The unions have fought throughout the war to help citizens of all nationalities without discrimination ... The council of our trade union consists of nine members: 4 Bosnian Moslems, 3 Bosnian Serbs, 2 Bosnian Croats ... But we cannot continue our resistance to the attack without international solidarity from the workers of Europe ...

If the multicultural Tuzla is defeated, can any area of Europe be safe from the racists?"<sup>33</sup>

This spirit survived the war. In March 1998, the Miners' Union organised an International Conference against Privatisation, Casualisation and Unemployment near Tuzla. This brought together workers from many countries in Europe, including miners from Serbia and Croatia, while miners from Kosova were invited but prevented from attending by Belgrade. Miners' leader Memis Music called for a new workers' party and for the union to "transform itself into a united and efficient working class organisation".<sup>34</sup>

This was not much good for "market reform." The militant working-class nature of Bosnia's multi-ethnic society explains why the West insisted on ethnic partition. To allow arms to flow to popular multi-ethnic self-defence forces with the above political direction would have been against Western interests. A military defeat of the Milosevic and Tudjman nationalist projects by such forces might well have destabilised their regimes in the direction of a 1987 type of "horizontal" unity of workers across Bosnia, Serbia and Croatia.

This is all the more relevant when a little-known fact is taken into account. Despite the oft repeated view that the West did not intervene to protect Bosnia because it had no interests there, there was evidence that Bosnia has important oil deposits. Since the mid-1980s, the World Bank had commissioned exploration with "an expectation of viable potential for oil recovery". The documents were apparently seized by Bosnian Serb and Croat nationalists at the outset of the war.<sup>35</sup> One region was around Tuzla. The partition lines between Bosnian forces and Serb nationalists in all Western peace plans cut right through this region — the Brcko-Posavina corridor (just north of Tuzla), while largely populated by Moslems and Croats, was given to the Serb "republic" in all plans. The other region was the Dinaric range in the south-west on Croatia's border, populated mostly by Serbs. In the dealing around partition in 1994-95, the Serb and Croat nationalists agreed to swap a wider Serb-controlled Posavina corridor for a Croat-controlled Dinaric region.

## Anxiety about Islam

Another factor making Western governments apprehensive about Bosnia was the leading role played by a Moslem party, the SDA, and the fact that any Bosnian government would have to contain a major Moslem component to reflect their 43% of the population. While it would be impolitic to have said openly "We don't want a Moslem-led state in Europe", the anxieties can nevertheless be discerned from the sheer number of reports in the media and the prevailing anti-Moslem ideological atmosphere. Western anxiety about Bosnia's multi-ethnic traditions could not be

relaxed by promoting a more Moslem-dominated regime. Rather, this dilemma required a Serbo-Croatian solution.

For example, a French diplomat told reporter John Newhouse that the Europeans “want to prevent a wider war or the emergence of a rump Muslim state in southeastern Europe — one that might become rich, militant and an inspiration for ethnic or communal strife elsewhere ... Our interests are closer to the Serbs than you think. We worry more about the Moslems than about the Serbs.”<sup>36</sup> Or again: “The possibility there would be an overtly Islamic state in Europe, allied with Iran, is one of the main reasons the French opposed the establishment of Bosnia in the first place”.<sup>37</sup> It is difficult to assess the validity of such reports, often quoting anonymous diplomats who did not want the accusation of racism to be attached to their refusal to aid victims of genocide. However, their number would suggest something was being tapped.

These media reports regarding Islam and Bosnia corresponded to the general anti-Islamic ideological atmosphere of the times. In the Kissinger mouthpiece *The National Interest*, advisory board member Samuel Huntington wrote in 1991, “With one exception, no Islamic country has sustained a fully democratic political system for any length of time”. His one “exception” was Washington’s ally, the brutal military dictatorship in Turkey; its “democracy” stems, in Huntington’s view, from Kemal Ataturk’s suppression of Islam. “The only Arab country to sustain a form of democracy ... was Lebanon ... and 40 to 50% of its population was Christian. Once Moslems became a majority in Lebanon, and began to assert themselves, Lebanese democracy collapsed”,<sup>38</sup> he continued, not pointing out that the reason for this was the refusal of the Christian elite to give up its privileged position and grant the Moslem majority equal voting rights. The parallel with Serb nationalist paranoia about the birth rates of Bosnian and Kosovar Albanian Moslems is hard to avoid.

It was the same Huntington who wrote *Political Order in Changing Societies*, the World Bank’s bible which advocated support for Third World dictatorships as the most effective way to get economic “reform”. Harvard’s Institute of Strategic Studies, of which Huntington is director, is a major US foreign policy establishment think-tank.

The article went unchallenged, and in 1993, Huntington struck again, writing in *Foreign Affairs*, “Conflict along the fault line between Western and Islamic civilisations has been going on for 1,300 years. This centuries-old military interaction is unlikely to decline.” This “fault line” has always referred to where the Christian Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Moslem Ottoman Empire intersected — Bosnia, where anti-Moslem genocide was going on as Huntington wrote.

His advice was that “The West must also limit the expansion of the military strength of potential hostile civilisations, principally Confucian and Islamic ... and exploit

differences and conflicts among (them) ... This will require a moderation in the reduction of Western military capabilities, and in particular, the maintenance of American military superiority in East and Southwest Asia” — the oil reserves of the Middle East.

A multi-ethnic state with Moslems in leading positions could pose major problems for European states, which all had very large Moslem minorities, mostly industrial workers from North Africa, Turkey, the Middle East and the Indian subcontinent. There were up to five million Moslem workers in France and Italy, two million in Germany and 1.5 million in Britain. The bulk of these immigrants were not citizens, and this did not depend on length of time of residence. In Germany, citizenship is based on “blood ties” according to its 1913 law. In France, all the minority languages were banned after the French revolution in the name of “equality”.

Rising unemployment (some 40 million in the EC) was resulting in an increase in “security” laws aimed at preventing these immigrants’ easy access to “fortress Europe”; the idea of granting them citizenship and hence social security rights was unacceptable to European leaders. Anti-Islamic hysteria against immigrants was on the rise, especially in France. In 1993, 2000 Algerians were deported. Pierre Lelouche, adviser to President Chirac, claimed, “Multiculturalism would be the end of France”.<sup>39</sup> The “Socialist” administration in the town of Taverny even bulldozed the premises of the Social and Cultural Association of the Moslem community — not so different from what France’s “historic Serb allies” were doing in Bosnia.

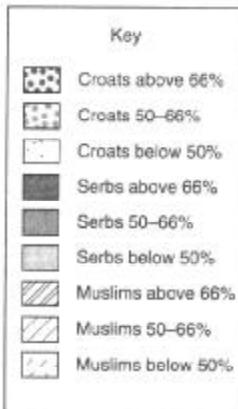
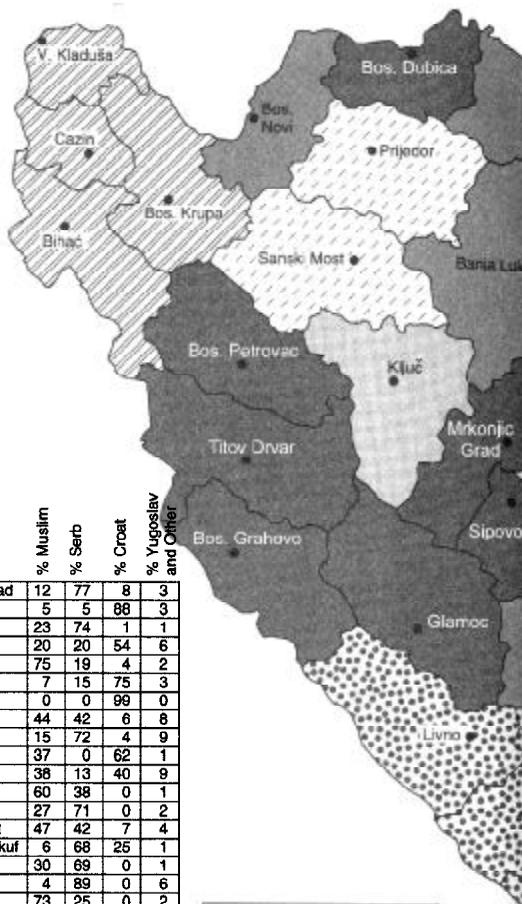
*The National Interest* further revealed some of Europe’s anxieties here. Anthony Hartley (also the editor of the right-wing *Encounter*), went completely overboard against those advocating “the rights of non-European religious and cultural minorities”. Do these rights, he asks, “include the rights to pursue individual citizens with death threats? And is the evolution of European society toward tolerance over three hundred years to go for nothing?” More concretely, he feared the special demands of Moslem workers and possible foreign influences — he feared that “the Ramadan fast ... may diminish the physical capacity of workers doing heavy manual labour”, their organisation by “Communist” trade unions and “the influence exercised on them by Muslim states and sects in Asia and Africa”.<sup>40</sup>

## US re-enters the scene

US rejection of the European partition plan of March 1992 became the norm in US policy, occurring again with the EC’s Vance-Owen and Owen-Stoltenberg Plans. However, the sincerity of the US in defending multi-ethnic principles is open to question because what also became standard was that apparent encouragement of Bosnia

	% Muslim	% Serb	% Croat	% Yugoslav and Other
Sarajevo	49	28	7	16
Centar	51	21	7	22
Hadžići	64	26	3	7
Ilidža	43	37	10	10
Ilijaš	42	45	7	6
Novi Grad	51	28	6	15
Novo Sarajevo	36	35	9	20
Pale	27	69	0	3
Stari Grad	78	10	2	9
Trnovo	69	30	0	1
Vogošća	51	36	4	9
Banovići	72	17	2	9
Banja Luka	15	55	15	16
Bihać	67	18	8	8
Bijeljina	31	59	0	9
Bileća	15	80	0	5
Bos. Dubica	20	69	2	9
Bos. Gradiška	26	60	6	8
Bos. Krupa	74	24	0	2
Bos. Brod	12	34	41	13
Bos. Novi	34	60	1	5
Bos. Petrovac	21	75	0	3
Bos. Šamac	7	41	45	7
Bos. Grahovo	0	95	3	2
Bratunac	64	34	0	2
Brčko	44	21	25	9
Breza	76	12	5	7
Bugojno	42	19	34	5
Busovača	45	3	48	4
Cazin	98	1	0	1
Čapljina	45	53	0	2
Čapljina	28	14	54	5
Čelinac	8	89	0	3
Čitluk	0	0	99	0
Derвента	13	41	39	8
Doboj	40	39	13	8
Donji Vakuf	55	39	3	3
Foča	52	45	0	3
Fojnica	49	0	41	9
Gacko	35	62	0	2
Glamoč	18	79	1	1
Goražde	70	26	0	3
Gornji Vakuf	56	0	43	1
Gračanica	72	23	0	5
Gračac	60	20	15	5
Grude	0	0	99	0
Han Pijesak	40	58	0	2
Jablanica	72	4	18	6
Jajce	39	19	35	7
Kakanj	55	9	30	7
Kalesija	80	18	0	2
Kalinovik	37	61	0	2
Kiseljak	41	3	52	4
Kladanj	73	24	0	3
Ključ	48	50	0	2
Konjic	55	15	26	4
Kotor Varoš	30	38	29	3
Kreševo	23	0	71	6
Kupres	7	51	39	3
Laktaši	2	82	9	8
Lištica	0	0	99	0
Livno	15	10	72	3
Lopare	38	56	4	3
Lukavac	67	22	4	8
Ljubinje	8	90	1	1
Ljubuški	6	0	93	1
Maglaj	45	31	19	5
Modriča	29	35	27	8
Mostar	35	19	34	12

	% Muslim	% Serb	% Croat	% Yugoslav and Other
Mrkonjić Grad	12	77	8	3
Neum	5	5	88	3
Nevesinje	23	74	1	1
Ođžak	20	20	54	6
Olovo	75	19	4	2
Orašje	7	15	75	3
Posušje	0	0	99	0
Prijedor	44	42	6	8
Prnjavor	15	72	4	9
Prozor	37	0	62	1
Pucarevo	38	13	40	9
Rogatica	60	38	0	1
Rudo	27	71	0	2
Sanski Most	47	42	7	4
Skender Vakuf	6	68	25	1
Sokolac	30	69	0	1
Srbac	4	89	0	6
Srebrenica	73	25	0	2
Srebrenik	75	13	7	5
Stolac	45	21	32	2
Šekovići	3	94	0	2
Šipovo	19	79	0	1
Tešić	21	55	16	7
Tešanj	72	6	18	3
Titov Drvar	0	97	0	2
Tomislavgrad	11	2	87	0
Travnik	45	11	37	7
Trbinje	18	69	4	9
Tuzla	48	15	16	21
Ugljevik	41	56	0	3
Vareš	30	16	41	13
Velika Kladuša	92	4	1	3
Visoko	75	16	4	5
Višegrad	63	33	0	4
Vitez	41	5	46	8
Vlasenica	55	42	0	2
Zavidovići	60	20	19	6
Zenica	55	16	16	13
Zvornik	59	38	0	3
Zepče	47	10	40	3
Zivinice	81	6	7	6





materialised only as rhetoric. This policy continued until the US was in a position to impose its own settlement through military intervention in late 1995: yet the Dayton Accords were the most thorough ethnic partition with the biggest concessions to Serb nationalist demands.

US policy contradicted itself from one day to the next. The US first strongly opposed recognition of Croatia and Slovenia, then supported Bosnian recognition; it refused to involve US ground troops in the UN forces, but now and then offered NATO air strikes, opposed by those with forces on the ground, then hurriedly backed away many times over; it called for lifting the arms embargo on Bosnia and then completely changed its mind many times, and never did it; it continually supported, rejected, supported again and rejected again European partition plans before imposing its own; it regarded it as a civil war one moment and a war of aggression another.

Despite the Clinton administration's public anti-Serbia and anti-partition rhetoric, behind the scenes leading voices in the US foreign policy establishment pushed pro-Serbia and pro-partition views often more extreme than those of the EC. Henry Kissinger continually called for the three-way partition of Bosnia, having a powerful influence in US ruling circles. The policy journal, *The National Interest*, of which Kissinger is on the advisory board, spelled it out in an article claiming "... the recognition of Bosnia's independence itself constituted an illegal intervention in Yugoslavia's internal affairs, to which Belgrade had every right to object". The article advocates not only partition, but also the "Serb and Croat entities proposed under the Serb-Croat partition plans" to be directly "absorbed by the mother states". The Serbs should be entitled to 60% of the land and they "ought not be denied a defensible corridor in the north linking Serb territories".<sup>41</sup>

Likewise, General Charles Boyd, deputy commander in chief of the US European Command from 1992 to 1995, wrote, "The Serbs are not trying to conquer new territory but to hold on to what was already theirs", and "The distinction among the factions is more power and opportunity than morality". He also claimed the original sin was the recognition of Bosnia, which amounted to the West "accepting the dissolution of a UN member state".<sup>42</sup>

Islam has particular relevance to the US, as the leading military superpower trying to maintain both that position and its arms industry. The ideology contained in the Huntington quotes was the new justification for NATO's existence and the US role once the "Communist threat" no longer existed. The "threats" posed by certain "Moslem" states were condensed into a general threat of "Islamic fundamentalism" as a new ideology supposedly challenging the West. This was emphasised during the US massacre of Iraq in 1991.

Daniel Pipes, the director of the Foreign Policy Research Institute, rejecting criticism of US support for autocratic governments in the Middle East that violently suppress Islamist movements, put all Islamist movements into a monolithic bag: “The United States should, wherever possible, wherever it has the will, the energy and the resources to do so, block the process of these movements”.<sup>43</sup> He claimed, “Islamic movements around the world rely on violence; ... [they] reject modernity and reject the West”. This was in accord with bizarre claims by Serbia and Croatia to be fighting to save Europe from the “fundamentalist” threat posed by the Bosnian government.

Thus the US would not seem to have any fundamental differences with the EC over the concerns about a multi-ethnic, partly Moslem Bosnia. But while it was happy with European powers in NATO doing much of the “work” in their own backyard, it did not want to be left out completely, in particular in its role as military leader through NATO. The US challenge to the EC in Bosnia was not over fundamental policy but over increasing rivalry, and over other related broader US concerns.

These concerns can be summarised as opposition to any Europe-only security system to rival US-led NATO; advocacy of NATO having an “out of area” role (i.e., outside of the NATO countries); and pushing for NATO, indeed the US, to have greater control over when to use its forces, without reference to the UN. The context was the rivalry between the US, the German-led EC and Japan; at the GATT Uruguay rounds, for example, trade and economic disputes blossomed, particularly over Europe’s agricultural subsidies. This was sharpened with the onset of the world recession in 1990, which hit the US harder than Germany or Japan. The US advantage of being able to provide “security cover” was all the more important; justifying a continued high rate of military spending was good for the US defence industry, as was creating conditions to prove to the Europeans that they had to buy more US weaponry.

France, while a NATO member, had been outside its military control since the 1960s. While European convergence was occurring through Maastricht and the Carrington-Cutilheiro Plan, France and Germany were also pushing for a “Eurocorps” as a military wing of the EC independent from NATO. A Pentagon document in March 1992 openly put out the line, “... we must seek to prevent the emergence of European-only security arrangements which would undermine NATO.” Indeed, the US must deter “potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role”.<sup>44</sup> The announcement of the Eurocorps plans on May 20, 1992, led to an almost immediate verbal toughening of the US position against Serb aggression.

The turn in US policy on Bosnia in March 1992 should be seen in this framework. An “orderly” partition of Bosnia would still need some foreign “guarantor” force, but one which a “Euro-Corps”, or a UN force, would be strong enough to handle. The

outbreak of a full-scale war, and aggressive rhetoric against Serbia, would be more in the interests of the US asserting the need for NATO to stay in Europe.

Further, Yugoslavia was “out of area”, so intervention there would set a precedent for a new role for NATO. But while Yugoslavia offered a good example for such actions, the real US interest was in the oilfields of the Middle East. This was a contradiction in US policy, behind its contradictory actions: needing to make an example of Yugoslavia for “out of area” actions, and indeed to assert NATO’s validity, by confronting Milosevic; yet not having a real interest in doing so.

Germany and France were reluctant to be led into military confrontations out of area if they were principally of US interest; while Britain enthusiastically joined the US-led war against Iraq, Germany was distinctly cool about it, while France, likewise cool at the onset of the crisis, ultimately joined in lest its status as a great military power be compromised.

The Pentagon document makes no mention of the UN. If the UN acted as a necessary control when two superpowers with nuclear weapons confronted each other, now the US could see little use in an organisation which restricted its freedom of action. As of April 1994, the US, with a defence budget of \$224 billion, owed the UN \$1.2 billion, over a third of the total owed by all member states. With only a few hundred US troops in UN peacekeeping operations, it had one of the lowest levels of participation, lower than very small countries like Ghana and Uruguay.

## US-French military rivalry

US-French military rivalry became a dominant theme in the Bosnian war, as one upstaged the other, proposing military actions at points when the other was keeping a low profile or engaging in some diplomatic initiative.

After pushing for sanctions on Serbia in May 1992 against French reluctance, the US meditated on the impossibility of military action. At that point, Mitterand offered 1000 French UN troops to protect Sarajevo airport, but was opposed by the US. The French suggestion for military support to aid convoys initially terrified the US Congress, but in August, the US put such a resolution to the UN; France wanted the mandate limited to defence of humanitarian convoys, but the US wanted it to authorise attacks on Serb positions.

In September, France proposed the “no-fly zone” over Bosnia, without enforcement; the US proposed authorisation to shoot down Serb planes. In July, France pushed for the West European Union (WEU — the military wing of the EC) to send warships to the Adriatic to enforce the arms embargo and the sanctions. As the US hibernated during the Bush-Clinton transition, France announced it would send in

a force to free the prisoners in concentration camps. US rhetoric on air strikes then stepped up in February and March 1993 as France was involved in the Vance-Owen Plan.

French initiatives, in line with the capacities of European military forces, were specific in nature, and did not conflict with overall Serb war aims; US rhetoric called for a vaster application of force. Nevertheless, for France this military rivalry was a contradiction, because the more the ante was upped, the less viability the “Euro-Corp” project had. Given the escalation of the war and the rhetoric, only NATO had the capability, command structure, alert systems, observation satellites and numbers to launch effective operations.

Hence when the Chetniks rejected the Vance-Owen Plan and France dropped its opposition to enforcement of the No-Fly Zone, it recognised that this could only be done by NATO. France, however, insisted that the UN, not NATO, have political control; the US insisted that NATO control the military operations. This April 1993 compromise buried the French push for the time being. In the same month France resumed its seat “with full deliberative status” on NATO’s military committee — if involvement in NATO was inevitable, France would have its say. If the dramatic US policy switch in March 1992 was related to the French threat, the equally dramatic US turn the other way in May 1993 may be related to this French capitulation.

However, France now pushed the “European Defence Identity” within NATO, to strengthen French bargaining power, and rivalry continued to be played out on the issue of NATO versus the UN. France insisted that NATO operations first have UN authorisation.

## **Britain loses ‘special relationship’ with US but maintains it with Serbia**

If the US headed the verbally “interventionist” wing among the Western powers after March 1992, the UK headed the opposite camp, being the most consistently opposed to lifting the arms embargo, to air strikes or ground troops, and most consistently heading the most pro-Serb initiatives in the partition plans. This is ironic, given that London had enjoyed a “special relationship” with the US, supported a strong US presence in Europe, opposed the “Eurocorps” and was in other cases the most likely to join the US in military actions, such as against Iraq. This British position led to deep fissures in the special relationship, with President Clinton pointing to Britain as the chief obstacle to his own Bosnia policy .

The “special relationship” had already been tempered after John Major replaced the vigorously anti-EC Margaret Thatcher in 1990, adjusting it to the realities of

European union, hence adopting a “middle position”. Thus on Bosnia, the UK and France generally held an allied position on most issues against the stronger US rhetoric; but because the UK opposed France’s challenge to NATO, it opposed even the milder initiatives France took in the direction of more forceful action.

While committed to NATO, Britain opposed US rhetoric because the US was playing a game. The US could stir things up, but the effects were far from home; Britain existed in Europe and could not afford the same luxury. Britain was obsessed with “control” in Bosnia, the need to keep control being given as a reason both for maintaining the UN operation and for opposing lifting the arms embargo. As Douglas Hurd asked, “Who runs the place when the blue helmets have gone?”<sup>45</sup> Of course his answer was not “the Bosnians”. Likewise, when British Defence Secretary Malcolm Rifkind was asked why he considered lifting the arms embargo “the worst possible option”, he replied, “Because it would mean we lost control.”<sup>46</sup> Britain therefore believed air strikes must be followed by NATO ground troops, to prevent the Bosnians imposing their own solution. Since the US refused to send troops to lead a NATO force, Britain had no interest in playing with fire.

While opposed to an independent EC military force, Britain was a leading member of the EC itself; in the EC’s attempts to find a “peaceful” partition, the UK played a leading role. Divide and rule policies leading to partition have after all been Britain’s major contribution to 20th century diplomacy. Stuck between its fear of a Franco-German dominated Europe, and what it saw as US abdication of a real role in Europe, the UK looked to other forums. One of these was the UN, where the interests of both Britain and France in protecting their privileged position as permanent members of the Security Council were reflected in their role in UNPROFOR.

The other such forum was the CSCE, which incorporated the US, Russia and the EC countries. British leaders saw a more active role for Russia as a way of helping to balance between a Franco-German-led Eurocorps and the US conception of a selective, limited expansion of NATO. The reluctance of the US to incorporate many new eastern European states into NATO was of concern to Britain, which believed the “main problem ... is the complete absence of any collective security framework which covers the countries of Eastern and Central Europe”, which was a “security vacuum” between Germany and Russia. The Foreign Affairs Committee believed NATO should “aspire to be the defence dimension ... of the CSCE” rather than a “tight alliance of one bloc against another”.<sup>47</sup>

The US believed that extending NATO to too many countries would “dilute the binding commitments among allies, and constrain NATO’s ability to translate a common purpose into action”.<sup>48</sup> But selective expansion threatened Russia with the division of

Europe on its border. While Britain willingly joined US “out of area” NATO actions in the Gulf, such actions within Europe would be opposed by Russia. The British view of NATO as the security wing of the CSCE included Russia. Britain made sustained efforts to bring Russia into the picture to counterbalance the US at times when the latter appeared to be ready for military action.

Nevertheless, if Britain opposed air strikes because it knew there would be no US troops, it also made no attempt to push the US to commit troops (it polemicised against the idea); and if it opposed unilateral NATO action because of its views on Russia, it made no attempt to convince Russia to play a stronger role pressuring Serbia; and if it opposed lifting the arms embargo or air strikes because of the threat to its UN peacekeepers, it did not support French moves to strengthen the UN mandate so it could better defend itself.

The traditional British-Serb relationship, dating to 1918, played a role. Crown Prince Alexander, heir to the Serbian throne from the House of Karageorgevic, was a descendant of Queen Victoria and cousin of Prince Philip; he was courted by the British establishment in this period, invited as a witness to various committees of the British parliament. While opposed to Milosevic, the royal house shared his vision of Greater Serbia, and was connected to other Serb nationalist forces.

A Conservative party MP and relative of the Montenegrin royal family, Jovan Gvozdenovic (John Kennedy), organised two donations of 100,000 pounds to the ruling Conservative Party in 1992 and 1994. The money was donated by a network of British-based companies that Kennedy was involved in, partly or wholly owned by a Serbian parent company, with strong links to Karadzic. Kennedy led delegations of British MPs to meet Karadzic and other SDS leaders. Kennedy was a researcher for and close friend of Tory MP Henry Bellingham, parliamentary secretary to Malcolm Rifkind, defence secretary, and reportedly “had access to the highest levels of the Conservative Party”.<sup>49</sup> Another MP openly supporting Milosevic, right-winger David Hart, was also an adviser to Rifkind. Jovan Zametica, another English-educated Serb nationalist, gave lectures at British military training courses, despite becoming a paid spokesperson for the SDS leadership. His book *The Yugoslav Conflict* was published by the London International Institute of Strategic Studies as a guide to the conflict.

It is hardly surprising that the British foreign policy establishment was full of people with powerful links to Serbian ruling circles. Belgrade had long been a “mine of information on the Soviet bloc” for Britain.<sup>50</sup> While Milosevic’s new “Yugoslavia” was not recognised as the successor of the former state, Britain maintained an embassy in Belgrade while sending no ambassador to Bosnia, which it “recognised”.

Finally, Ireland needs to be mentioned. The quagmire of British troops in Ireland

is often raised as a reason Britain was nervous about intervention in another ethnic conflict in Yugoslavia. However, Britain *did* have 2000 troops in Bosnia, playing a very political role. The parallel is elsewhere: in Ireland, the Protestant minority was allowed to partition Ireland and remain part of the UK, rather than live in a “Catholic” Ireland, despite a large Catholic minority under them; Northern Ireland Unionists saw a parallel with Serb nationalists not wanting to live in a “Moslem and Catholic” Bosnia and hence demanding their “right” to partition it and become part of Serbia. Irish Unionists in the UK parliament firmly opposed any anti-Serb initiatives, as late as 1995 still complaining about the recognition of Bosnia three years earlier.<sup>51</sup> ■

## 7. Countdown to Final Solution

A new situation opened at the beginning of 1994 following the collapse of the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan. Bosnia had found the will to resist through greater organisation of its armed forces, minor breaches of the arms embargo and the capture of some enemy weapons. This allowed the Bosnian army to go on the offensive in late 1993, crushing the Croatian nationalist forces. The new confidence of the Bosnian government was well expressed by Ejup Ganic, “non-ethnic” member of the Presidency, who claimed, “The Croatian Defence Council ... does not exist as an army in Bosnia any more. It consists of dismembered groups and gangs ... Croatia’s threats are inconceivable nonsense”.<sup>1</sup>

This had a number of implications. Firstly, it put the Bosnian government in a powerful position to push its own solution, an undivided multi-ethnic state for all its citizens. The neutralising of Croatia meant it could devote its energies to the Chetniks. The West preferred some kind of partition deal with Karadzic’s forces, in particular to save the skin of his master. In a report published in January 1994, the CIA claimed there was no acceptable alternative to Milosevic.<sup>2</sup>

Secondly, the defeat of Tudjman’s adventure left open the danger of a collapse of his regime. Neither the US nor the EC wanted that, especially because it had just signed an agreement with the IMF. The defeats had given rise to mass opposition to his Bosnia policy, both within Croatia and among Bosnian Croats.

Within Bosnia, the elected leaders of the Croats, like Klujic (whom Tudjman had replaced with Boban as head of the Bosnian HDZ, and who represented the Croats of central Bosnia, the biggest group) and Ivo Kosmic of the Croatian Peasants Party, denounced Tudjman’s policy. Mass meetings of Croats from all over Bosnia and Yugoslavia approved a plan presented by Kosmic for an equal federation of all Bosnia’s ethnic groups, rather than the ethnic state that Tudjman’s proxies were trying to carve out. Even the Catholic Church was strongly opposed to Tudjman and Boban’s policy, despite the latter’s attempt to appeal to clerical fundamentalism. In Croatia, the Union of Autonomous Trade Unions, formed to fight Tudjman’s stranglehold on the unions, openly opposed the war. The whole

Croatian opposition condemned Tadjman's policy, and even within his own party a deep split was taking place which threatened to wipe out its parliamentary majority.

Thirdly, much of Bosnia's illegally acquired weaponry was coming from Islamic states, especially Iran. This, together with the feeling that Bosnia was being allowed to suffer because it was Moslems being killed, was creating an "Islamist" current among many of the Moslem refugees, reflected among a faction of the ruling SDA and armed forces. The EC, the US, Serbia and Croatia were responsible for this, because it was they who created the "Moslem state" in the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan. But what they had in mind was a disarmed, landlocked ghetto, not one that was rearming and fighting back.

The prospect of an Islamist movement in Europe stiffened the opposition of Britain and France to lifting the arms embargo. However, it also strengthened the view in the US and France that stronger Western action was needed against the more extreme Chetnik positions, in order to get a stable partition and head off the Islamist danger. Pierre Lellouche, Gaullist member of the French parliament, revealed, "What many in my party fear is the emergence of a kind of Gaza Strip in the midst of the Balkans ... and a drift to radical Islamic politics [that] would follow".<sup>3</sup> The "Moslem republic" necessary for Serbo-Croatian partition now needed to be modified so that it did not become a liability.

At a NATO meeting in December, French Defence Minister Leotard claimed, while withdrawing a "threat" of UN pull-out, that such an action "would bring Islamic forces into the area". The "threat" from Moslem governments at the time was fairly direct — the Organisation of Islamic States had renewed its offer to replace discredited Western UN forces for the purposes of aid delivery, which might reveal that it was unnecessary for Bosnians to tolerate British and French dithering.

In early 1995, NATO Secretary-General Willy Claes told a security conference, "Islamic militancy has emerged as perhaps the single gravest threat to the NATO alliance and to western security".<sup>4</sup> Around the same time, NATO launched a dialogue with Egypt, Israel, Morocco, Tunisia and Mauritania to develop a joint strategy to combat "the security threat posed by Islamic fundamentalism". The *Economist* chipped in with the observation that, apart from a resurgent Russia or China, the only real threat to the West would be if an "expansionary Islamic power" arises out of "the present chaos between Iran and Morocco",<sup>5</sup> this "chaos" otherwise known as the Islamic world.

For the US, the "Mediterranean angle" and its links to the Middle East were always more strategic than Bosnia itself, and the "situation there [in the Mediterranean] is of increasing concern".<sup>6</sup> Hence the fear of instability spreading through Kosova, Macedonia

and then Greece and Turkey. The US sent a warship into the Aegean Sea in 1995 to help prevent a major dispute between Greece and Turkey over the tiny island of Imia from developing into open war. While it refused to commit ground troops to the Bosnian UN forces, it sent several hundred troops to Macedonia, took control of Albania's largest air base and pressured the Berisha government to curb support for Kosova Albanians.

The EC's attempt to act independently of US leadership was thwarted by the Bosnian resurgence. Moreover, France's attempt to create a Europe-only security system had also collapsed. With France rejoining NATO's military command, the NATO summit of January 1994 endorsed the European Defence Identity, giving more leeway to European decision making, but under NATO control. The French government stole the military initiative at the NATO summit by suddenly advocating NATO air strikes to save Sarajevo from a crippling Chetnik assault. This time it was the US that was reluctant, believing it to be a "trap". On the other hand, now the US was stealing the diplomatic initiative, in manoeuvres involving Croatia and Bosnia, based on a new partition of the region which would also involve Serbia.

However, a bomb in a crowded Sarajevo marketplace in early February forced the US to fall into line, with a joint NATO threat of air strikes on February 9 (only Britain remaining opposed). An ultimatum demanded a Chetnik pullback of heavy weapons from around Sarajevo, but also that the Bosnian government "place the heavy weapons in its possession...under UNPROFOR control, and ... refrain from attacks launched from within the current confrontation lines in the city". The threat of air strikes was made against *either party* that did not comply. Alarmed, British Prime Minister Major rushed off to Moscow to enlist Boris Yeltsin's help in thwarting NATO's threat, and Yeltsin responded by pressuring the Chetniks to withdraw from certain areas, in return for bringing Russian forces, viewed as protectors by the Serbs, into the Chetnik-controlled region.

The US interest in NATO expansion (for a select few), was regarded with hostility by Russia, which felt threatened by a new division of Europe. US and NATO leaders, for example Clinton's assistant secretary of state, Richard Holbrooke, openly spoke of the need for NATO expansion, explaining that destabilisation in the region has historically been a major contributor to "aggressive" behaviour by Germany and Russia, revealing yet again the latent US fear of Germany.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, US exclusion of Russia (and many other states) from NATO expansion was not designed as anti-Russian. US and Western covert support for Russia's monstrous military action in Chechnya at the time is evidence enough of this. The Russian military, which had just helped Yeltsin blow up his elected parliament, released in November

1993 a kind of Russian “Monroe Doctrine” emphasising Russia’s special role in the states of the former Soviet Union, including its right to intervene to “protect” Russian minorities in other countries. The US essentially accepted this doctrine, and it would appear this acceptance was in exchange for Russian acceptance of NATO expansion.

Exclusion of Russia from NATO expansion was a question of who was boss and maintaining the elite nature of NATO. To allay Russian concerns, the US aimed to form a new “partnership” between Russia and NATO. The US thus made more mileage of the Russian entry into Sarajevo as part of the “partnership”, leading to the US controlling the Bosnian government and HVO-held regions, while Russia would control the Serb side.

### **Moslem-Croat Federation**

US diplomacy came up with a plan perfect for the new situation — the Washington Agreement for a Moslem-Croat Federation, in the areas currently controlled by the Bosnian army and the HVO, in March 1994, linked to a confederation between this federation and Croatia itself. While Tudjman had to officially give up having a Croat republic in Bosnia, since it had been defeated anyway, this agreement rescued him from total defeat. The government-controlled portion of Bosnia would have little choice but to become a political and economic satellite of Croatia, given that most of the country was still under SDS control. Confederation was in fact an old demand of now sidelined hardliner Mate Boban, which he continually demanded of the Bosnian government in 1992, before and after opening hostilities.

The plan in effect placed the Moslem forces under Croatian control, hence providing a formula for the US to apply some military pressure, via Croatia, on the Chetniks, without arming either an independent Bosnia that would oppose partition or a radicalised Moslem statelet. Croatia would be in a position to turn the weapons supply to Bosnia on and off, depending on the situation and the behaviour of the Bosnians. Indeed, even after this agreement, Croatia continued secretly to supply oil from the port of Split to the BSA, via the HVO, until the end of 1994, revealing the double nature of the agreement and that the Serbo-Croatian understanding over Bosnia still existed, in a modified form. Despite the multi-ethnic pretence of “federation”, it aimed at the partition of Bosnia between this federation and the ethnically cleansed “Republika Srpska”, which would have the same rights to confederate with Serbia. US officials “told the Serbs the door is open for them to join the federation but we assume they do not want to come in ... so what you could eventually have is a Bosnian Serb state recognised by the UN with confederal ties to Serbia, and a Muslim-Croat state with confederal ties to Croatia.”<sup>8</sup>

The federation was essentially a combination of the Vance-Owen Plan for ethnic majority provinces, within the areas that the Owen-Stoltenberg Plan had designated as Croat and Moslem states. It was virtually identical to the British-Russian proposal a year earlier, for the implementation of Vance-Owen first in the areas controlled by the HVO and the Bosnian army — a plan the US opposed. Another year of war was necessary to achieve the same result because now it was a US, not British and Russian, diplomatic victory, and the earlier plan had included the UN.

The emphasis on ethnicity — “the agreement mandated ethnic representation at the municipal and regional levels as well as the national and federation levels, and extended it to the civilian and police services”<sup>9</sup> — gave the most nationalistic elements in both the HDZ and the SDA the upper hand in the assembly elections of June, pushing out many moderates and most smaller parties. This was aided by the requirement for parties to receive 5% of the vote to gain representation, pushing aside smaller non-nationalist parties — a requirement pushed by the US.

At the session of the first assembly of the federation in March, many delegates from social democratic, non-ethnic, Serb and dissident Moslem and Croat parties brought up many criticisms of the agreement, in particular this overemphasis on ethnic criteria and the lack of clarity in the delineation of the federation of Moslems and Croats from the Bosnian government itself, which still represented Moslems, Croats, Serbs and others in all levels of administration. Related to this, oppositionists stressed that the goal remained unity of the whole of Bosnia, and hence called for the areas under Chetnik control to be declared “occupied”, and for guarantees that all refugees would be allowed to return. On the last point, the dissident Croat delegate from Chetnik-occupied Posavina, considered by the Chetniks to be their “corridor” between eastern and northern Bosnia, said that 160,000 people had been expelled from their homes in this region and wanted to return.

## Serb Civic Council

The most important issue was the amendment put by the newly formed Serb Civic Council, to include the Serbs as one of the constituent groups of the federation — a proposal supported by many others from the floor. The SCC had been set up by an assembly on March 27 of 500 Serbs living in Bosnian government-controlled areas, elected as members of communal or republican governing bodies and armed forces. By the year’s end, the SCC had 50,000 members signed up, out of the 200,000 Serbs estimated still to live in these regions. The SCC claimed that Karadzic’s SDS had “usurped” the will of the Bosnian Serbs, and it therefore demanded of the US that it also be represented in all negotiations on the country’s future.<sup>10</sup>

However, the amendment was ultimately rejected by the federation leaders — in the federation constitution, Serbs were included in the category of “others”. Likewise, the appeal to be allowed to take part in negotiations was never accepted by the US or other Western negotiators. The call by the US for “the Serbs” to join the federation was aimed at the only people the US regarded to be Serb representatives — the SDS, which, Washington knew, would say no.

These were grave decisions. Officially including Serbs in the federation constitution, and recognising the right of the SCC to represent Serbs, would have been an enormous victory for all the Serbs who had steadfastly stayed behind and fought alongside their fellow Bosnians against Chetnik separatism. It would have given the SCC the standing on a national and international level to appeal to the other Bosnian Serbs trapped in the 70% of Bosnia under Chetnik occupation.

This was far from an insignificant constituency. While Serbs (like Moslems) had been expelled from HVO territory, the 200,000 Serbs in the approximately 15% of Bosnia under government control were a far higher proportion of the original numbers than those remaining under SDS occupation, which included all Serb majority areas and much more. From the occupied zones, hundreds of thousands of Serbs had fled to Serbia proper, wanting neither to be drafted into Karadzic’s war nor to live in his state. Most estimates were that RS had about 600,000 Serbs living in it. The total prewar Serb population of Bosnia was 1,400,000.

Recognising the SCC would also have allowed it to appeal to opponents of Milosevic in Serbia, such as the group “Living in Sarajevo”, a coalition of a large number of progressive, anti-nationalist individuals and organisations, including the Civic Alliance, the Independent Trade Unions, the Belgrade Circle, the Centre for Anti-War Action, Women in Black and many others. They sent a message calling the anti-Karadzic Serbs “the greatest victims and the greatest heroes” of the war and “the only hope” that people could continue to live together in Bosnia.<sup>11</sup>

The rejection of the SCC’s proposals had a negative effect on the morale of many loyalist Serbs, who now began to leave the federation. For example, the Serb population of Zenica declined from 8000 to 5000 in just four months following the signing of the federation agreement. While there was “no evidence of any form of systematic campaign of terror”, the UN special rapporteur reported, “These people moved for essentially economic reasons [i.e., job discrimination] and with the perception that they had no future in areas controlled by the government”.<sup>12</sup>

The US lack of interest in attempting to harness this potential Serb opposition to Karadzic and Milosevic revealed that the ethnic partition of Bosnia between a de facto Greater Croatia and Greater Serbia was the US aim, rather than simply the unfortunate

result of the war, which no-one could now do anything about.

This was further underlined when a new proposal was put by the Moslem-Croat federation as a starting point for negotiations in May. While the federation leaders had essentially capitulated to the partitionist agenda, their new proposal was at least ethnically fairer than the imperialist partition plans. It divided Bosnia on a 58-42% basis, based roughly on where there had been previous ethnic majorities. The facts of this map would have made partition difficult, because much of eastern Bosnia on the Serbian border — not just the isolated enclaves — would be in a Moslem-majority province, and the northern “corridor” would be divided between a Moslem and a Croat majority province, both consistent with prewar ethnic reality. Hence there could be no solid bloc of “Serb” provinces which could viably separate from Bosnia, and regions of autonomy would more likely result. The US rejected this last reasonable offer in favour of a more complete partition.

### Contact Group partition plan

The US set up a “Contact Group” to partition Bosnia, consisting of itself, Britain, France and Russia (and later Spain), as a way of avoiding either EC or UN control of the peace process, while including Russia as part of the new partnership. In June this group put forward the new plan — a 51-49% division between the Moslem-Croat federation and Republika Srpska, joined in a weak Bosnian Confederation. The US plan not only gave clearer republic status to the “Serb” state, and far more territory than offered in the federation proposal, hence validating ethnic cleansing, but also a completely connected territory regardless of ethnic realities (including eastern Bosnia and the “corridor”), hence allowing full partition in the future.

This was accepted by Tudjman and Milosevic. Under extreme pressure, the Bosnian government reluctantly accepted it as a basis for negotiation. The rejection of the plan by Karadzic’s SDS was simple enough — the US had come this far its way, it still had overwhelming superiority in heavy weaponry, so why settle for 49 when it had conquered 70%? However, this led to a more drastic breach between the SDS and Milosevic, the latter imposing an embargo on RS and allowing the stationing of a token 137 international monitors along the Serbia-Bosnia border.

The SDS wanted the eastern Moslem “enclaves” — Srebrenica, Zepa and Gorazde — because they stuck out into the otherwise solid “Serb territory” (overwhelmingly Moslem before the cleansing) in eastern Bosnia. It also wanted the Brcko-Posavina “corridor” drastically widened. These changes would make RS even more territorially compact and viable, hence more able to have republican status and ultimately independence. US envoy Charles Redman indicated to SDS leaders on a visit to their

capital, Pale, in December that the US was interested in giving RS the enclaves in exchange for other territory in the west around Bihac.

The SDS also revealed its own betrayal in these negotiations: in exchange for even more Moslem and Croat territories in the east and north, it was prepared to trade away the SDS-controlled regions on the Croatian border in south-west Bosnia, to be given to the HVO, though they were the most solidly Serb-populated regions in Bosnia.

This had a certain logic for the US — in a stable partition of the region, the Serb state would have more solidified territories in the east, while the Croatian border would be more secure with extra territory in the west. The fact that this did not in any way correspond to the ethnic realities of the regions involved indicated that the kind of partition the US was heading for was the most complete one — “tidying up” ethnic areas which happened to be in the wrong geographic region.

Based on these changes, in May 1995 Tudjman drew a map which he presented to British politician Paddy Ashdown, showing an “S” through Bosnia which was labelled “future border Serbia/Croatia”. At the same time, the US sent special envoy Robert Frasure to Belgrade to discuss such a deal with Milosevic. As well as the changes listed above, the regional deal would involve Croatia recovering the Serb-occupied Krajina region to the west of Bosnia, despite its Serb majority, while for the moment Serbia would hang onto Eastern Slavonia, on the Serb border, despite its overwhelming Croat majority.

The events of the next few months, in terms of when NATO got involved and when it did not, correspond very closely to this new version of the 51-49 split, giving a new clarity to US action and inaction. France continued with its middle position, calling for a tougher mandate for UN forces. Britain intensified its role as spoiler of US actions and spokesperson for Serb victory. Foreign Office spokesperson Douglas Hogg lectured the Moslems that they should “recognise military defeat when it stares them in the face, and that land has been seized by force, and there is going to have to be a degree of acquiescence in that. They’ve got to accept that the military option has to be abandoned.”<sup>13</sup> During the Chetnik assault on Gorazde in April 1994, British UN General Rose attempted to play down the situation, referring to a “minor attack into a limited area”, but UN military observers on the ground protested his appalling attempt to cover the fact that the BSA was only three kilometres from the city centre. In extraordinary developments within NATO, Rose went out of his way to *sabotage* NATO air strikes in November 1994, as Chetnik forces were heading for the heart of Bihac.<sup>14</sup> Rose then hypocritically concluded that nothing could be done to save the city.

The main patterns of Western action remained within this framework. Several pinprick air strikes were now ordered by NATO — in April 1994, during the siege of

Gorazde, “a tank, tent and truck” were hit;<sup>15</sup> in Pale in May 1995, following months of more Chetnik sieges of “safe areas” and seizure of heavy weapons from UN “exclusion zones”, a portion of an ammunition dump was hit. Such actions were judged so limited as to be counterproductive.<sup>16</sup> However, the Chetnik siege of Bihac in November 1994 was outside of the US plan, because the fall of Bihac would threaten the vital interests of Croatia. Hence, more significant air strikes were ordered against a Chetnik air base in occupied Croatia (a “UN protected area”), from which planes had flown to drop napalm and cluster bombs on Bihac.

On the other hand, “heavy weapons exclusion zones”, like that ordered by NATO in February 1994, were as “even-handed” as the arms embargo. Heavy weapons in government hands in exclusion zones had to actually be handed over to the UN, while the besieging Chetnik forces merely had to withdraw their weapons behind certain lines. Another was negotiated in Gorazde in April. Rapid action was taken against the Bosnian government when it committed “violations” of the UN occupiers’ dictates regarding such “exclusion zones”, such as the UN’s expulsion of 500 Bosnian troops after they crushed a Chetnik battalion around Sarajevo in October 1994. It was a crime for the Bosnian army to fight the forces which had been besieging the city for three years.

The Bosnian army went on a number of offensives, continuing to grow. There were important victories — a major offensive in October 1994 drove Owen’s puppet Abdic out of Bihac. This meant RS was confronted from two directions at once, as the Bosnian army’s Fifth Corps then burst out of Bihac, and Chetnik forces were driven out of 250 square kilometres. However, the Bosnian army was driven back, partly through the open intervention into Bosnia of the Croatian Serb forces from “Krajina”. This led to the protracted Chetnik siege of Bihac in November, threatening to overwhelm this city of 400,000 people.

But the main reason this and other initially successful offensives were driven back remained the lack of arms. Not all of the Bosnian army’s superior numbers could be used — despite forces of up to 180,000, they had to be constantly rotated because “there are not enough arms to go around”.<sup>17</sup> According to the Sarajevo commander of the Bosnian army, General Divjak (an ethnic Serb), the army “numbers 200,000 men, of whom 50,000 are actually under arms. Some of our mechanised brigades do not possess a single tank or armoured personnel carrier.”<sup>18</sup> The Chetniks defeated these offensives “with significant support of artillery”.<sup>19</sup> The Bosnian army’s heroic “break-out” from Sarajevo in mid-1995 suffered defeat for the same reason — according to Divjak, while there were at least 25,000 troops in Sarajevo, facing only 12,000 Chetniks, only about 7000 were adequately armed, and they had only 30 artillery pieces and five tanks.

The US Congress voted in October that US warships stop enforcing the arms embargo, which made little difference since most of the warships were British and French. Clinton rejected the demand for the US to lift the embargo unilaterally. Nevertheless, the US had concluded that a partial lifting of the embargo was necessary in order to increase the military pressure on the BSA to agree to the 49-51 partition. This included turning a blind eye to considerable shipments of weapons from Iran via Zagreb — the existence of the Croatia-Bosnia confederation agreement rendered the Iranian weapons safe. Shipments were limited to large amounts of “small arms, ammunition and anti-tank weapons”. Nevertheless, by April, they had helped make the Bosnian army “a more formidable force”<sup>20</sup> according to US officials — yet one of the reasons given for not lifting the embargo had been that the Bosnians needed heavy weapons to be effective and they were too hard to get in.

Nevertheless, the US wanted to keep this in check and not encourage the Bosnians too much. Following the NATO failure in Bihac in November, it virtually withdrew from the area. When the BSA offensive was renewed in March 1995, US Defence Secretary William Perry said there was nothing that could be done to save the city, and went on to say there was nothing the Bosnians could do to win back any lost territory: “The Serbs have occupied 70% of Bosnia. There’s no prospect, as I see it, of the Muslims winning that back.”<sup>21</sup> Around the same time, Rose said that the BSA was now in a position to occupy Bihac, there was nothing that could be done about it, and the UN might have to withdraw. White House spokesperson Mike McCurry made the obvious point that the BSA had all the territory “that you would expect them to want to win as a matter of geography” and so it must have a desire to negotiate — i.e., the US peace plan would be based on giving the SDS-BSA most of what it had conquered and everything it wanted.

### **Final solution: from Srebrenica to Krajina**

From June 1995, US intelligence officers of the National Security Agency listened to discussions between BSA General Mladic and Yugoslav General Perisic, who were planning a massive attack on Srebrenica with 10,000 troops, 3000 of them from over the Yugoslav border. The US kept silent on this, and on the information that large numbers of tanks and other heavy weapons were crossing the Serbia-Bosnia border.<sup>22</sup> As the BSA attacked in early July, the UN refused to authorise air strikes, believing it to be a limited attack, even though US intelligence knew better. The Srebrenica “safe area” fell on July 12, and as 70,000 women and children fled, Chetnik forces separated 10,000 fighting-age men and boys and kept them behind. Ashamed local Serb residents and clergy later reported that they had all been killed and dumped in mass graves. A

desire to display the uselessness of the UN was the apparent reason US intelligence withheld the information.

The BSA/Chetniks moved on the next “safe area”, Zepa. Bosnians in both Zepa and Gorazde attacked the UN and seized their weapons. The Bosnian government again demanded that the useless UN get out of Bosnia and turn over its weapons. While the defenders in Zepa were holding out for 11 days, NATO declared that it would launch air strikes if the Chetniks attacked Gorazde! After driving tens of thousands more out of Zepa, the Chetniks moved on Gorazde, not in the slightest concerned about the umpteenth threat of air strikes. But here the defenders, with their seized UN weapons and stores of weapons they had secretly never given up to Rose’s “exclusion zone” scheme, furiously resisted the assault.

Other events stole the limelight on the western front. As the three-year Chetnik siege of Bihac stepped up, Croatia launched its offensive to defend Bihac in August — and in doing so reconquered the whole Krajina. Just before this, the US and Russia had launched an initiative to offer Krajina full autonomy, with its own currency, flag, police force, army, parliament and dual nationality, an initiative supported by Milosevic, yet the power-drunk Krajina leaders turned it down. The whole Serb population, some 150,000 people, fled the region within a few days, ahead of the Croatian reconquest. The attack had been made possible by the training and intelligence provided by a private US consultancy with an official green light, despite the arms embargo, following the Memorandum of Cooperation on Defence and Military Relations signed by Croatia and the US in November 1994.

Milosevic neither made any attempt at military resistance nor even made an issue about it — regarding one of the few regions where the Serbs had a valid ethnic claim. It is difficult to explain this in terms of military weakness. The Krajina Serb forces were massively armed and had been using napalm and cluster bombs against Bosnian Moslems in neighbouring Bihac. Their heavy weaponry was not used against the Croatian army. The military leaders, according to reports, often fled ahead of the rest. In the context of formalising the division of the region with Croatia, Milosevic no longer had any need for the conquered territories in Croatia, least of all Krajina, which was economically worthless. Hence it is a myth that the catastrophe of the Krajina Serbs represented a defeat for Milosevic; it was essentially the result of agreement.

The anti-Croat, pro-Serb nationalist lobby has always played up this event, by bolstering the numbers expelled to 300,000 or more. The figure of 150,000 is based on census figures and the bulk of reports at the time, a figure that already represents an enormous act of reverse ethnic cleansing and hence hardly needs exaggerating. The purpose of the exaggeration is the attempt to claim that this was the “biggest single act

of ethnic cleansing in the whole Balkans”. This would be news to the more than two million Bosnian refugees and the half million Croats expelled in 1991.

Croatian forces then entered Bosnia to back the HVO, and seized several regions in the south-west near the Croatian border, again forcing the overwhelmingly Serb populations to flee. These barren areas on the Dinaric range, on the wrong side of Bosnia, were also expendable to Milosevic, while important to Tadjman to consolidate control of the region of Bosnia along the Croatian border.

### **Bosnian offensive blocked by US intervention**

This created a new situation for the Bosnian army. The Bosnian Fifth Corps broke out of Bihac, driving Chetnik forces back hundreds of kilometres in the direction of their Banja Luka stronghold. From the other side of Bosnia, the Third Corps also attacked, threatening the “corridor” region and hence the isolation of Banja Luka.

As the BSA for the first time stared possible defeat in the face, the US finally launched the air strikes to defend Sarajevo that had been heralded for years but always considered too difficult. Within a fortnight, the backbone of Chetnik artillery had been destroyed. Encouraged, the Bosnian army pressed its advantage. However, the US had not intervened to help the Bosnians liberate their territory. Within days of the US attack, special envoy Richard Holbrooke released the new partition plan. Based on the Contact Group plan, its “improvements” included all the provisions demanded by Milosevic and the SDS leadership to make their state more “solidified” — ceding the eastern Moslem enclaves to RS, giving RS a wider corridor through Brcko and Posavina and giving the entity full, internationally recognised republican status, with its own army — if losing some distant Serb regions near the Croatian border. This was accepted by Karadzic.

As the territorial distribution on the ground was now close to 51-49, the US and other Western governments demanded that Bosnia end its offensive. The Bosnian army, however, fought on. The terror of the Bosnian advance even moved UN Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali, who had opposed NATO intervention against the BSA all through the war, finally to call for the UN to be replaced by a NATO-led force! In September the Bosnian army liberated 15% of Bosnia, formerly Moslem-majority or mixed regions, including Sanski Most, scene of horrific genocide in 1992, and the mine of Ljubija just outside Prijedor, into which some 8000 Bosnian bodies had been dumped. As the Fifth and Third Corps tried to meet up in Jacje, south of the Banja Luka region, which would have allowed full communications links between Sarajevo and Bihac, the HVO suddenly attacked from the south and took the formerly Moslem-majority town. Having achieved its strategic goals all along the southern Bosnian

border, Croatia quit the offensive.

However, in the north, the Third Corps continued its offensive into the corridor, to cut the eastern and north-western parts of RS from each other. According to General Divjak, Karadzic recognised that “the future of Bosnia will be decided at Dobož and Brčko. It is true that the taking of these two cities by our forces would completely alter the operational-strategic situation.”<sup>23</sup> It would also completely alter the political situation. While parts of the RS around Banja Luka always had important Serb majorities, its eastern half had been overwhelmingly Moslem and the corridor connecting them mostly Moslem and Croat. Only by hanging on to these ill-gotten gains was the Banja Luka region linked to Serbia. If cut off, it might have to accept the reality of an autonomous region within Bosnia at peace with its non-Serb neighbours.

As the Third Corps moved to take Dobož on October 7 and hence directly threaten this “corridor”, which Holbrooke had just widened for RS, the US “announced” a cease-fire, but the Bosnian army refused to give up at the very point it was liberating its own territory. From opposite directions, the Third Corps and Fifth Corps pushed on towards Banja Luka, aiming to place the city under siege *but not to take it*. Izetbegovic realised that for the Bosnian army to force its way into Banja Luka would cause a bloodbath. Large numbers of Serb refugees from Krajina had joined the now entirely Serb population in this once mixed city. However, the city’s Serbs were in open rebellion against the corrupt and hated leadership of Karadzic. A new opposition formation called the Patriotic Front sprang up consisting of many local parties. Their views of the situation were confused, but in the end their main aim was the survival of the Banja Luka region and promotion of its interests at the expense of Karadzic’s stronghold in East Bosnia. A further push by the Bosnian army might have forced them into open revolt and negotiations for their own survival. The Bosnian government called on the BSA to surrender the town to civilian authorities, and called on Britain to arrange negotiations with “responsible” leaders there.

By forcing such a surrender of Banja Luka and cutting it off as the Third Corps simultaneously liberated the “corridor”, the Bosnian government was in a position to push its own solution, a united Bosnia with broad local autonomy for areas with large Serb or Croat populations. Izetbegovic released such a 12-point peace plan on August 18. It included all of ethnically cleansed eastern Bosnia, not just the “enclaves”, in the Moslem-Croat federation. Similarly, the Serb Civic Council announced that it was “categorically opposed to any division of Bosnia, and above all one based on ethnic principles. We request that the Serb Civic Council be included as representatives of the Bosnian Serbs in the peace negotiations.”<sup>24</sup> In September, all the non-nationalist parties and organisations came together and declared the “Principles for establishing

a durable peace in Bosnia-Herzegovina”, which rejected partition. It called for a “non-confessional, multicultural, multi-faith and multi-ethnic” state, with “decentralised federal units” but not “mono-national” units.<sup>25</sup>

The US demand to stop the offensive again makes clear that its support for ethnic partition was not simply a recognition of “facts on the ground”; only now that the Bosnian army was in a position to reverse these “facts” did the US intervene to save partition. As Bosnian journalist Hasan Roncevic pointed out, the Bosnians “had to endure the frustration of seeing forceful Western diplomatic and military intervention coming just as they were on the brink of an outright military victory”.<sup>26</sup> The offensive was finally ended in mid October; US NATO General Shalikhshvili threatened air strikes against anyone who threatened the achievement of a truce, meaning now the Bosnian army.

### Dayton partition plan

The Dayton partition plan, based on Holbrooke’s draft, signed under US pressure by Izetbegovic, Milosevic and Tudjman in November 1995, represented the most complete partition, and the most pro-Serb position, of all the plans. A weak symbolic Bosnian government would remain, but all real authority would be divided between RS and the federation. RS was now fully recognised internationally as a republic with its own army, police force, parliament, education system and flag, and the two republics gained the right to form “special relationships” with neighbouring countries, i.e., Serbia and Croatia.

The only significant areas to remain under the jurisdiction of the Bosnian government were monetary and foreign policies. The pressure for Bosnia to pay its share of the Yugoslav debt could now be applied directly, via the new colonial administration which Dayton set up — the central government was made merely a fig leaf, while foreign powers made crucial economic decisions. According to Dayton, the Central Bank was to have a governor appointed by the IMF “who shall not be a citizen of Bosnia and Herzegovina”, nor would this bank have the usual powers of an independent central bank. A Commission on Public Corporations was set up to operate (and privatise) joint public facilities, controlled by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. In civilian matters, a foreign “high representative” was appointed by the Security Council to convene a “Joint Civilian Commission consisting of himself, the Commissioner of the International Police Task Force (IFOR), likewise a foreigner appointed by the Security Council, and representatives of the Parties and whoever else the high representative “deems necessary”.<sup>27</sup> IFOR would consist of tens of thousands of foreign troops to enforce the agreement.

That the two entities have their own armies, the same armies that were at war, prevents the return of refugees, especially to RS. While the role of various Western bodies such as IFOR and the high representative was supposed to be facilitating aspects of reintegration, the reality is that ethnic partition has become more entrenched, which serves to prevent any united working-class resistance to the IMF program.

This US victory in imposing its partition on Bosnia under NATO guns corresponded to NATO's final victory over the French push: in June 1996, the principles of a European defence system were established, whereby European forces, under European command, could act without US involvement, but only on prior agreement with NATO (i.e., the US), based on NATO infrastructures and logistics. When France attempted a major reform within the system, demanding that NATO's southern command be given to a European, the US categorically rejected the idea at the NATO meeting in December 1996, stating that the command would never be given to a European because the Mediterranean, where the Sixth Fleet is based, was too important for US interests. Finally, the deployment of Russian troops in (junior) partnership with NATO in Bosnia was the first step towards calming Russian fears of NATO expansion to its doorstep; this was consecrated with the signing of the "Founding Act" between NATO and Russia in May 1997, which created a permanent joint council. ■

## 8. Post-Dayton Bosnia

It is astonishing that for years following the Dayton Accord, the international media have referred to it as a defeat for Greater Serbia. After the Kosova war, article after article made reference to Milosevic allegedly having lost “four disastrous wars” (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia and Kosova). As explained above, Milosevic was never interested in war with Slovenia; and even the eventual loss in Croatia, following years of Serbian victories there, had more to do with the Milosevic-Tudjman regional agreement than with defeat. But it is on Bosnia that the assertion is most ridiculous.

The Bosnian government had fought against ethnic partition, believing regional autonomy was more appropriate given the nature of the population mix. Even when forced to accept partition, it opposed the ceding of territories which were formerly overwhelmingly Moslem, Croat or mixed in population to a “Serb” state. Yet Dayton consecrated a fully fledged Serb republic in nearly half of Bosnia, on territories from which a million Moslems and Croats had been expelled, including many territories where Serbs had been only a small minority. Despite a loose “Bosnian” entity being held together by the presence of thousands of Western troops and the UN-NATO colonial regime, virtually all functions of a normal state are in the hands of its two halves. Once the colonial administration feels it has stabilised the situation and collected enough of the Yugoslav debt to the IMF/World Bank, it will withdraw, leaving two separate states, which will join Serbia and Croatia.

The only limits on this Serb republic were that it could not *officially* leave the fictional Bosnian state and join Serbia, for the time being. However, the real measure of independence is the degree of state power: this Serb republic has not only its own local police but also its own army, and both the police and army are based on the former Bosnian Serb Army. This means that, whatever Dayton said on paper about the return of refugees, it will not occur. An ethnic state based on Serb language, culture and religion, and ruled by the same forces that carried out the genocide, is clearly destined to evolve into an appendage of Serbia and the Serbian capitalist class.

By 1999, four years after Dayton, reports began to flourish regarding the failure of Dayton in its so-called “reintegrative” measures. Relatively few refugees had returned

to any parts of Bosnia, even fewer to regions where they were a minority, and refugee returns of non-Serbs to Republika Srpska stood at only *one-tenth* of the number of returns of Serbs and Croats to the federation. Other moves had tended more to “reintegrate” the two halves into Serbia and Croatia, including agreements on dual citizenship for Bosnian Serbs and Croats in those two countries, and moves for “special relations”, including Croatian attempts to revive the “confederation” between Croatia and the Moslem-Croat federation, as initially proclaimed at the Washington Agreement of March 1994 but superseded by Dayton.

Moreover, it is important to look at *which* regions of Bosnia were seized by RS. Bosnia had always been defined as the land bordered by the Drina and Sava rivers to the east and north; now both river valleys are entirely in the hands of RS. Above all, the Sava valley of northern Bosnia, all along the Croatian border, forms the Bosnian part of the fabulously fertile agricultural region known as the Pannonian Plain, which includes Vojvodina and northern Serbia and the Slavonia region of Croatia. A glance at a topographical map of Bosnia will reveal the extent of RS gains, with most of the Moslem-Croat federation, by contrast, consisting of higher ground. The northern third of the Drina river valley is the same as the Sava valley; while its southern part is more like the rest of Bosnia, the advantage here is that it links RS to Montenegro and all the way almost to the sea, as well as encompassing the entire Serbian border region.

The World Bank believed there was oil wealth in parts of Bosnia, and one such region was around Tuzla. While Tuzla itself could never be seized, RS’s incorporation of a wider “corridor” region to its north covers this possibility quite well, because other regions of former Yugoslavia with oil are the Slavonia and Vojvodina regions of Croatia and Serbia just to its north. Furthermore, the way the partition line is drawn means that as an economic unity. “Bosnia’s ... partition cuts across its traditional and geographically well-defined axis of economic development — the basins of the Bosna and Neretva rivers — while leaving central Bosnia without free and easy access to the River Sava in the north and the Adriatic coast in the south.”<sup>1</sup>

For the time being, imperialism aims to hold its Dayton plan together, despite increasing calls by Kissinger and other top US foreign policy figures to allow the Serbian and Croatian parts to officially join their “fatherlands”.<sup>2</sup> While this is the long-term agenda, there are a number of short-term problems. Firstly, the colonial regime is a useful lever to collect the debt; complete partition would make this authority irrelevant. Secondly, the formal changing of international borders could encourage the Kosovar Albanians to push for independence. Thirdly, while imperialism has successfully divided the working class of the region, it now needs a certain degree of integration to allow for investment and the reconstruction of vital cross-border road

and rail and other infrastructures; it does not want new conflicts within Bosnia that would create new impassable borders, so any change to Dayton must occur over time. Fourthly, there would be problems with the “Moslem-Croat federation”, which neither Croatian nationalists nor the Bosnian government are at all happy with, for opposite reasons; if RS were to gain even more, the other two sides would push their own mutually antagonistic solutions.

From the point of view of the Bosnian government and the Moslem SDA, Dayton is a defeat. Therefore, if it is to accept partition, it is on the condition that all the “reintegrative” measures promised by Dayton are put into effect. Above all this means the right of return of hundreds of thousands of Moslem refugees to RS and HVO-controlled parts of the federation, and the prosecution of Serbian and Croatian war criminals. It also means a real federation, at least in the half called that; in reality, the HVO controls about half of it and has not allowed Moslems to return, nor has it allowed a real integration of governing structures.

If these things are not happening, and hence partition is entrenched, then the SDA is not interested in a pretend multi-ethnic Bosnia where it is the loser. In 1997, it formally proposed its own alternative: parts of the federation and RS can join Serbia and Croatia, but on condition that the area controlled by the Bosniak unit, now unofficially about 25% of Bosnia, be more than doubled to about 60%.<sup>3</sup> It would therefore take the whole north-eastern half of RS around Banja Luka and territory from the HVO in central Bosnia, Mostar and the port Neum, leaving only a narrow strip of western Herzegovina to Croatia and eastern Bosnia to Serbia. In increasing frustration with Dayton, the SDA made it clear that if this does not happen, and neither do the reintegrative steps occur, then it will retake these territories by force. The growing “threat” of action by the SDA and the Bosniak regime to revise Dayton has led to continual extensions of the length of time NATO troops remain in Bosnia.<sup>4</sup>

For the HVO and Tudjman, opposition to Dayton came from the opposite position: the Serb nationalists had their republic, but the Croat nationalists are officially denied one, being “forced” to cohabit with Moslems in a federation. They therefore stopped any integrative moves within the federation and continually pushed to set up their own republic or to have the region formally annexed to Croatia — of course, without ceding any territory as proposed by the SDA. However, if Croatia moves beyond its informal partition of the federation, it will leave a dangerously unstable, poverty-stricken, Moslem mini-state in the heart of the Balkans, bent on revising the borders created by force, possibly a source of radical Islamic influence — and still containing within it the core strongholds of Bosnia’s militant working class. Croatia thus needs to be convinced that, whatever RS eventually does, it must be satisfied with its dominating

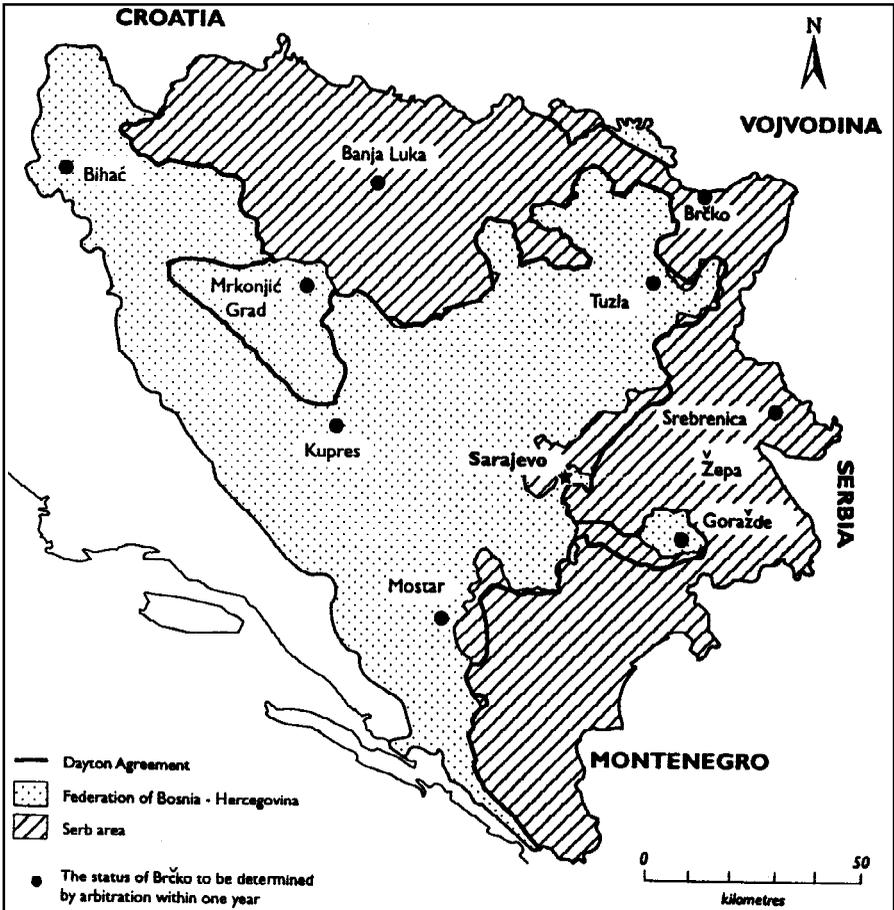


Figure 3. Dayton partition plan. Serb republic achieves all its objectives: a wide northern corridor and elimination of eastern Moslem enclaves. Long contiguous borders with Serbia and Croatia, despite ethnic realities, make ultimate complete partition easier.

position over half of Bosnia in a confederal set-up.

Therefore, NATO troops and imperialist policy have generally aimed at bolstering the unequal compromise and stopping attempts by any of the three sides to revise the Dayton set-up in any hurry. The onset of the NATO operation revealed that illusions that NATO would enforce justice better than the UN had, or that it would be genuinely even handed, were false.

From the start, IFOR retreated to the same position as UNPROFOR when it came to helping refugees return, arresting war criminals or even protecting mass grave sites — the Serbian and Croatian paramilitaries had to agree, because IFOR would not fight them. In some cases, Serbs arrested for attacking Moslems trying to return to their homes were handed over to the Serb police! Even Karadzic freely whisked through IFOR checkpoints for a while. Likewise, Croatian paramilitaries openly violated Dayton by enforcing the partition of Mostar, with little response from IFOR. Justice Golstein of the International War Crimes Tribunal complained about IFOR's interpretation of its mandate.

On the other hand, NATO early identified where it would strike hard: against the allegedly foreign “Islamist” fighters still in Bosnia. In February 1996, the US State Department alleged there were up to 150 “foreign” Islamic fighters still in Bosnia, and their presence threatened further US aid. IFOR raided an alleged “terrorist training camp” on February 16, detaining 11 Bosnians from the Interior Ministry and three Iranians. Izetbegovic claimed the camp's purpose was to train people to hunt war criminals. Around the same time, HVO forces also detained nine Iranians they alleged to be “mujahideen”. Earlier, the first major show of force by IFOR was against Bosnian troops who had entered a region south of Mostar, which is usually considered part of their country. When they “refused to leave,” two US A-10 close support aircraft were called in and disarmed the Bosnian soldiers. French IFOR troops seized a secret Bosnian government air base, allegedly used to smuggle arms into the country in defiance of the imperialist arms embargo.

The hysteria about a handful of “Islamic” fighters in Bosnia went way beyond any threats to the continued presence of considerable Serbian and Croatian foreign forces among their related paramilitaries. Later in 1996, the US successfully pressured Izetbegovic to remove his friend Hasan Cengic as minister of defence, because he was viewed by Washington as “radical Islamic” with Iranian connections.<sup>5</sup> Unless this happened, the US would not come through with the military help it had promised to bring federation forces to parity with those of RS. Even following the removal of Cengic, however, the US still did little to fulfil this Dayton promise, the Balkan Institute reporting in October 1997 that there was still “a way to go” before parity was

approached. This in turn led to further Bosnian reliance on Islamic countries, including Iran, from where Bosnia attempted to import arms in violation of Dayton, to the anger of NATO.

The combination of this “Islamist” threat and the SDA’s growing frustration with Dayton led to an open campaign by imperialism against the Izetbegovic regime. The Western powers in 1998 *imposed sanctions on the municipality of Sarajevo*, the very heart of years of multi-ethnic resistance, on the pretext that the Sarajevo government was preventing the return of Serbs and Croats to the city.<sup>6</sup> In reality, *far more* Serbs and Croats have returned to Bosniak-controlled regions than vice versa — and the Western powers have done nothing to help Moslem refugees return to regions controlled by RS and the HVO.

The position of the Sarajevo government was that it was in favour of the returns, but housing was not available, because the houses of the Serbs and Croats who had fled were occupied by Moslem refugees who were unable to return to RS or HVO-controlled regions. Hence, Sarajevo proposed that the Sarajevo returns be carried out in tandem with returns of Serbs to Knin and Croats and Moslems to Banja Luka, and that Western governments come through with their unmet promises of aid for housing construction. According to the SDA, only 10% of funds needed for reconstruction to house the 20,000 targeted Serb and Croat returnees had been received. Sanctions would therefore hold up the process further.

In July 1998, NATO invited the eight-party Bosnian opposition bloc to its headquarters in Brussels and declared support for the campaign against the Izetbegovic regime by these parties — an unprecedented interference into Bosnia’s internal affairs.<sup>7</sup> Izetbegovic asked if they also wanted “air force support of NATO in order to come to power”. Ironically, many of the parties of the opposition were the very non-nationalist social democratic parties that Western governments ignored throughout the war, because their programs got in the way of partition plans; now that partition was irreversible, the West turned to these forces to balance the Islamic tendencies of the SDA.

Around the same time, the US government invited the five-party Croatian opposition bloc to Washington to support their campaign against Tudjman’s HDZ.<sup>8</sup> It was all the more embarrassing because Tudjman was never invited anywhere, and caused an upsurge of anti-US nationalism among the ruling elite. This was a way for the US to put pressure on Tudjman to draw back from his anti-Dayton policy. Furthermore, given that the West had no intention of trying to enforce the return of refugees demanded by the Bosnian government, what was needed in order to keep the Bosniak party in Dayton was the arrest of a certain number of war criminals —

especially since Bosnia had sent all the indicted Moslems, but Croatia, Serbia and their cronies in Bosnia had completely refused to cooperate with the tribunal. Western threats of sanctions against Croatia in 1997, however, forced Tudjman to hand over 10 of the 17 indicted Croats.

The other demand on Tudjman was that his government stop obstructing the return of Serb refugees to Croatia. However, Milosevic, still aiming to settle these refugees in Kosova, was obstructing their return from his own side as well. In general, apart from Dayton, Western policy towards Tudjman was also determined by the crony nature of his regime, like that of Milosevic, and his growing incorporation of the Ustashe into the state apparatus.

The blatant attempts of the Karadzic leadership in RS to revise Dayton also had to be fought. As RS had the best deal out of Dayton, attempts to go further had to be fought so as to keep the peace on the other side. Furthermore, RS had totally refused to cooperate in handing over war criminals. In fact, Dayton stipulated that indicted war criminals not hold any positions of power, yet the greatest of all such war criminals, Karadzic, remained in control of RS, while the genocidal General Mladic remained head of the armed forces.

In 1996, Karadzic handed over power to his loyal deputy, the fanatical chauvinist Biliana Plavsic, in order to appease the West. Plavsic went on to depose Mladic from the armed forces command — which was easy because Mladic and Karadzic were seen as political rivals, the former closer to Milosevic. However, Karadzic continued to thumb his nose at the West by playing a prominent role in political life. The US campaigned strongly to remove him from this position, and if possible to arrest him: on the one hand, the capture of Karadzic would deflect attention from the failings of Dayton regarding refugee return; on the other hand, Karadzic was a political opponent of Milosevic from the ultra-right, so the US believed the latter could be persuaded to help. Milosevic was even offered the removal of the remaining “outer ring” of sanctions — access to IMF/World bank funds — if Karadzic alone was captured.

Suddenly, in mid-1997, support for the US campaign came from unexpected quarters — Karadzic’s appointed president, Plavsic. It was amazing how rapidly the international media turned Plavsic into a “moderate”. Being “moderate” in relation to imperialism had no relation to moderation on Serb nationalism. Long the advocate of all the most extreme positions, opposed to the Dayton accord, believing Moslems to be “genetic mutants”, lauding Seselj, Arkan and a host of other bloody paramilitary leaders for years, Plavsic was no moderate. She had even thought that Mladic was not hard enough when, following his slaughter of 8000 Moslems in Srebrenica, he had wanted to call it a day rather than do the same elsewhere.

An ideologically committed chauvinist, Plavsic had no interest in promoting the return of Moslem refugees to RS. However, as head of state, she now came to a “pragmatic” nationalist position similar to that of Milosevic (with whom she had once refused to shake hands because he was too moderate). The need for Western aid and investment meant that it was not necessary to push for immediate union with Serbia when in essence it was happening slowly; a verbal commitment could be made to cooperating with the war crimes tribunal, and if she still resisted handing over Karadzic, she at least believed that he should be obliging enough to disappear from political life.

Plavsic represented the section of the Bosnian Serb elite who understood that once it had made its conquests, it had to get on with the rest of the world if its economy was to recover. This was of less interest to Karadzic because he headed a section of the elite of such ingrained corruption, ruling a smuggling empire built through years of sanctions, that free economic borders might threaten their monopoly.

The US openly intervened on the side of Plavsic, including direct intervention by US troops to help replace pro-Karadzic forces in police stations in Banja Luka. Milosevic, while having a position almost identical to that of Plavsic on these issues, exploited the situation by playing the mediator among Serbs. Karadzic before the tribunal might reveal all the evidence that Milosevic had organised everything; therefore, like Plavsic, he preferred that Karadzic just disappear. From late 1997, it was clear that Milosevic had decisively thrown his weight behind Plavsic, who responded by calling Milosevic a “great politician”.

In late 1997 elections, Karadzic’s SDS and his allies in the Radical Party (SRS) profited from a nationalist reaction to US support for Plavsic; despite Western media reports of a big showing for Plavsic, compared to results for the 1996 elections for the Presidency and House of Representatives, the SDS-SRS ultra-right bloc suffered barely at all. Plavsic’s new party made a space for itself by taking votes away from other oppositionists further to the left — from the Social Democrats, who had long opposed Serbian nationalism, and from the Socialist Party, set up by supporters of Milosevic after he had split with Karadzic. SDS corruption allegations led to more votes to its more extremist allies in the SRS, who also profited from nationalist reaction to US support for Plavsic, while the Socialists and Social Democrats made important gains among working-class centres in Banja Luka and elsewhere, despite losing some space to Plavsic. In the other half of Bosnia, there were also important gains for anti-nationalist candidates, in particular the victory of the United List ’97 bloc in Tuzla, against both the HDZ and the SDA.

The SDS-SRS was defeated by the decision of the Socialists and Social Democrats, with Milosevic’s blessing, to form a coalition with Plavsic’s “reformed” chauvinists. In

January 1998, Milosevic and the US government jointly sponsored a new ruling coalition of these three parties, headed by Social Democrat leader Milorand Dodic.

While this was certainly a step forward for the citizens of RS, in reality the new regime was “new” more in appearance than in substance. It would no longer openly thumb its nose at Dayton, but by late 1999, the Dodic regime had done virtually nothing to encourage the refugee returns it had promised. And while Karadzic finally disappeared from public life, and promises were made regarding war criminals, the new regime included people very close to mass killer Mladic, including the new defence minister, Manoljo Milovanovic — previously Mladic’s chief of staff. Milovanovic made clear that Mladic would not be handed over to the tribunal: “He is safe. Thanks to the security system, SFOR (the replacement of IFOR) cannot get Mladic.”<sup>9</sup>

However, Western governments rushed in with extensive aid and loans to the new regime, seemingly taking at face value its statements about refugees. In January 1998, the US announced plans for an aid package to RS of between \$70 and \$100 million — earmarked for things like small business, privatisation and banking reform. Plavsic signed an agreement with the World Bank for \$17 million in reconstruction credit, of which 15% was for regions controlled by indicted war criminals.

Throughout 1997-98, when the US and NATO openly and blatantly courted the oppositions to Izetbegovic, Tadjman and Karadzic, the same policy *was not adopted towards Milosevic*. On the contrary, his help with installing Dodic was again evidence to Western leaders of his indispensable role in promoting regional stability. Even the 88-day mass movement against Milosevic in 1996-97 did not result in any invitation for the opposition Zajedno coalition (the centre-right Democratic Party of Zoran Djindjic and Serb Revival Movement of Vuk Draskovic and the centre-left Civic Alliance of Vesna Pesic) to visit Washington or Brussels.

Indeed, when Draskovic broke with Zajedno later in 1997 by taking part in Milosevic’s September election farce, against the position of the united opposition, this new position was welcomed by Holbrooke, who visited Belgrade and castigated the opposition for its boycott. This was the beginning of Draskovic emerging as a kind of Milosevic agent in the opposition, leading him to join the regime in 1999 and then emerge as the chief fire extinguisher of the mid-1999 uprising against Milosevic — and the West’s favoured oppositionist, one who did not threaten the stability of the regime.

When Milosevic’s candidate in the late 1997 Serbian presidential elections, Zoran Lilic, was challenged by the SRS’s Seselj, the US Balkan envoy, Robert Gelbard, openly backed Milosevic, declaring — not wrongly — that Seselj was a “fascist” who represented “backwardness” and “darkness”.<sup>10</sup> Even in late 1998, when asked by Serbian oppositionist Veran Matic why the US still saw Milosevic as the leader to deal with, Holbrooke

replied that there was no credible opposition leader.<sup>11</sup>

The view that Milosevic could enforce “stability”, and the initial fright from the uprising of the KLA, which Washington’s envoy labelled “terrorists,” tells us something of imperialism’s fears in the region. The rise of Kosovar resistance was essentially an extension of the huge revolutionary uprising in Albania in 1997, which shook the emerging capitalist state to its foundations. It took place at the same time as the giant mass movement in Serbia and similar mass movements against the Bulgarian and Croatian regimes.

While the Dayton set-up allows the colonial apparatus to suck debt out of Bosnia, making money through economic investment has been less successful. One reason is that, despite optimistic offers of reconstruction aid, necessary for economic penetration in such a destroyed society, few Western governments want to put the necessary cash in; another is the existence of the same “crony capitalism” in the Bosnian regimes that exists in Serbia, Croatia and much of eastern Europe.

While the Dodic regime’s record on refugee returns was little different from that of its predecessor, Western capital was more impressed by its achievements on economic “reform”. The imperialist Contact Group in February 1999 “praised the progress made in the Republika Srpska towards development of a market economy and expressed concern over the lack of equal progress in the federation”.<sup>12</sup>

Perhaps one of the reasons for this “lack” in the federation was the still relatively strong position of the working class within the Bosniak-controlled areas. Despite the pro-capitalist nature of the SDA, the fact that it does not rule the same kind of police state as do the HVO and RS means the working-class movement has continued to have an independent existence. On October 25, 1999, 30,000 workers from Bosniak-majority areas of the federation, organised by the trade union federation, marched demanding “bread because we are hungry,” publication of the labour law, a social welfare program, collective contracts and payment of unpaid salaries. Leaders claimed, “workers agree to privatisation, but not to plunder”, which in the circumstances means no to privatisation. ■

# 9. Sowing the Seeds of Catastrophe in Kosova

## Kosova & Dayton

From the West's open dealing with the Milosevic regime over the partition of Bosnia, the world witnessed in 1999 an apparent 180 degree turn — the brutal war launched by NATO against Serbia. That this war was proclaimed to be over Serbia's ethnic cleansing in Kosova is ironic, given that the abolition of Kosova's autonomy in 1989-90 drew little Western reaction. Years of brutal police repression and apartheid drew customary complaints about human rights, but almost never calls to reinstitute Kosova's legal autonomy. And where the Western powers were at least compelled to recognise formally the legality of Bosnia's case, with Kosova the same powers hid behind legalisms to refuse to recognise the right of the Kosovars to self-determination.

When Milosevic finally abolished the fiction of the old "Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" in 1992, setting up a new "Federal Republic of Yugoslavia" between Serbia and Montenegro and a new bourgeois constitution, the oppressed Albanians had no say in the matter. Hence Kosova's inclusion in the new Yugoslavia was constitutionally invalid.

Nevertheless, at Dayton, while recognising the Bosnian Serb gangster "republic", the US also officially recognised the borders of the new "Yugoslavia", including Kosova. Kosova, which had a huge Albanian majority, was thus left on a far lower footing than Republika Srpska, even though the latter had not previously had a Serb majority but had been carved out of Bosnia through expulsion of the local populations. Even if the maximum occasionally on offer to the Kosovars, autonomy, were re-instituted, it would still be a lower status than that of "republic" within the Yugoslav federation.

Kosova remaining part of Serbia was part of Dayton's fragile regional balance between Serbia and Croatia. Moderate Kosovan leader Ibrahim Rugova, who had led a Gandhian resistance for Kosovan rights for years, had appealed to be invited to the Dayton conference, but was ignored. Said a Kosova Liberation Army commander: "We feel a deep, deep sense of betrayal. We mounted a peaceful, civilised protest to

fight the totalitarian rule of Milosevic. We did not go down the road of nationalist hatred, always respecting Serbian churches and monasteries. The result is that we were ignored.” The Dayton accord “taught us a painful truth: those who want freedom must fight for it”.<sup>1</sup>

Though victorious, the Serbian ruling elite could not be content with the situation in Kosova. The bulk of the population were completely alienated from Serbian institutions and set up their own “parallel” institutions; demonstrations and many forms of peaceful protest continued to intensify. The massive human rights violations directed against these activities could be ignored by the West, but Serbia, like Turkey and Croatia, would remain excluded from membership of the EC and other European institutions until it improved its image. Furthermore, the betrayal at Dayton emboldened a group of radical Albanians to give up on the peaceful road — in early 1996, the first attacks were launched by a previously unknown group, the KLA.

## **Kosova in Greater Serbia**

As the Serbian elite aimed to clarify its borders after years of war, the place of Kosova was particularly difficult. The exact borders of Greater Serbia were still unclear, and this was a source of instability and an identity problem for the new bourgeois nation-state. Since Vojvodina had a slight Serb majority, the abolition of its autonomy had remained fairly stable; much of the Croat minority had fled, and the Hungarian minority remained quiescent in this wealthy region. Montenegro had remained firmly within the new “Yugoslav” federation, but was a republic in its own right, officially separate from Serbia, something which the elite aimed ultimately to rationalise. Even the official international border between Republika Srpska and Serbia remained to be resolved.

According to Serbian oppositionist Sonja Biserko, from the Serbian Helsinki Centre, this lack of clarity about borders and what exactly Serbia/Yugoslavia is, is a major block to the completion of Serbia’s privatisation campaign. When Serbs and foreigners buy up assets, where does the home market begin and end? Over what borders do import/export taxes have to be paid? Will there be further breakaways?

The most serious issue was Kosova. How could Greater Serbia, constructed on an unambiguously ethnic basis, continue to rule over an area which was 90% Albanian, especially given the inability to pacify it? Despite the fact that it was ideologically central to the Milosevic regime’s nationalist mythology, continued Serbian rule could only be a source of permanent instability. While autonomy, as later pushed by the West at Rambouillet in 1999, was preferable to independence, the stabilisation of an ethnic Serb state might require shedding as much of this Albanian population as possible, requiring a partition: if Serbia could expel half the Albanian population, it could keep

the more economically valuable north (where the famous Trepca lead and zinc mines are located) while accepting some kind of Palestinian-style “autonomy” for an enormous refugee ghetto in the south.

Throughout 1998, voices were again raised among the Serbian intelligentsia for partition, in particular by Dobrica Cosic, the intellectual “father” of modern Serb nationalism and Milosevic’s mentor, who had advocated such a solution for years. Beginning the offensive in March 1992 on Drenica, in central-north Kosova, an Albanian “wedge” between eastern and western Kosova, fit in well with a scenario of territorial division.

The West preferred a different solution — improving human rights to dampen Albanian resistance while insisting the whole remain within “Yugoslavia”. However, because future “stability” in the region depends on a strong Serb capitalist class in a position to complete privatisation, Western leaders were not blind to its special needs. Moreover, since forced separation of populations, allowing Western troops to patrol the lines of separation, had been the key to reactionary post-Dayton “stability” in Bosnia, perhaps such a scenario could also be used in Kosova.

Hence, a number of voices from the imperialist camp appeared to favour this solution. “Kosovo is to Serbs what Jerusalem and the West Bank are to Israelis — a sacred ancestral homeland now inhabited largely by Muslims...the analogy with Israel and Jerusalem is an apt one. The Kosovo issue ... may have to be settled one day by some sort of partition”, according to the former US ambassador to Yugoslavia.<sup>2</sup> Just before the launching of NATO’s 1999 war, David Owen, Britain’s chief negotiator during the Bosnian war, proposed the partition of Kosova, with every square mile “lost” to Serbia and “given” to its Albanian population to be compensated by the same amount of territory in “Republika Srpska” being allowed to formally join Serbia, despite the fact that this would violate the territorial integrity of Bosnia and destroy Dayton. The argument was taken up by Thomas Friedman of the *New York Times* and a number of other Western policy makers.

## Fears of destabilisation

However, while partition would make Kosova more manageable, it also posed great difficulties for Western policy. The thing Western leaders most wanted to avoid was the independence of Kosova and its union with Albania. The independence or union with Albania of even *part* of Kosova would have the same destabilising effects, so any partition would have to avoid the Albanian part formally breaking away. Moreover, as Serbs were a far smaller section of the population in Kosova than in Bosnia, a much greater proportion of Albanians would need to be driven from their homes in the kind

of partition that would satisfy Serbia, something the West feared would overwhelm the southern Balkans.

For these reasons, Washington had long feared instability in Kosova far more than anywhere else in former Yugoslavia. During the darkest days of Serb-run death camps in Bosnia, in November 1992, Eagleburger, of the outgoing Bush administration, warned that ethnic cleansing in Kosova would be “qualitatively different” from Bosnia and would require US intervention.<sup>3</sup> Bush later made a formal warning, which was repeated by incoming President Clinton. This was referred to as the “nightmare scenario”.

While the disaster in Bosnia was contained within the borders of the former Yugoslavia, a major outbreak in Kosova, either due to large numbers of Albanian refugees pouring across borders, or major Albanian armed resistance, would pose a major threat to the stability of other new bourgeois regimes in Albania, Macedonia and throughout the southern Balkans. The influx of large numbers of Albanians into Macedonia would alter the precarious ethnic balance in that country, possibly resulting in a radicalisation of the Albanian minority there, which might choose to join a struggle for a united Albanian state. Such a blow-out of Macedonia could then result in a wider war, bringing in Albania, Bulgaria, Greece and Turkey, thus threatening the southern flank of NATO in the region connecting Europe to the oilfields of the Middle East: “...with most ethnic Albanians concentrated in homogeneous areas bordering Albania, the drive to extend Albania’s borders remains feasible. That drive is not only a wider threat to European stability but also to Albanian moderation ... Many KLA commanders tout themselves as a ‘liberation army for all Albanians’ — precisely what frightens the NATO alliance most.”<sup>4</sup> Such “homogeneous” Albanian areas also cross into Montenegro and south Serbia proper.

The reference to “Albanian moderation” was related to the origins of the KLA, namely how its arms supply blossomed in the second half of 1997. In early 1997, an enormous uprising in Albania shattered the pro-Western, anti-Communist regime of Salih Berisha and five years of attempting to build capitalism. The state apparatus fell apart. Some 750,000 guns were seized by the population from the armouries. Many of these weapons found their way to the KLA. Despite the intervention of Greek and Italian NATO forces, the situation in Albania remained highly unstable, the state apparatus still in tatters, and the rise of Kosovar resistance was a block to the restabilisation of post-Berisha Albania.

A successful independence struggle in Kosova could also encourage other struggles for self-determination in the region. Neighbouring Bulgaria has very large Turkish and other Moslem populations, there are related populations across the border in Greece, while there is a restive Greek minority in southern Albania and a large Hungarian

minority in Romania. Shorn of its Albanian population by a united Albania, Macedonian nationalism might be encouraged to look again at the Macedonian minorities in Greece and Bulgaria. All these minorities have often suffered some form of oppression by the various states. And while Turkish regimes may rhetorically support oppressed Moslem peoples in the Balkans, any move towards independence or real autonomy for Kosova would set too much of a bad example to its own brutally oppressed Kurds.

Actions by the Serbian regime (driving hundreds of thousands south over the borders) *and* by the Kosovans (armed struggle leading to independence for Kosova) were both seen as major threats. The latter case was all the more a threat if carried out by an armed liberation movement outside of imperialist control, like the KLA. The only thing that began to change the rhetorical attitude of Western leaders after March 1998 was the sudden rise of the KLA as an independent armed force.

That armed Albanian resistance had long been feared as much as ethnic cleansing can be seen from a Congressional Research Service Report in 1989, which claimed that the alienation of Kosova's Albanians might cause damage to the all-important "territorial integrity and stability of Yugoslavia" (which the US "has a strong interest in"), if the Albanians "increase the pressure for a change in the political and territorial status quo in Yugoslavia, either by forceful or peaceful means".<sup>5</sup>

## Growing Western economic interests in Serbia

The pattern established by Dayton continued from late 1995 to early 1998. In the second half of 1997, the US government and Milosevic cooperated in removing the most extreme wing of the Bosnian Serb leadership, which was unsatisfied with Dayton, and replacing it with a less tainted wing of the same Serb Democratic Party. This removed the ultra-right opponents of Milosevic around Karadzic who wanted to move from the Dayton compromise to full-scale union with Serbia prematurely. This resulted in improving ties between the US and Serbia, including the opening of a Yugoslav consulate and permission to land planes in the US in February 1998.

The west European powers, however, had not waited as long as the "hardline" US, having rushed in diplomatically and economically following Dayton and the lifting of sanctions in late 1995. This related to the growing legal and illegal privatisation of the Serbian economy.

Serbia's privatisation legislation was based on the previous federal legislation, allowing workers and managers to buy out firms — though workers' shares were usually small, 15% in the case of the Trepca mining/metallurgy conglomerate. By first removing them from workers' control, the Socialist Party managers were able to take as much as they wanted. By 1994 "half of Serbian industry has been quietly privatised

at a rapid rate ... already in 72.6% of state enterprises, 660,000 employees have bought shares ... Behind these shares, however, hide several hundred managers, from the Socialist Party, who make business dealings of a frankly capitalist character and virtually thieving manner, taking the lion's share."<sup>6</sup>

Because much of this share buying was done in-house, by workers and managers, in the murky world of Serbia's legal system, many of these enterprises can still be called "state" enterprises. Exactly the same process has been at work in Croatia's "state" industries. In both countries, the shares of the workers are often worthless, not only because of the relative weight of management shares, but because more often than not these "managers" fleece the assets of the "state" enterprises to build other private enterprises they own outright.

The economic sanctions on Serbia during the Bosnian war helped build this elite while ordinary Serbs suffered. Milosevic and his ministers stole \$3.8 billion in foreign exchange owned by citizens, under the cover of putting it in more secure places abroad. It was deposited in their private accounts in Cyprus and Moscow.<sup>7</sup>

Most state ministers are also big business people. Milosevic's son Marko owns the duty free shops at Serbia's borders and airports. Prime Minister Marjanovic owns around \$50 million, largely through questionable deals by the trading firm Progres, which he "manages". Former vice premier Slobodan Radulovic runs a retail chain, and was accused by workers of ripping off \$372 million from the company. Zoran Todorovic, former leader of the "Yugoslav Left" (JUL), set up by Milosevic's wife, directed state petrol firms while building the giant privately owned T & M Trade company, becoming one of the richest men in Serbia. The JUL — part of Milosevic's ruling coalition — is ironically named, being the major party of Serbian big business, controlled by these tycoon ministers and former generals.

In October 1997, the regime announced a new privatisation law, aiming to sell off major chunks of strategic Serbian industries, including oil, the electric company, cement works, the Trepca complex and the 75 largest companies. A scramble for posts in state industries about to be privatised began, to make sure the clique around party leaders grabbed the lion's share. JUL leader Todorovic was assassinated, part of a wave of similar killings, just after the privatisation plan was announced and this scramble for spoils began.

While seeking to legitimise its wealth, the ruling elite also looked for foreign partners. Almost as soon as Dayton was signed and sanctions lifted, the British consultancy firm Nat-West Industries signed a contract with Milosevic to help sell these firms, for a fee of \$10 million, and to manage the Yugoslav debt, for a further nice sum. On the board of Nat-West is Douglas Hurd, former British foreign secretary, who was chiefly

responsible for Britain's pro-Serbian position on the Bosnian war, and his former intelligence committee chair, Pauline Neville-Jones. Hurd earned 250 thousand pounds a year in this career. Meanwhile, the large Beocin Cement Industry was sold to French and British investors in 1998 for \$350 million, while the giant Pancevo Petrochemical Industry was evaluated at a billion German marks and was ready to offer shares on the London capital market as the 1999 war opened.

Nat-West aided the sale in 1997 of half of Serbian Telecom to Greek and Italian investors. Italy has developed an interest in the construction of an oil pipeline from the Caspian reserves to run from Russia through Yugoslavia along the Danube to the Italian port of Trieste, and the construction of an electric power cable under the Adriatic Sea, Serbia being the largest producer of electricity in the region, through an integrated system which includes Kosova's massive lignite reserves. Greek capital has played a major role in Serbia and Kosova, as in the rest of the southern Balkans. A host of giant Greek companies — Telecom, Mytilinaos, the National Bank, Kokkalis, Delta, Viochalko and others — have become a major force in the region.

The whole of Kosova was put up for sale at bargain prices. The Greek company Mytilinaos AG bought a \$500 million concession in the Trepca lead and zinc mines in Kosova, from which the Milosevic regime had sacked 13,000 Albanian workers, as a step towards buying a share. Mytilinaos is a major metal export-import firm with links throughout the Balkans. Greece and Italy were given the right to exploit Kosova's PTT telephone network. The Albanian majority, thrown out of all public sector jobs in 1989-90, were thus excluded from their legitimate right to shares in any privatisation; neither were they consulted about these deals. Giving workers their rightful shares would leave less for foreign partners and make it more difficult to sell the industries.

Kosovan leaders called on foreign companies not to take part in Milosevic's fire sale privatisation of Kosova's assets. According to Ibrahim Rugova in 1998, "The Serbian regime has put on sale the major economic facilities of Kosovo, like Trepca, the Electric Company, Feronikl etc, which is just a form of economic pressure on Kosova and its citizens. We appeal to the international community and the UN to exert pressure on Belgrade to terminate this process. Legitimate institutions of the Republic of Kosova avail themselves of the opportunity to warn foreign companies that every contract signed with this intention, as the Greek company Mytilinaos did, will be null and void ..."<sup>8</sup> In January 1998, the underground Kosova parliament denounced such "flagrant violations of the rights of Kosovar employees and citizens" and warned foreign governments and business people, "The Albanian people will treat them as neo-colonialists and demand reparations".<sup>9</sup>

None of this leaves much "socialism" that some among the western left believed

was imperialism's problem with Milosevic. Western imperialism attacked Serbia in 1999, not for "socialism", but despite these considerable opportunities for investment. The main impediment to such opportunities in Kosova was the Albanian resistance. Ironically, some assets which came under NATO attack were Western owned or up for privatisation. In fact, the continuation of the so-called "outer ring" of sanctions after 1995 — denial of access to IMF and World Bank funds — is a major factor *slowing* Serbia's privatisation plan.

This outer ring aims to bring about certain political changes necessary for the stabilisation of the post-Dayton Balkans. One demand is that Serbia cooperate with the War Crimes Tribunal. Otherwise, the Bosnian government, which has fully cooperated, and the Croatian government, which has reluctantly cooperated under Western pressure, would feel free to break the blatantly pro-Serbian Dayton process. The other demand is "substantial progress towards the solution of the Kosovo issue", including negotiations over the "political status" of Kosova, clearly central for the region's stability — though this fell far short of demanding that Belgrade reinstitute Kosova's legal autonomous status. In fact, Kosova had slipped so far off the Western agenda that even that condition had been dropped until war broke out in Kosova in 1998: in late 1997, Washington offered the lifting of the outer ring on the sole condition that Milosevic hand over *just one* of 50 or so Bosnian Serb war criminals, Radovan Karadzic.

French and German leaders, pushing Milosevic and Rugova towards some educational reforms for the Albanian majority in late 1997, offered to reward Milosevic with Yugoslavia's return to OSCE and opening the road to normalising EU-Yugoslav relations. The problem was the right-wing turn in Belgrade in March 1999 following the appearance of the KLA, when Milosevic brought Seselj's fascist Serbian Radical Party (SRS) back into the ruling coalition for the first time since 1993, and the educational reform was ripped up.

Despite the obsession of some of the left with alleged Western hostility to the "leftist" Milosevic, it was the distant "left" origins of the parties of Milosevic and his wife that made them more "pragmatic" nationalists, who knew when to make necessary compromises with imperialism for regional stability. The view that imperialism had any argument with these parties maintaining some "left" social-democratic imagery within their reactionary bourgeois nationalist ideology is mistaken. On the contrary, it was precisely from the time his wife, Miriana Markovic, set up the "Yugoslav Left" (JUL) in 1993-94 to pull Milosevic's Socialist Party away from its ultra-right Chetnik allies that Belgrade's relations with imperialism began to improve, and it became a "factor of stability" since the ultra-right was dumped in 1993, supporting every western partition plan for Bosnia.

JUL's "left" rhetoric in any case was harmless, being essentially a vehicle for pulling a layer of disgruntled former Titoist military officers, alienated by Milosevic's Chetnik ideology, back to the regime's periphery. And this was achieved in a distinctly "unleft" way — by providing them with opportunities to make large amounts of money via sanctions busting and the regime's black market style of privatisation, the "Yugoslav Left" hence becoming the major party of Serbian big business.

Only with the return of the ultra-right in 1998 — creating an unlikely coalition of Milosevic's Socialist Party, the "leftist" bourgeois JUL and Seselj's fascistic SRS — and with it, radically repressive policies in Kosova, did the West and Belgrade again fall out over tactics.

Further economic opportunities were not blocked by any anti-capitalist problem. As Serbian economist Mladjan Kovacevic noted during the upswing of conflict in Kosova during 1998, the main reason that foreign investment was not greater was "the risk factor", the conflict in Kosova.<sup>10</sup> This instability was due to the Serbian bourgeoisie's inability to subdue or partition Kosova. Its chosen methods — maintenance of apartheid, denial of all rights to Albanians and outright slaughter of the first signs of opposition in March 1998 — were not having success.

### **Rise of the KLA & Serbia's counterinsurgency war**

What messed up this neat arrangement? The only factor that changed was the intensification of the Kosovan liberation movement and in particular the steady growth of the KLA. Ironic as it may seem now, the green light for Milosevic to crack down on the KLA was given by the US government following a number of KLA attacks on Serbian police in February 1998. Robert Gelbard, US special envoy, in a speech in Belgrade, first congratulated Milosevic for his government's constructive policy in Bosnia. Turning to Kosova, he stated that the KLA is "without any question, a terrorist organisation".<sup>11</sup> When the US government uses the term "terrorist," it has a clear meaning: they should be destroyed.

The KLA's core derives from "Marxist-Leninist" forces which fought Belgrade's repressive rule in the 1980s and had links with Albania's Stalinist regime. Many of these leaders were in exile in Western Europe. One of these groups, active in Kosova and in Germany, was called the Red Front. "About 80 leading members were assassinated in Germany in the 1980s by the Yugoslav secret service with the help of the German secret service. This eliminated most of the left wing, Maoist leaders."<sup>12</sup> The KLA was founded in 1993 by activists largely from the tradition of the Red Front, the most important of which was the LPK, the Kosova People's Movement.

Its sudden fame in the later part of 1997 was due to the liberation of hundreds of

thousands of weapons in Albania during the revolutionary uprising earlier that year. Many of these weapons were eagerly snatched up by Albanians in Kosovan villages living under the brutal decade-long military repression. Volunteers, arms and money have also come from the 600,000 Albanians working in Germany and Switzerland. Among those who came to lead the resistance were many Albanian former officers of the old JNA and Kosovan Territorial Defence Forces, from the period previous to 1989, who had extensive military training.

By 1997-98, the small-scale armed struggle began to coalesce with the increasing frustration among sections of the Kosovan political leadership in Pristina with the seven-year “Gandhian” strategy implemented by the Kosova League for Democracy (LDK), headed by Rugova. While the system of “parallel institutions” provided Albanians with basic services denied them by the Serbian state, the feeling was growing that this policy was only perpetuating Serbia’s apartheid policies, paid for by doubly taxing the Albanian masses. The aim of the strategy, to attract Western support, had been a complete failure.

In 1996, a section of the political leadership, led by Adem Demaqi, who had spent 28 years in a Serbian prison, began agitating for a change of strategy. For Demaqi and his Kosova Parliamentary Party, both more vigorous action and engagement with genuine Serbian opposition forces, were more important than the hopeless goal of attracting Western attention. The major Serbian bourgeois opposition forces had a line on Kosova either identical to, or more extreme than, Milosevic. However, in a 1997 “Serbian-Albanian Dialogue” organised by the Serbian Helsinki Human Rights Committee, considerable support among anti-nationalist Serbs was expressed for Demaqi’s strategy that a Republic of Kosova, on gaining self-determination, could enter into a new and equal federation with Serbia and Montenegro. He called this concept “Balkanija”. Other Balkan republics could also join. This was a way of going beyond a return to mere “autonomy” within Serbia, now universally rejected by Kosovars, while falling just short of total independence, in order to appeal to a lingering nostalgia for Yugoslavia among many non-nationalist Serbs. According to Demaqi, “The same mechanism which keeps by sheer violence both Albanians and other peoples in captivity, has been hindering democratisation in Serbia for 100 years”.

While Demaqi still advocated peaceful methods, the Milosevic regime, the Serbian bourgeois opposition and Western governments all ignored these ideas. By mid-1998, the KLA had appointed Demaqi’s party as its political leadership, in opposition to the Rugova line. Branches of his party throughout Kosova merged with the KLA. In some ways this may appear an odd combination: the “radical” KLA leaders were vociferously opposed to any compromise on complete independence, while Demaqi’s concept of a

Kosovan republic in Yugoslavia made him more “moderate” in this respect than even Rugova’s LDK. However, the KLA and Demaqi forces had in common the view that Kosovans needed to exert their own strength and rely on their own forces, if they were going to get anywhere.

Whether the KLA had the military strength to take on Milosevic’s terror machine in early 1998 will need closer examination. It appears that the necessary level of overall command was not there, different sections often operating their own agendas. There is little doubt, however, that it corresponded to the feelings of the mass of Kosovars at the time, and thousands of villagers joined in order to exercise the right of self-protection from the police and army. “There is no doubt that these groups have the full support of the local population”, according to Serbian Albanian journalist Fehim Rexhepi.<sup>13</sup>

The US reacted with hostility to the appearance of the KLA. “Muslim Aid for Albanians a Threat to Peace” according to the *Sydney Morning Herald* of May 16, 1998, quoting senior US advisers, fearful this could turn the KLA into “a more dangerous military force”. US envoys Robert Gelbard and Richard Holbrooke brought this message to Milosevic when they met him in May, briefing him “on US intelligence assessments which demonstrate the growing strength of the KLA and how it poses the threat of a large-scale regional conflict”. It was even reported that Osama Bin Laden was operating in the region! US State Department spokesperson James Foley claimed the increased presence of the Serbian army on the Albanian border was “legal and legitimate”, while Richard Holbrooke spoke of his fears of a “Ho Chi Minh Trail” for arms from Albania to Kosova.

The Gelbard speech calling the KLA “terrorist” indicated US support for a mixed strategy: supporting the brutal counterinsurgency war against the KLA, combined with pressuring Milosevic on negotiations with the Rugova leadership to return some measure of autonomy. After the fighting erupted, all Western countries again made it very clear they were utterly opposed to Kosovan independence, despite the fact that years of repression had intensified the virtually unanimous support for independence among the Kosova Albanians expressed in the 1991 referendum. In 1996, the Serbian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights, researching the views of various minorities within Serbia regarding solutions to their oppression, was struck that the choice of “independence” was supported by 100% of Albanians.

But the counterinsurgency strategy adopted by Milosevic and his newly appointed deputy, Seselj, did not have the required results. Within two weeks of Gelbard’s speech, villages in central Kosova were attacked by helicopter gunships and burned to the ground, dozens of civilians killed and thousands driven from their homes. This

immediately provided thousands of recruits to the KLA, uprooted Kosovans with nothing else to lose. As the pattern continued, the KLA blossomed into an organisation of 30-40,000 fighters and took over large parts of Kosova.

The first concrete intervention was once again an “arms embargo” on massively armed Yugoslavia. Under this cover, NATO began pushing for its forces to be deployed along Albania’s and Macedonia’s borders with Kosova, to prevent arms getting to the KLA and prevent the conflict from spreading. In exchange for considerable credit from the International Monetary Fund, Albania agreed to some hundred international police training Albanian government forces to block the supply of arms over the border. Given the highly porous mountainous border, it is difficult to know how effective this was in blocking the supply of Albanian Kalashnikovs to the KLA, but the embargo blocked the supply of any of the better anti-tank weapons the KLA needed in this highly unequal conflict.

In mid-May, the US special envoy in the Balkans, Richard Holbrooke, visited Belgrade. Holbrooke pressured Milosevic and Rugova to come to the negotiating table, even though the conditions set by the Albanian side — third party involvement, cessation of hostilities and withdrawal of Serbian special forces — had not been met.

“Unfortunately, experience teaches us that where Holbrooke passes, democracy usually does not flourish”, said Ognjen Pribicevic and other speakers at a discussion at the Belgrade Media Centre.<sup>14</sup> Holbrooke’s visit was followed almost immediately by a more massive wave of ethnic cleansing. Virtually the minute Holbrooke finished his 17 hours in Belgrade, Milosevic also launched a three-pronged attack on oppositional voices — the suppression of broadcasting rights of nearly all electronic media, the ending of the Tito-era autonomy of the universities and the illegal replacement of the federal government and appointment of Momir Bulatovic, a Milosevic man recently crushed in Montenegrin elections, as federal prime minister, against the recommendation of Montenegro’s government.

Holbrooke clearly got what he wanted, the publicity stunt of the US creating “peace talks,” while Milosevic was assured of the dropping of sanctions threats—an assets freeze and a ban on new investment — and Western silence over the strengthening of his dictatorship. To Milosevic it also meant buying time: under the cover of these “negotiations”, he could get on with much more vigorous ethnic cleansing, gambling — correctly — that Western leaders would take another few weeks before “noticing” the terror on the ground.

With far superior weaponry, the Serbian forces drove the KLA back from much of the central region it had taken over. Western governments and media did begin to notice the terror several weeks after Holbrooke’s visit, and so imposed the above

sanctions after all; but by mid-July they had again dropped the rhetoric, now explicitly claiming that any NATO intervention against the Serbian military would help the KLA, which was against the Western agenda. Articles in the imperialist media began to suggest that Western leaders were considering bombing both Serbian forces and the KLA. The August 8 *Economist* reported: “The operations by the Serb security forces that began in central Kosovo in late July were quietly condoned by Western governments”.

Following the Serbian victories, the US intervened with a cease-fire negotiated between Milosevic and Holbrooke in October. Serbia agreed to the withdrawal of only certain special units of its occupation forces. In exchange, the US presented a plan for limited autonomy for Kosova within Serbia, short of the level of autonomy Kosova had enjoyed in Tito’s Yugoslavia. Then, Kosovans had their own Territorial Defence Force; in the US plan, the most they would have were “municipal police”. Nor would Kosova have the same level of representation in the Yugoslav federal government that it had once had. There would be no central bank, again at variance with the previous model. A clause designed to protect minority rights would allow the majority of any minority group — Serbs, Rom, Turks, Bosniaks or “Egyptians” — to block any legislation deemed against the “vital interests” of Kosova — a clause essentially outlawing any push by the Albanian majority for independence. This US-style autonomy, the model used a few months later at the Rambouillet conference, appears to codify some of the *restrictions* on autonomy initially proposed by Milosevic in 1988.

The plan was rejected by the KLA as “not even worth dealing with”. Kosovar negotiators were initially appalled that they were being asked to negotiate for less than what Kosova was legally entitled to, claiming, “It is absurd to negotiate about rights and institutions which the citizens of Kosova once enjoyed and which were then abolished by force and unlawfully”.<sup>15</sup> According to KLA leader Pleurat Sejdiu, the “autonomy” draft rejected by the Albanians in the first round of the Rambouillet negotiations offered not only less than Milosevic had taken away in 1989, but even “less than what Milosevic was ready to give us back in 1989”.<sup>16</sup>

## **NATO ‘cannot be the KLA’s air force’**

Neither the Serbian victories nor the Holbrooke plan stabilised the situation. Because most victims of ethnic cleansing were not fleeing across borders — only around 100,000 at this stage — the scenario of mass exodus was largely avoided; but the fact that some 250,000 uprooted Kosovars moved around *inside Kosova* provided a greater base for recruitment to the KLA. “Western diplomats in Yugoslavia thought the KLA had been destroyed in last summer’s fierce Serbian offensive. Western officials then tried to

ignore the KLA as a factor in political talks.” However, while Serbian forces had captured all the main towns and border regions, the villages were still under KLA control: “As soon as you head off the main roads, held by sullen Serbian police, you encounter officious KLA guerrillas manning sandbagged checkpoints”.<sup>17</sup>

A situation of permanent instability developed, both sides breaking the cease-fire. The instability affected not only Kosova, but also Yugoslavia, Albania and Macedonia. The ambitious privatisation plans of Milosevic dried up because few wanted to invest in a war zone. Western investment was also being driven away from Albania. The situation was highly problematic for Macedonia, which over previous years had experienced clashes between Albanian and Macedonian communities.

The growing chorus in the US for air strikes by early 1999 did not result from any dramatic deterioration. While Milosevic launched new ethnic cleansing operations in January, they were well below the scale of the mid-1998 offensives. Media reports tended more and more to blame the actions of the KLA, and raise the spectre of bombing both sides. According to most reports, the KLA’s sin was that it reoccupied the regions that Serbian special forces had withdrawn from under the cease-fire.

The KLA denied this. While the KLA was not a signatory to the US-imposed cease-fire, and was opposed to the blatantly pro-Serb plan which the State Department handed down, it insisted that it stuck to the cease-fire, despite the cost being great suffering of the Albanian people. “They [the KLA] insist that the cease-fire enables Serbian forces free movement on the territory controlled by the KLA and therefore made it easy for them to carry out armed operations in which mostly the Albanian population suffered.”<sup>18</sup>

The KLA was also highly critical of the interpretation of the cease-fire by the Kosovo Verification Mission (KVM), the unarmed international monitor, which it claimed prevented it from aiding its own people when they were under attack from occupation forces. In fact, the occupation forces acted with impunity under the noses of the “peace verifiers”. Serbian forces launched a major attack on the region of Podujevo on New Year’s Eve, which drove out 5500 Albanians. According to the KLA, it did not relaunch its offensive until January 8, arresting eight Serb officers who had entered KLA territory and attacked civilians. NATO Secretary-General Javier Solana immediately demanded the officers be released, without mentioning the KLA’s demand that some of its fighters be released in exchange. The head of the “peace verifiers” mission claimed, “The irresponsible actions of the KLA are the main reason for the significant increase of tension in Kosovo”.<sup>19</sup>

Just as the KLA released the military officers it had arrested, in exchange, it believed, for the release of some KLA officers, Serbian forces instead massacred 45 civilians in

the southern town of Racak, possibly as an act of revenge. This was followed by a ferocious attack on two neighbouring villages, resulting in another 5300 refugees fleeing to open areas in freezing temperatures, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees. Serbia then threw out the head of the KVM mission, for blaming Serbian forces for the massacre, and refused to allow Louise Arbour, head of the War Crimes Tribunal, in to investigate.

These actions of the KLA were given as a major reason for concern by Western powers. Even following Racak, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook claimed that until then the KLA had been responsible for more deaths since the cease-fire than the Serbian forces, not mentioning that most of these were of members of these occupation forces rather than civilians. The main problem with Milosevic's brutal tactics was their lack of success. The *Guardian Weekly* pointed out that doing nothing or even a "limited bombing campaign" could lead to a drastic attempt by Milosevic to "wipe out the KLA", and, while this might include "large scale evacuation of villages," nevertheless, "all this might be done quite quickly and the casualties might not be huge". However, the *Guardian* thought such an enviable outcome could not be counted on: "But, even if that were the case, the situation would be absolutely unstable. Kosovars would never be reconciled to it, nor would their kin in Albania ... Sooner or later the war would resume."<sup>20</sup>

A further fear was that, if the West's initiatives did not succeed, "The KLA leaders will swiftly become utterly disenchanted with the West and — as if they are not already implacable enough — turn to Islamic radicals ... There are already signs contacts have been established."<sup>21</sup> The author claimed he had seen "mujahideen, who do not look Albanian", wandering around northern Albania, and quoted Serbian propaganda regarding thousands of Islamic "mercenaries" from the Middle East.

In January-February 1999, almost every outburst by Western leaders, even more than the previous year, stressed that both sides were equally at fault and both faced air strikes. Thus, following Racak, NATO's General Klaus Naumann, warning of Western air strikes, said, "Both sides must be made to understand that they've reached the limit".<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Solana declared, "We rule out no option to ensure full respect *by both sides in Kosovo* for the requirements of the international community".<sup>23</sup> Even Albright, during the first round of talks at Rambouillet in February, declared, "I want to deliver that message [that they would be bombed] personally to the Yugoslav side ... and the Albanians".<sup>24</sup>

But as Western commentators pointed out, it is difficult to hit a guerilla army like the KLA with air strikes. According to the *US News and World Report*, in an article headed "One Possibility: Bomb 'em Both", "It would be relatively easy to destroy

many of the heavy weapons, command centres, and air defence batteries belonging to the Serb forces in Kosova. The Albanian rebels, however, are a guerilla force with few assets visible from above.”<sup>25</sup> But air strikes only on Serbian heavy weaponry would give the advantage to the KLA if left at that. This “would amount to renting our air force out to the Albanians”, the article continued. All the Western powers and media commentators were quite certain they did not want that. US foreign policy analyst Jim Hoagland explained in February that air power alone would not work, but rather required the aid of ground forces. However, the existing “ground force”, the KLA, was one the US leaders “distrust and disparage”; hence in Kosova “there is neither appetite nor convincing logic for bombing raids” because, “whatever Washington’s intentions, bombing will have the effect of bringing Kosovar independence closer”.<sup>26</sup> In an editorial, the *Guardian* warned, “Bombing, especially attacks directed specifically against Serbian units operating in Kosovo, would encourage the KLA to take advantage of the altered odds”.<sup>27</sup> Solana insisted NATO “cannot be the KLA’s air force”.<sup>28</sup>

Hence there was more talk than in 1998 about the possibility of NATO sending in ground troops, above all by European leaders. If it was necessary to defend “stability” in the region through air strikes, the West was preparing to occupy the region so that the KLA could not press its own solution. Imperialism came to see that it would need its own troops in Kosova to bring about stability, having lost confidence in the ability of Serbia’s brutal tactics to be anything but counterproductive. Hoagland thus continued: “Britain, France and now Germany have formally told the United States that they will commit ground troops to a NATO force in Kosovo if a small number of US troops join that force. They are opposed to air raids alone.” Hoagland then lamented that the US government was still foot-dragging on the issue of ground troops.<sup>29</sup> Similarly, the *Guardian* claimed, “the threat or use of air power *alone*” would be of no avail, because the two sides “will fight unless a substantial third force, armed and determined, stands between them”.<sup>30</sup>

## The Rambouillet plan

In early 1999, the US re-launched its offensive to force Serbia and the Kosovars to accept its autonomy plan, now repackaged and put to both delegations at a conference in the French town of Rambouillet.

The plan contained two elements. The first was the weak form of autonomy described above. This was the sop to Milosevic, who basically accepted the plan on paper. Kosovars would not have their own armed forces, and the KLA would be disarmed. A local multi-ethnic police force would be set up, with fewer powers than most police in the world — they would be entitled to only one long-barrelled gun for every 15 “local” police. Local

police would have only local duties; they would not deal with fighting organised crime, external security, border police, customs etc. Most Serbian occupation forces would withdraw, but 2500 Yugoslav troops would patrol a five-kilometre border zone within Kosova's international borders to enforce "security", and 2500 dreaded Serbian police from the Interior Ministry would remain for the first year.

Given the Albanians' disbelief that they could feel secure while still within Serbia, and under such conditions, the US now offered a NATO "peacekeeping force" for Kosova to police the deal, the second element of Rambouillet. Western troops would be needed to disband the KLA and restore stability in the province and the region. In and of itself, this was not such a bad thing for the Serbian government: Western troops could do the job of getting rid of the KLA, and it would be much easier if the KLA officially agreed. The bait for the KLA to sign was that the Western troops would protect Kosovans from Serbian-Yugoslav troops. As all NATO powers, and the Rambouillet text, insisted on Kosova remaining in both Serbia and Yugoslavia, they would, in effect, be protecting Yugoslavia's borders.

To achieve this, however, the US had to blackmail a section of the KLA to surrender its historic demand for independence and place its faith in NATO to defend Albanians from genocide. Adem Demaqi, who led the KLA politically until Rambouillet, denounced this attempt to "convince Albanians to accept capitulation, by launching illusions and empty promises".<sup>31</sup> Both the KLA and Serbia rejected the Rambouillet principles in the first round in February; the KLA refused to capitulate to "autonomy", and Serbia refused to allow a foreign force into "its" territory.

The world media denounced Demaqi as a hardliner for rejecting the surrender involved in Rambouillet. However, under massive pressure from pro-Western Albanian forces, the leading wing of the KLA finally capitulated on March 15. Demaqi resigned from the leadership. Two weeks previously, *Voice of Kosova*, the paper of the LPK in Germany, still had its original masthead with "Long live Marxism-Leninism". The book list of the LPK was full of the writings of Enver Hoxha and Ramis Alia. The paper at the time of its capitulation to NATO ran the headline "NATO thank you", while the left books disappeared and all names of the editorial board changed.

Many media reports claimed that NATO had "in effect" intervened on the side of the KLA. This turns reality on its head. It was the KLA's total capitulation — dropping its demand for self-determination and agreeing to disarm its forces — that was demanded by NATO as a condition for "helping" Albanians against Milosevic. However, Serbia rejected the part of Rambouillet regarding the stationing of NATO troops in Kosova. Nine days later, on March 24, NATO launched its air war.

## NATO launches terror, Milosevic launches genocide

On March 24, hundreds of NATO aircraft launched the first bombing raids on Yugoslavia. The war gradually escalated until it had done some \$30 billion of damage to Yugoslav infrastructure, including roads, bridges, factories, railways, power stations and oil refineries. Thousands of Serbian workers were made unemployed as their factories were blasted, hundreds of civilians were killed, and many ghastly “mistakes” blasted passenger trains, buses, hospitals, refugee convoys, residential neighbourhoods and even a little bridge in a village on market day in broad daylight — a bridge that a tank could not even fit on. Violating international law, NATO dropped cluster bombs, for example in the May 7 attack on a residential neighbourhood and hospital in Nis. Some bombs even hit Albania and Bulgaria. Major destruction to the environment resulted. According to a Belgrade Green, “Serbia is one of the greatest sources of underground waters in Europe and the contamination will be felt in the whole surrounding area all the way to the Black Sea”.<sup>32</sup> The attacks on the petrochemical complex and fertiliser factory in Pancevo resulted in tonnes of poison pouring into the Danube, contamination matched only by the clouds of toxic gases pouring into the sky.

From the outset, it was clear that those who had had illusions that NATO might act in a more humane fashion than Milosevic were badly mistaken. After years of refusing to strike the Serbian military forces that were reducing Bosnia and Kosova to ruins, NATO instead began meting out punishment to Serbian civilians.

Apart from the devastation wreaked on ordinary Serbs, these NATO bombing attacks “against Milosevic” had two immediate effects: on the ground, they led directly to the historic national catastrophe of Kosova’s Albanians; politically, Milosevic emerged far stronger.

Milosevic’s thugs had driven around 250,000 Kosovars from their homes over the preceding year. Following the NATO attack, the figures rose to 700,000, a third of Kosova’s population, within one week. Bombing Serbia could have two contradictory effects, depending on the nature of the attack. Attacks on Serbian heavy weaponry in Kosova — the only thing giving it military advantage over the Albanian majority there — would have hindered Milosevic’s attempted genocide. This *did not happen*. Bombing targets in Serbia, especially civilian targets, gave a massive political advantage to nationalist forces that identified the foreign aggressor with the “internal enemy”.

Within a few weeks, the number of Kosovars driven into camps in Albania, Macedonia and Montenegro had risen to 850,000, while hundreds of thousands more were living inside Kosova in forest hide-outs. Their villages were burned and their passports and ID cards stolen, in an attempt to stop them from returning. The Kosova

Albanian civil leadership, as well as their journalists, teachers and any leaders the Chetnik forces could get their hands on, were either taken captive or killed. NATO bombed the Kosovar capital Pristina, including entirely Albanian-populated regions like Vrajevac and Dragodan, according to the Pristina Emergency Information Centre on March 31, giving the Chetnik thugs a hand in driving out the Albanian population.

Among the sections of the left that thought opposing NATO's war had to mean crass apologetics for the chauvinist and barbaric regime of Milosevic, one of the most grotesque assertions was that the million-odd Kosovar refugees were "fleeing NATO's bombs". This was part of a more general inability to see that NATO's air war on Serbian civilian infrastructure and Serbia's ground war against the Kosovan people were essentially two separate wars. It would be no service to the anti-war movement to pretend that what the Serbian regime was doing was really not so bad. The point is that the bombing was not directed against the Serbian military and paramilitary forces in Kosova, which were allowed to act with impunity, while Serbian citizens in Belgrade, Nis, Kragujevac and elsewhere suffered.

Gregor Gysi, leader of the German Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), visited Kosovar refugees in Albania, hoping to have confirmed the story presented to him by Milosevic, that the refugees were fleeing NATO bombs. He was disappointed, reporting: "In *all their stories*, the reason given me was their expulsion on the part of the Yugoslav army and police".<sup>33</sup>

Similarly, Physicians for Human Rights released findings from interviews with 11,400 refugees selected randomly from the camps in Albania and Macedonia. The report asserted that 91% were forced to leave their homes "simply on the grounds that they were Kosova Albanians", not because of some association with the KLA, as the apologists asserted. Those who were not forced fled due to fear of Serbian forces or destruction of property. Only 0.4% fled due to KLA pressure, *and not a single refugee reported fleeing from NATO bombing*. Other startling finds included that one in three refugees witnessed Serbian forces engaged in killing or saw dead bodies, and nearly half of all respondents witnessed Serbian destruction of places of worship.<sup>34</sup>

Despite such horrific accounts, later in the year, as forensic teams began to dig up the evidence, the genocide revisionists claimed that relatively few Albanians had been killed. "The massacres that never were", ran the headline in the right-wing London *Spectator*,<sup>35</sup> as journalist John Laughland claimed that "only" hundreds of Albanians had been killed in Kosova during the NATO-Serbia war, rather than the figure of 10,000 estimated by the UN. Laughland told readers that "a whole string of sites where atrocities were allegedly committed have revealed no bodies at all". Similar stories also turned up in the *Sunday Times* and the *New York Times*, the pro-Milosevic wing of the

left and the US right-wing think-tank Stratfor,<sup>36</sup> which had long advised Washington that its war would be counterproductive because it would help the struggle of the KLA for an independent Kosova.

According to Stratfor, since “only” a few hundred bodies had been found, NATO’s use of the term “genocide” had “serious implications not just for NATO integrity, but for the notion of sovereignty”. It is certainly true that NATO’s brutal war on Serbian civilians casts much doubt on its “integrity”, but this right-left alliance to deny the Kosovan genocide had little integrity of its own. The main argument was that a Spanish forensic team returned home having discovered “only 187 bodies”. This pseudo-journalism left the reader to believe this was the only such team. In fact there were 20 in different parts of the country — one in Djakovica discovered 200 bodies in five days.

When, in November, the UN’s International Criminal Tribunal for Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) released the figure of 2108 bodies so far discovered, the apologists continued — “only 2000” rather than 10,000 died. But of course, the forensic teams had to interrupt their work for the winter. The 2108 figure was only from the 195 graves dug up — out of 529 identified. If that trend continued, there would be something like 6000 bodies. But, according to ICTY, this was the bare minimum, because there was also widespread evidence of tampering with grave sites, of digging up bodies, of burning them, of body parts being scattered. The 2108 bodies had been discovered in sites where Albanians had given accounts of 4256 murders of relatives — the whereabouts of the other 2000 were still unknown.

In fact, the 10,000 figure was not invented by NATO, but based on figures produced by ICTY of 11,334 killings identified by relatives. How accurate this is is difficult to say, but there were still *17,000* Kosovan Albanians completely unaccounted for at the time. While up to 5000 were still rotting in Serbian jails, this leaves a figure for presumed dead similar to the usual estimate.

In the UN Genocide Convention, “genocide” is defined as acts “committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group”; such acts, with these aims, are not restricted to killing, but include “deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part”, such as uprooting people from their homes. The Nuremberg Tribunal Charter explicitly lists deportation of the civilian population as one of the “crimes against humanity.” The genocide in Kosova was not a question of numbers of dead, but the fact that half the entire population had been driven across borders, and around 80% of those remaining inside Kosova had also been uprooted from their homes.

## Serbian oppositionists against NATO & Milosevic

Did the launching of this genocide prove that Milosevic would have done it anyway? The point is not merely the military superiority of Belgrade over the Kosovars — that had long existed — but whether such use of this arsenal was *politically* possible. While Serbia had been tied down with its “Vietnam” in Kosova, trying to fight the armed resistance of the KLA, Serbian society was becoming increasingly restive. Parents from many cities gathered outside the office of the army’s general staff with the simple message: “Bring our sons back from Kosovo”.<sup>37</sup> When nationalist parties attempted in February 1999 to organise demonstrations in Belgrade to insist on rejection of the Rambouillet accord, a few dozen turned up; passers-by took no notice. By all reports, few in Belgrade had any interest in volunteering to go and fight in Kosova. With two million Serbs out of work and pensioners owed seven months’ pension, Serbia was close to social rebellion. Sooner or later, the regime would have had to face the consequences of being bogged down in Kosova, especially if the KLA had been able to get increased and better arms.

The NATO attack turned this around, as Serbs rallied to defend their country — and by extension, occupied Kosova — against a larger foreign aggressor, giving the regime the political cover to do what it always dreamed of — attempt to drive out as much of the Albanian population as possible, to be in the best bargaining position in the hoped-for partition. The Serbian opposition were too busy ducking bombs to protest; the Serbian people largely did not even know about it because the media were placed under wartime censorship and the independent media were suppressed. Opposition forces were labelled traitors. People rallied to their leader against the bullies of the world.

Milosevic thus emerged politically far stronger, chauvinist “homogenisation” reaching fever pitch in war conditions. Two years previously, Belgrade was the scene of months of gigantic demonstrations against the tyrant; the opposition had won the municipal government. Opposition now evaporated or was driven underground. The mass killer Arkan praised NATO’s actions: “You have united the entire opposition in Yugoslavia. You have managed to achieve the impossible.” Opposition groups could no longer operate freely, overwhelmed by this oppressive atmosphere. Women in Black, who had carried out weekly anti-chauvinist vigils for eight years, were unable to operate. The very last independent medium, Radio B-92, was suppressed. In Belgrade, police raided the offices of the Humanitarian Law Centre, which had been one of the few non-regime sources of information on Kosova. The president of the opposition left-oriented Civic Alliance was press-ganged into the army. “In one night, the NATO air strikes have wiped out 10 years of hard work of ... the democratic opposition”, reported Vojin Dimitrijevic,

director of the Belgrade Centre for Human Rights.<sup>38</sup>

Milosevic had “overnight acquired a most potent ally, namely fear. It is all-pervasive and has silenced every dissenting voice,” wrote a dissident Serb journalist.<sup>39</sup> On April 11, Slavko Curuvija, a journalist who had written an open letter to Milosevic the previous year calling on him to break his coalition with the Serbian Radical Party, was gunned down outside his home.

In April, 17 Serbian organisations that had long opposed the chauvinist regime of Milosevic released a declaration condemning both the NATO attack on their country and the ethnic cleansing.

One of the signatories was the independent trade union federation Nezavisnost, which had about 300,000 members. Nezavisnost has long held a staunch anti-nationalist position. During the Bosnian war, it joined Women in Black and other anti-nationalist organisations in the coalition “Living in Sarajevo”, which openly condemned Belgrade’s aggression against Bosnia, and declared support to the Serb Civic Council, the mass organisation of Bosnia’s Serbs who supported Bosnia’s multi-ethnic government against the Milosevic-backed fascist forces.

Many of the industries where Nezavisnost was strong were destroyed by NATO bombs, including the Zastava car plant in Kragujevic, which put 38,000 workers out of work. It was here that in 1998 workers went on hunger strike against the refusal of the regime to pay them, and two years previously they launched a strike wave under the banner “the factories to the workers”. Speaking to reporters from the US *Militant*, Nezavisnost leader Branislav Canak claimed, “Many workers joke that NATO’s special target is the independent trade union”.<sup>40</sup> It is working-class opposition to Milosevic that imperialism most fears.

Nezavisnost’s May Day statement, in the midst of the war, said: “It is eight years now that Serbia lives without its working class, for eight years warmongering, nationalist and chauvinist songs and slogans are heard, eight years they are dividing us into Serbs and ‘others’, while in the name of and to the benefit of the working class they are closing down factories, sending workers out to the streets and flea markets, with no future or hope. NATO came in at the end of the final act of the play. Workers whose factories NATO finally finished off joined the workers who have been out of work for years thanks to the adventurist, irresponsible and anti-labour policy of the Serbian regime.”<sup>41</sup>

NATO’s bombs hit far and wide, killing and destroying indiscriminately. If the Western powers had wanted the overthrow of Milosevic, they would have directed their aim to support certain opposition centres. The opposite happened. In addition to working-class centres such as Kragujevic, NATO bombs continually hit Novi Sad, the capital of

once autonomous multi-ethnic Vojvodina. Milosevic, who suppressed that autonomy, had little support there; it was a centre of the 1998 “bring our sons home” movement. Even the members of the municipal government had led such protests, yet the municipal government building was hit weeks before Milosevic’s headquarters.

There were reports of a rise of Serb chauvinism directed against the province’s large Hungarian minority, due to Hungary’s recent joining of NATO. Meanwhile NATO even bombed the Vojvodinan city Subotica. This multi-ethnic town resisted for years attempts by Chetnik forces to draft locals for the Bosnia slaughter, identifying instead with multi-ethnic Bosnia. Ethnic Hungarian leaders in Vojvodina, despite their hostility to Milosevic, condemned the NATO bombing.

Likewise, the NATO bombing of Montenegro played into the hands of the pro-Milosevic forces in that republic, who had been seeking to overthrow the anti-Milosevic government of Djukanovic for over a year. The bombing caused a sharp shift in public sympathies towards Milosevic and away from the Montenegrin leadership, according to Serbian opposition sources. This included bombing of the mostly Albanian populated town, Tuzi, causing severe damage. The Montenegrin government had opposed Milosevic’s brutal counterinsurgency operation in Kosova, and had appealed to the West to be left out of any attacks. In early 1998, the ruling Montenegrin Democratic Party of Socialists forged an alliance with Serbian opposition parties, the “Coalition for Change”, which posed a significant alternative to the regime for the first time in years.

The April declaration represented a courageous and desperate attempt by activists, who for years had fought the destruction of Yugoslav society by Milosevic’s chauvinism, to present a different Serbian voice to the world and to regain some of the opposition potential destroyed by NATO’s attack. Where it can be criticised for suggesting that NATO bombing and the KLA shared equal responsibility with the Milosevic regime for forcing the flight of the Kosovars, this may have been due to ignorance, given the wartime censorship; in any case, it should not detract from the overall thrust of the declaration. It is here translated from Greek from the Greek leftist paper *Epohi*:

Deeply shocked by the catastrophic NATO attacks on our country and the terrible situation of the Albanians of Kosovo, we, the representatives of non-government organisations and the trade union confederation Nezavisnost, demand that all those who created this tragedy take all necessary steps to create the conditions for the renewal of the peace process.

For two weeks now, the strongest military, political and economic countries of the world kill people and destroy military and civilian installations, bridges, railway lines, factories, warehouses and power stations. This has resulted in an enormous cost. Hundreds of thousands of Yugoslavs, above all ethnic Albanians, have been forced to abandon

their ruined houses and flee the bombings and the military actions of the regime and the KLA, in the hope of finding salvation in the tragic situation of exile.

It is obvious that all this leads to catastrophe and that a peaceful solution to the problem of Kosovo through negotiations, for which we struggled for years, is now further away than ever. Our struggle to develop democracy and civil society in Yugoslavia and to help restore its place in all international organisations, occurred despite the endless pressure on us by the Serbian regime.

We, the representatives of groups and civilian organisations, have struggled courageously and systematically against warmongering and nationalistic politics, and for respect for human rights and in particular against the suppression of the Kosovan Albanians. We have always insisted on respect for human rights and the restoration of autonomy for Kosovo. Throughout this time, the Serbian and Albanian civil society groups were the only ones who maintained contact and cooperation.

The intervention of NATO has not only destroyed everything we accomplished till now but also the very possibility of the existence of civil society in Serbia. Confronted by the current situation, we put forward the following demands in the name of humanity and in the name of the values and ideas which guide our actions ... [The demands included the end to bombing and all military operations, renewal of the peace process, an end to ethnic cleansing and repatriation of all refugees, and support to Montenegro.]

We cannot achieve the above by ourselves. We expect you to support our demands and to help us realise them through your actions and initiatives.

Signed:

Civic Alliance for Democracy, Social Justice and Support to Trade Unions, Belgrade Circle, Centre for Cultural De-pollution, Centre for Democracy and Free Elections, Centre for the Passage to Democracy, Political Initiatives, Centre EKO, European Movement of Serbia, Forum for Ethnic Relations and Foundation for the Management of Peace and Crises, Group 484, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in Serbia, Student Union of Serbia, Union for Truth and Anti-Fascist Resistance, Weekly Video News, Women in Black, Committee of Yugoslav Lawyers for Human Rights, Trade Union Confederation Nezavisnost.

## Did NATO blunder?

The NATO attack immediately led to Serbia's attempted genocide in Kosova and the strengthening of the Milosevic regime so obviously that virtually the whole media, as well as many ruling class political spokespeople, pointed it out. Results so at variance with the alleged aims — to prevent a humanitarian catastrophe and undermine Milosevic — led to much discussion of whether NATO had “blundered”, whether it

had bombed without thinking through its strategy and, generally, of what exactly NATO's strategy and goals were.

A number of common questions and assertions related to what the war was about. It was said that NATO had wanted a war, and so deliberately set the terms at Rambouillet so high that Milosevic would have no choice but to reject them. In that case, what were NATO's reasons for wanting war rather than a slightly compromised Rambouillet? On the other hand, it was stated that Milosevic had long planned the genocide anyway, which then meant either that NATO had to act and could not be blamed for what happened, or that Milosevic wanted the NATO attack in order to have the political cover for his scheme. Related to all this was the question of who had miscalculated. If Milosevic did want a war, did he miscalculate how long and how severely NATO would bomb until it got its way? Did NATO miscalculate how much terror Milosevic would employ in Kosova, and how long he would last before surrendering? Did NATO think Milosevic just needed a few days of bombing in order to surrender with honour, or did it know what he would do?

The answers remain unclear, and it is difficult to know what was in the heads of the various leaders at the time. Nevertheless, we can attempt some answers based on the evidence available.

### **Did NATO force Milosevic to say no?**

The fundamentals of Rambouillet were all in Serbia's interest. A foreign force would disarm the KLA, Kosova would remain part of Serbia and Yugoslavia, several thousand Serbian troops and MUP police would remain, autonomy would be of a more limited nature than previously, minorities — especially Serbs — would have a high level of constitutional rights, and there would be no referendum on independence.

However, NATO did make Rambouillet difficult for Milosevic to accept. Firstly, it was insisted that the foreign force had to be from NATO rather than the UN force. For years, Milosevic had defended "the holiest of Serb lands" from its own population, and now he was asked to accept it being occupied by a group of self-appointed Western nations, rather than a UN viewed as neutral.

However, this point needs to be weighed up against the fact that the entire Kosovan delegation insisted that any concession to "autonomy" must at the very least include a protection force from NATO *and not the UN*. Before the KLA finally accepted this Rambouillet compromise, it carried out widespread consultation in Kosova. Under escalating Serbian attack, it seems the majority sentiment was to sign the deal. Reliance on the UN, following the mass murder of so many hundreds of thousands of Bosnian Moslems and Rwandan Tutsi, who were both under UN "protection", was viewed, no

doubt correctly, as suicide. The belief that NATO would be “tougher” in protecting civilians was an illusion, and reliance on NATO led to disaster, but that was not widely recognised by Kosovans at the time.

Moreover, an annex to the accord gave NATO forces the right to *roam anywhere within the whole Federal Republic of Yugoslavia*, not just in Kosova, supposedly to facilitate their work; these forces would not be subject to Yugoslav law. There was clearly no way this could have been accepted by any sovereign regime. This annex does raise suspicion that it was added to make sure that Milosevic would reject it.

This seems all the more likely given that, following NATO’s victory in June, not only was this entire annex completely dropped, but the security force for Kosova was to be a UN force, “with NATO as its core”, including troops from many other countries. If these conditions were so important to NATO in March, it is odd it did not insist on them in victory. On February 20, Belgrade had held out the possibility of supporting an international force, if not commanded by NATO, but from the next day onwards, Albright and others continually and forcefully rejected the idea of anything other than a fully fledged NATO force.<sup>42</sup> Even while finally rejecting the NATO force in mid-March, the Serbian parliament passed a resolution supporting the examination of options for a UN security force in Kosova.

While the US presented the collapse of Rambouillet as a Serbian refusal to negotiate, the package was presented to Serbia as an accept in full or be bombed proposal. In stark contrast to the “bomb them both” rhetoric of just one month previously, by March, Madeleine Albright was openly pressing the Kosovan delegation to sign the Rambouillet autonomy plan, *in order that Serbia could be bombed*.

## Why did NATO want war?

To understand why the US-NATO leadership might have made a shift from Holbrooke’s diplomacy, we need to look at both what it wanted from Kosova and the broader agenda of the US and NATO. This has to be seen in the light of the 50th NATO summit, which was coming up in April 1999. There, the US was able to push through some of its key long term goals of the post-Cold War era.

The first US goal was to reorient NATO as a force which could carry out “out of area” actions — interventions outside the NATO countries themselves. Albright presented this scheme at a meeting of NATO foreign ministers in December. According to Albright, missile-armed “rogue states” now posed the major threat to Western civilisation, and so NATO had to adapt its charter to fight them even in areas distant from Europe. This meant that troops and money from European countries could be used to fight battles that are primarily of US interest. At that time, European

governments “balked” at the idea.<sup>43</sup>

However, this new role for NATO was explicitly endorsed by the NATO summit. On April 23, Secretary-General Solana declared that the new charter “marks the transition from an alliance mainly concerned over collective defence to one that will guarantee European security and defend democratic values, both within and without our borders”. Europe was brought on board because the instability in the Balkans created by the actions of Milosevic and the KLA were a major danger first and foremost to Europe rather than the US. If NATO still had a reason to exist, how could it stand by when there was a major crisis in Europe? How would the US later be able to justify using NATO in the Middle East? As Clinton explained on March 23, the day before launching the war, a strong US-European partnership “is what this Kosovo thing *is all about*”.<sup>44</sup>

Whatever the West’s problems with Milosevic, his Serbia had never before been put on US lists of “rogue states”, which typically included Iran, Iraq, Libya and North Korea. By putting it on the list in the context of launching a war in Europe’s back yard, the US aimed to tie Europe to its strategic concept by precedent. Much has been written about the rivalry between Holbrooke, the architect of the working through Milosevic strategy, and Albright, the hawkish bomber. The ascendancy of the Albright line by 1999 had less to do with what Milosevic was doing, and much to do with what Europe was doing.

The second US goal was to demonstrate a continued need for NATO in the face of Franco-German moves to set up a Europe-only security apparatus. As Albright was launching the new strategic concept in December, European leaders meeting in Vienna were discussing a new European strategic and defence role and a new EU defence force separate from NATO. These moves towards European military integration and autonomy should be seen in the light of the arrival of the Euro, a major step in the economic unity and strengthening of Europe vis-a-vis the US. Moreover, one of the key reasons for European powers sticking to NATO is their dependence on US defence industry for military hardware and intelligence: they lack military transport infrastructures and planes, battlefield satellite intelligence gathering equipment, and key technologies such as cruise missiles and “smart bombs”. Justifying continued military spending despite the end of the Cold War was very good for the US defence industry. But now, these European discussions included the idea of Europe launching its own defence industry. This all posed a serious threat to US hegemony in Europe and to NATO.

Even worse, for the first time, Britain was in the forefront of these discussions, in a major policy reversal. This was crowned by the agreement between Prime Minister Blair and French President Chirac in December to push for the building of European

capabilities to act autonomously, if necessary, of NATO. Blair's policy shift was largely motivated by the lack of US interest in getting involved in the Kosova crisis throughout 1998. At the same time, Blair always insisted that the aim of strengthening European ability to act alone was to "improve its own capabilities to serve alliance [NATO] needs, not to create duplicative new institutions for their own sake".<sup>45</sup>

Rivalry between US and French imperialism had been stepping up, in particular in Africa, where a US push to oust French economic domination was taking place, and in the Middle East, where France was dealing with Iran and Iraq in defiance of US dictates.

The US push for a NATO security force to enter Kosova and the aggressive posturing of Albright in the lead-up to the war were a late development. It is true that, over the year before the NATO attack, France, Germany and Italy continually appeared to take a softer line in pushing for a negotiated solution, while the US often played the "bad cop" with bombing threats; however, these threats were used principally to force Milosevic to accept some deal, as in October. It was the US that had brought Milosevic in as a partner at Dayton, the US that had joined Milosevic in setting up a new regime in Republika Srpska, US envoy Gelbard who had called the KLA "terrorists", US envoy Holbrooke who had saved Milosevic from impending new sanctions in May, and Holbrooke again who had organised the October cease-fire with Milosevic and launched the pro-Serbian autonomy plan.

It was above all Britain, France and Germany that by late 1998 were calling for a Western military force to enter the region, because they feared the instability in their backyard and believed air strikes alone would solve nothing or, even worse, give the initiative to the KLA. It was not specified that it had to be a NATO force, but it would obviously consist of European members of NATO. France and Germany specified that it should be authorised by the UN Security Council, and also thought it reasonable that some Russian forces be involved. This was a direct outcome of the Anglo-French December agreement, and it was "aimed at the Americans".<sup>46</sup> In terms of the issue of "effectiveness" that concerned the Kosovars, such a force would be stronger than a UN "blue helmets" force.

The US, on the other hand, was consistently opposed to sending in its ground troops. The new threat of air strikes by February 1999 was related to this European push to send in troops, especially in the context of the proposed new European strategic initiative. In order to head off this dangerous precedent, the US gave "leadership" to this process by upping the bombing threats, insisted the force be a NATO force, sidelined the Russians and the UN, and inserted the annex that made it impossible for Milosevic to agree.

Once the Europeans were pushing to act, any course less than a full-scale war

might have supported the view that Europe could handle itself without the US; war demonstrated the continued need for the US.

The third US aim was to remove all UN restrictions on its actions, however small. The attack on Yugoslavia without even going through the motions of a UN resolution, despite French reservations, was intended to establish this new order. But here the European NATO partners drew the line on the “new strategic concept”. Acting “out of area” is one thing; in the case of Yugoslavia, Europe had interests. However, EU states do not want to be used “out of area” in cases primarily of US strategic interest. If the EU is still attached to a US-led NATO, then at least if acting out of area is covered by a UN resolution, it puts some restraint on the US.

Thus the US victory at the NATO summit was not complete; the Europeans insisted that the communiqué include reference to “the primary responsibility of the UN Security Council for the maintenance of international peace and security”.<sup>47</sup>

These broader needs coincided with the escalating crisis in Kosova and were major reasons for the US/NATO needing war.

### **Did Milosevic already have the genocide prepared?**

If NATO appears to have wanted Rambouillet to break down in order to launch a war, it seems Milosevic had exactly the same goal. The fact that the Serbian parliament had, at the last moment, raised the possibility of a UN force, does not necessarily mean that there was anything honest about the proposal, but merely that taking it up might have put pressure for NATO to avoid what it did *and for Milosevic himself* also to avoid what he did.

It required a war for Milosevic to get away with what the most radical wing of the Serbian leadership had long advocated: expelling as many as possible of the Kosovan Albanian population. While the autonomy plan enforced by foreign forces was in Milosevic’s interests in one way, there were still too many Albanians, and autonomy achieved in a civil way would have strengthened their own civic organisations, so they could still fight for independence later. Perhaps worse, from the point of view of Milosevic’s clique, limited autonomy would bring Albanians back into the body politic of Serbia, where their votes would decisively defeat the very narrow majority with which his coalition ruled.

There is some evidence that the plan to clear Kosova of its Albanian population was hatched as early as October 1998,<sup>48</sup> when there were purges of senior members of the Yugoslav Army, including the commander, General Perisic, who opposed the plan. Members of the regime had plans for such a holocaust for years; deputy prime minister Vojislav Seselj had long spoken about infecting all Albanians with HIV.

The devastating rapidity and unity of purpose with which the regime's forces carried out their genocide as soon as the bombs began dropping very much points to a plan. Secondly, the Serbian leadership began its massive drive to ethnically cleanse Kosova, especially the north, on March 19—that is, following the end of the Rambouillet discussions but *a full week before the bombing started*. On March 23, Serbian authorities began setting fire to villages that had known no KLA activity. It was as if they were saying, “Bomb us, so we can do this better”. Even the famous “Operation Horseshoe” for the ethnic cleansing of the whole of Kosova, allegedly revealed by German intelligence during the war, was planned to be carried out *when NATO began bombing*.

### What did NATO expect?

Highly contradictory assertions have been made about what NATO expected the bombing to result in. On the one hand, it has been widely asserted that NATO expected to have to bomb for only a few days for Milosevic to capitulate and agree to sign the Rambouillet accord. It was believed he wanted the bombing so as not to be seen as capitulating without a fight. Some leading US foreign policy experts believed the bombing began to help Milosevic maintain his grip, because it was still believed he was “the only Serb politician capable of resolving the Kosovo question on NATO's lines”.<sup>49</sup>

On the other hand, it is asserted that NATO leaders knew that the bombing would provoke the Serb chauvinism that Milosevic's regime is built on to launch an all-out attack on the Albanians. Intelligence chiefs and the CIA had warned the State Department that this would happen. Following the attack, NATO chief Wesley Clarke stated, “The military authorities fully anticipated the vicious approach that Milosevic would adopt, as well as the terrible efficiency with which he would carry it out”.<sup>50</sup> He added explicitly that air strikes were not intended to stop this.

If shorn of extreme versions of these two theories, this is largely a false dichotomy. NATO did not expect the war to last as long as it did — the US aircraft carrier in the region was moved from the Mediterranean to the Persian Gulf just eight days before the bombing began! However, it certainly expected it to last more than a few days. NATO also expected “the vicious approach that Milosevic would adopt”, but probably not the full extent of it. There is a contradiction only if “a short time” really means “a few days” during which Milosevic would do no harm to the Kosovars; or if expecting “the vicious approach” means expecting the expulsion of two-thirds of the Kosovar population from their homes. The reality is clearly somewhere in between.

NATO expecting only “a few days” of war is highly unlikely. Those advocating this theory usually compared NATO's bombing of the Bosnian Serb armoury in late 1995, which resulted in Karadzic signing the Dayton Accord. But the Dayton partition was

exactly what Karadzic had been fighting for, and Milosevic was already signed on and pressuring Karadzic even before the bombing began, yet it still took a full two weeks of bombing for the latter to feel politically able to “capitulate”. It was hardly likely to take less time over an issue as central as Kosova. Moreover, there was a contradiction between expecting a quick capitulation and including the annex which made it so difficult for Milosevic to accept. Hence, while it is no doubt true that NATO had not prepared for an 11-week war, its anticipated “short” bombing campaign should be translated as “a few weeks” rather than “a few days”.

Did NATO expect Milosevic to play dead during those weeks? This would be highly unlikely, not only given Milosevic’s record and the inflammation of Serb nationalism that would result from the bombing, but also because a new and massive round of ethnic cleansing had already begun on March 19. In particular, NATO leaders could hardly have expected Milosevic not to launch a massive attack on the KLA: while NATO bombed air defence installations, bridges and factories *inside Serbia*, it did very little to attack the Serb/Yugoslav military forces carrying out the carnage *inside Kosova*. This was particularly pronounced during the first two weeks of war, during which time *not a single Serbian tank was hit* in Kosova.

This suggests, not miscalculation, but connivance. Western leaders wanted to restore stability to the region; the major threat to that was the KLA and its fight for an independent Kosova. While NATO concentrated on reducing Serbia’s military superiority to levels not so threatening to regional stability, why not let Serbian forces at the same time deal with the other threat?

While Western leaders appeared surprised by the attempt to empty the whole of Kosova, the “vicious approach” they did expect was an all-out attempt to smash the KLA and its roots. Regarding the massing of Yugoslav troops along the Kosova border just before the bombing began, a French intelligence official explained: “All the alliance’s secret services had the same hypothesis ... [Milosevic] was about to clear away the two or three main centres of the UCK [KLA] as soon as the bombardments began. Nobody imagined the deportations.”<sup>51</sup> Similarly, Wesley Clarke said, “We thought the Serbs were preparing for a spring offensive that would target KLA strongholds, which had also been reinforced in previous months. But we never expected the Serbs would push ahead with the wholesale deportation of the entire ethnic Albanian population.”<sup>52</sup> Serbian General Pavkovic continually promised that if bombing began, he would “move quickly and forcefully against the rebel army”.<sup>53</sup>

The KLA had signed the Rambouillet accord, which included its own disarmament, but it did so reluctantly. NATO leaders understood it would still be difficult to force disarmament in practice. A leading member of the US Council on Foreign Relations,

Michael Mandelbaum, spelled this out clearly. Writing before the KLA had accepted Rambouillet, he claimed that, of all potential outcomes of the talks, “all are bad for the US”. If both sides accepted, “NATO forces would then enter Kosovo to enforce it. But these forces are not guaranteed a peaceful stay. NATO’s plan envisages keeping Kosovo as part of Yugoslavia indefinitely. The Kosovars are unlikely to accept this, nor is the KLA likely to surrender its arms, as the plan requires ... [NATO’s] forces might well become KLA targets”.<sup>54</sup>

Similarly, Chris Hedges claimed it was “wildly unlikely” that the KLA would lay down its arms. Even if the outside leadership agreed, there remained the problem that “the KLA is poorly led, with no central command and little discipline. Many villages have formed ad hoc militias that, while they identify themselves as KLA, act independently.”<sup>55</sup>

This village structure is what a guerilla army is based on. If NATO had moved into Kosova under Rambouillet’s terms and the KLA and its “ad hoc village militias” had resisted disarmament, NATO might well have found itself in a Vietnam scenario, fighting a guerilla army firmly based among the local population with supply routes over difficult mountainous terrain from a neighbour of the same ethnic group. It was in NATO’s interest for Serbian forces to destroy the KLA’s real village social base and independence, making it less able to resist disarmament later. At the same time, the destruction of much of Kosova by NATO and the Serbian forces would drastically reduce the economic basis for independence, leaving Kosovars dependent on a UN “protectorate” for years to come.

Furthermore, to trick the KLA to sign on to Rambouillet in the second round in March, a vague clause had been incorporated suggesting they might be able eventually to vote on independence. In fact, it promised nothing of the sort, because the clause said the future of Kosova would be determined by a conference in three years that would take into account “the will of the people”, but also “opinions of relevant authorities, each party’s efforts regarding the implementation of this Agreement, and the *Helsinki Final Act*” — the latter explicitly ruling out changes of international borders. Nevertheless, a strong KLA and other Kosovan political organisations would have fought to have their own interpretation of this clause realised. It is notable that after the NATO victory in June, even this vague suggestion was removed.

The Serbian terror campaign reduced the KLA inside Kosova from 30-40,000 to about 3500 fighters, in much of the country virtually wiped out and on the verge of collapse.

Where NATO did miscalculate was on Milosevic’s attempt to empty Kosova of its Albanian population. Serbia’s genocidal campaign went far beyond driving out

populations in heavily KLA-active regions. Ethnic cleansing in a very deliberate way was carried out in areas of no KLA activity, including the major towns; even the most craven apologists for Milosevic had difficulty interpreting the loading of tens of thousands of residents of Pristina onto buses and trains and taking them to the borders as simply an extreme way of crushing the KLA.

For Milosevic the aim was gaining a much larger share in a partition, probably half the province or more. For NATO, this was not viable: such an enormous outpouring of refugees, threatening to destabilise the whole southern Balkans, was exactly what Western leaders had warned of since 1992. This changed the nature of the war; NATO now had the goal of getting these refugees back into Kosova.

### **NATO & the KLA during the war**

The fact that NATO and the KLA were fighting the same enemy created vast confusion about the different war aims of the two parties. From the right, among many who would normally have supported NATO's actions, came dire warnings about collaborating with the "terrorist", "separatist" KLA with its "Maoist" roots; on the left, among many who would normally support national liberation struggles, there was a view that by collaborating with NATO, the KLA had denied itself any support it should otherwise have been given.

These views became further complicated by leftists who joined the right-wing critique, criticising Western governments for supporting a "terrorist" group financed by "drug money". Even words such as "separatist" and "secessionist" turned up in the vocabulary of elements of the left in a negative way, while they protested not only about NATO bombing Yugoslavia, but also about its "violating the territorial integrity" of Yugoslavia by supporting "secession".

This was unusual: left-wing support to movements for national self-determination has never been limited to those lucky enough to have "international law" on their side (e.g. East Timor). A consistent left view has always held that state borders established by force against nationally oppressed populations (Kurds, Bougainville, Bangladesh, Eritrea) are invalid, regardless of whether they are recognised by the UN.

The leftists who got it wrong here did so partly because of the dinosaur view of Yugoslavia as "socialist", but also because of a false position on national self-determination. It was the brutal oppression of the Kosovar Albanians by the Serbian chauvinist regime that allowed NATO to exploit Kosovar grievances in order to intervene in the region. The Kosovars were unlikely to lose their illusions in imperialism as long as they faced a far more immediate danger to life and limb from the Serbian paramilitaries. The fact that sections of the Western left acted to whitewash this genocide

and the Milosevic regime could only further drive Kosovars into the hands of Western leaders who claimed to want to “protect” them. The fact that it did nothing to protect them was something they had to learn for themselves. Only when free from Serbian oppression will the Kosovar masses be in a position to see the failings of their own leaders and the true nature of imperialism.

The KLA’s illusions in NATO can be criticised not only for helping lead Kosovars to national catastrophe. By supporting the bombing of Serbia, these leaders also helped Milosevic drive a wedge between the Serb working class and the oppressed Albanian masses. This is the historic blind alley of nationalism without class analysis. However, it is one thing to criticise these mistakes of the KLA and quite another to refuse to support their just struggle.

Aside from such fundamental errors, however, there was genuine debate even among the anti-Milosevic left on the real potential of advocating increased support to the KLA, as well as on its political program, in the context of opposing NATO’s war. For example, Stephen Shalom, in an article which very incisively sums up the case against both NATO and Milosevic, stated, “I am sympathetic to the argument that says that if people want to fight for their rights, if they are not asking others to do it for them, then they ought to be provided with the weapons to help them succeed. Such an argument seemed to me persuasive with respect to Bosnia.” However, in the case of the KLA, Shalom saw a number of problems, both the unclarity of its ideology — “I have seen no KLA statement endorsing a multiethnic Kosova” — and his assessment that the KLA had “no credible chance of military victory”, and therefore further arms would have led only to much “larger scale atrocities that the Serbs would have let loose against a still relatively defenceless civilian population”.<sup>56</sup>

On the last point, Shalom may have been correct, since the KLA had not been properly armed previously. But it is still difficult to see how better arms would not have improved their position, given that Serbian forces were emptying Kosova as fast as they could. In such circumstances, do not the Kosovans have a right to self-defence?

Other left opponents of the strategy of supporting the KLA’s struggle came up with a number of arguments. The attempt was made to depict the KLA as an isolated fringe group, which did not have the support of the Kosovan masses, and hence was not leading a genuine struggle for national self-determination. This depiction enabled a picture to be created in which the KLA was bought in its entirety by the CIA, or was a uniformly “fanatical” anti-Serb organisation. A false dichotomy was then created, this picture being contrasted to the non-violent movement led for many years by Rugova. It was asserted that the KLA had invited in NATO, and likewise that NATO had promoted the position of the KLA by bringing it in as a negotiating partner. A

schema could then be presented of a NATO determined to rip Kosova away from “Yugoslavia” and hence pushing a more extreme Kosovan group ahead of “moderate” leaders, which then invited in NATO and its “extreme” actions.

Shallow media analysts who live in a world of “moderates” and “extremists” make no attempt to analyse these phenomena — are we talking about “moderate” or “extreme” *actions* or *goals*? The fact that NATO bombing and KLA armed struggle can both be called “extreme” *actions* compared to the formerly peaceful Kosovan struggle led by Rugova obscures the fact that NATO leaders had always preferred Rugova because of the ineffectiveness of these actions, while in terms of *goals*, NATO was the “moderate” (limited autonomy) while there was no difference between Rugova and the KLA on the “extreme” goal of independence.

Throughout 1998, NATO tried to ignore the KLA and to accept only Rugova as a negotiating partner. Even as late as October, when Holbrooke negotiated the accord with Milosevic, the KLA remained sidelined. The reason NATO ultimately had to change course and include the KLA, alongside the older Kosovan leadership, was that by late 1998 it was undeniable that the bulk of Kosovars were supporting the KLA, and so any deal done without its consent would be invalid and unenforceable.

Before March 1998, the KLA was indeed a small group with a specific leadership. However, following Milosevic’s over-reaction to its small attacks, it mushroomed into an enormous armed movement. As the struggle spread beyond the civil campaigns in Pristina, the bulk of the regional branches of Rugova’s Democratic League, Demaqi’s Parliamentary Party and Qosja’s Democratic Union — the three major political groups — became KLA village guards. Under massive military attack, these formerly non-violent movements responded by taking up arms. The KLA thus became the armed force of the bulk of the Kosovan population, containing vastly different political currents. Reality had changed — in the face of massive armed attack, rapidly setting up more “parallel schools” would have been irrelevant.

In the Rambouillet deal in March, the Kosovan delegation submitted to imperialist pressure to drop its historic demand for independence. This was a combined delegation including the KLA, Rugova’s Kosova Democratic League and the United Democratic Union. The KLA was the last Kosovan force to submit to NATO. Hence the entire Kosovan political leadership, and the bulk of the population, supported a deal that invited in NATO. This support continued throughout the war. Some on the left rushed to support the “moderate” Rugova when he allegedly called for a bombing halt in the middle of the war, while he had Serbian guns to his head. Yet once Rugova was released, he called on NATO to continue the bombing and insisted that the refugees would feel unsafe returning without an armed NATO-led force to protect them; at the same time

he denounced the KLA as “extremist,” but also continued to insist on full independence. Clearly he did not fit the caricature being created for him by the pro-Milosevic left.

Claims were made by pro-Milosevic leftists that Western leaders were giving political support to the KLA, supporting it on the ground or even arming it, in an attempt to suggest that, therefore, it was nothing but a Western tool. Michel Chossudovsky from Ottawa University set out the most meticulous attack on the KLA in a piece entitled “Freedom Fighters’ Financed by Organised Crime”.<sup>57</sup> He started out comparing the demonisation of Milosevic with the KLA being “upheld as a self-respecting nationalist movement struggling for the rights of ethnic Albanians” by the Western media. In reality, the Western media and virtually all Western leaders remained hostile to the KLA.

For example, according to a leading article in the *Washington Post*, “NATO is seeking to maintain its distance from the KLA, declining to supply the rebels with weapons, or endorse their goal of an independent Kosovo ... the KLA remains an object of suspicion in the West. There is concern about the group’s role in a post-conflict Kosovo ...”<sup>58</sup> Similarly, according to the *London Times*, “There is a concern within NATO that once its troops are inside Kosovo the KLA could be part of the problem ... Thus the ethnic Albanian fighters have not been supplied with ammunition.”<sup>59</sup>

The KLA remained on Germany’s list of proscribed “terrorist” organisations, and the government banned its fundraising and confiscated its funds. Buses carrying hundreds of Kosovars from Germany to fight in Kosova were turned back at the Austrian border.

Likewise, there was no evidence of NATO action from the sky to support the KLA on the ground. While NATO battered Serbia’s civilian infrastructure and wreaked havoc on the environment of the region, the amount of Serbian heavy weaponry touched in Kosova was minute. In the first two weeks of bombing, while Milosevic’s thugs emptied half a million people from Kosova, not a single Serb tank was hit in the province. KLA fighters were quoted as saying “It is all very well to blast bridges and oil refineries in Novi Sad, but their struggle to shield ethnic Albanian villages would be more effective if NATO focused on hitting Serb forces in Kosova”.<sup>60</sup>

According to KLA commander Shrem Dragobia, NATO had betrayed the Kosovans: “When we signed the Rambouillet agreement, we were led to believe that NATO and the US will help the Albanians. So we stopped arming and mobilising ourselves ... At all costs, they were told, the KLA was not to take advantage of any NATO action to embark on an offensive of their own.” The KLA kept its word, but “NATO has failed to keep its part of the *besa*”, an Albanian word for a vow. Now,

according to Dragobia, if NATO could not defend the Kosovan victims of genocide, “then our wish is that they leave us alone to resolve our own problems. We’re convinced we can handle the Serbs by ourselves.”<sup>61</sup>

During a visit to a rugged corridor in Kosova near the Albanian border which the KLA was desperately trying to hold against a Serb offensive, *Christian Science Monitor* reporter Jonathon Landay claimed, “There was no sign of any NATO support ... even though American and British military officials were said to have visited the area last week. Yugoslav tanks, troops and artillery opposing the rebels are untouched by NATO’s bombs, as are watchtowers along the border from which Serbian artillery spotters direct fire.”<sup>62</sup>

The only concrete evidence of Western “aid” to the KLA was a number of satellite phones with which KLA forces relayed intelligence on Serbian positions in Kosova to NATO, supposedly to help NATO better target these forces. They were earlier given to certain KLA units to maintain communication between the guerillas and the OSCE monitors sent in October to verify the cease-fire negotiated between Holbrooke and Milosevic. However, in return for this aid that *the KLA supplied NATO*, it got nothing of the ammunition and anti-tank weapons it needed.

Moreover, NATO showed little inclination to use this intelligence, at least in any way that would have helped the KLA. NATO set up a system that made this intelligence information fairly useless: due to NATO’s “reluctance to deal directly with the KLA the information has to be relayed first through a Western diplomat in Macedonia, before it is evaluated and finally acted upon, having passed again through another set of command filters ... the Serbs can pick up [the] call, complete their mission and redeploy their tanks and artillery before the KLA commander’s information is anywhere near being put on to a target list for a NATO pilot.”<sup>63</sup>

It is also interesting to look at the KLA’s equipment. The only arms ever seen are the same AK-47s which were looted from Albanian armouries in 1997. As for their uniforms:

The guerrillas based here are the best-outfitted of all the KLA rebels. Their uniforms are new, if mismatched—a Swiss camouflage shirt paired with German pants; a British tunic with U.S. Army britches; berets in rainbows of red, black or UN blue, World War II-style metal helmets and outback slouch hats in greens and browns. “We get our uniforms from all over the world,” said Bashki Belegu, 26, who ran a pizza shop in the Kosovo city of Pec before joining the KLA in Albania two months ago. “Many of us buy them ourselves.”<sup>64</sup>

Even with the catastrophe after NATO’s attack began, when the Albanian government appealed to the West to arm the KLA, State Department spokesperson James Rubin

said the US had made it clear it opposed arming or training the rebels. Albania also raised the issue with NATO commander Wesley Clarke, who refused.

Allegations that Military Professional Resources Inc was aiding the KLA may or may not have been true; MPRI totally denied it. MPRI spokesperson Ed Soyster responded to similar allegations by a US ultra-right rag that supports Milosevic and engages in conspiracy theories, "We're not going to get in the middle of that thing in Kosovo ... this group [the KLA] is something that we simply don't want to associate with."<sup>65</sup>

The West was imposing an *embargo* on arms to the region. "The rebel force has not persuaded Western governments to lift an arms embargo ... that has blocked its access to the Swedish-made BILL-2 anti-tank missile, the Carl Gustav M2 missile, Western-made heavy artillery and other sophisticated weaponry."<sup>66</sup>

Chossudovsky has only two sources for his claims of CIA funding of the KLA. The first is the Belgrade government! The second is the claim by right-wing "intelligence analyst" John Whitley that the CIA and German intelligence jointly funded the KLA. Whitley, who edits the "New World Order Intelligence Update", also claims the Kosova war was planned by the Bilderbergers group. Some of his other "analysis" includes the view that Clinton and Kissinger are involved in a conspiracy to facilitate "the final planned Russian and Chinese imposition of a Marxist New World Order on America".<sup>67</sup>

Nevertheless, if imperialist states had begun to supply some arms to the KLA, would the latter, engaged in its struggle to defend Kosovans from genocide, have been wrong to accept it? Would the mere receipt of arms have transformed the KLA from a liberation movement to a mere tool of NATO? Would such aid have signified support to the KLA's aims?

While both were fighting the Serbian regime, the two forces had opposite aims. The KLA was fighting for an independent Kosova. NATO and all its member states were implacably opposed to this outcome. In Clinton's "tough" speech in the middle of April, warning that people would have to get used to more civilian casualties, he repeated that autonomy within Serbia was still the goal. In the German plan put during the war to offer eventual EC and NATO membership to all Balkan states, the only condition was that the KLA must accept that there would be no independent Kosova.

Even while NATO bombed Serbia, it was not possible to reduce the conflict to NATO versus Serbia. The KLA was "defending 250,000 civilians in the Lapski and Shalja region in the north" from a fierce Serbian offensive.<sup>68</sup> In such a struggle, did the KLA not have the right to defend those villages? Were the attacking forces here carrying out an "anti-imperialist resistance"?

On the other hand, NATO's goals were spelled out well by Chris Hedges, who claimed:

... whatever political leadership emerges in Kosovo will come from the rebel ranks, and it will be militant, nationalist, uncompromising, and deeply suspicious of all outsiders ... By attempting to include the KLA in the peace process that began in February at the French chateau of Rambouillet, the Western alliance is working feverishly — even as it bombs the Serbs — to blunt the momentum toward a war of independence ... The underlying idea behind creating a theoretically temporary, NATO-enforced military protectorate in Kosovo is to buy time for a three-year transition period in which ethnic Albanians will be allowed to elect a parliament and other governing bodies — meeting enough of their aspirations, it is hoped, to keep Kosovo from seceding.<sup>69</sup>

If NATO had covertly armed sections of the KLA, the aim would have been to use them as an auxiliary for its own purposes, and then cut them off before the KLA could use the arms to achieve its goals. If the Kosovans had sufficient arms to defend themselves they would not have needed NATO to “protect” them, let alone needed to submit to NATO’s demands to surrender the goal of independence.

### The KLA & organised crime

Chossudovsky claims that “the KLA is sustained by organised crime ... the links of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) to criminal syndicates in Albania, Turkey and the European Union have been known to Western governments and intelligence agencies since the mid-1990s.” Before looking into his concrete evidence, it should be asked: is it that unusual that cash-starved liberation movements around the world may raise some of their funds from illegal sources, including drug money? Similar accusations have been made, for example, against the IRA and the PKK, usually by right-wingers trying to discredit a whole liberation movement. The KLA can’t raise funds through writing a funding submission, but it is known that most of its funds come from a 3% levy on incomes of many of the hundreds of thousands of Kosovars working in Europe.

In an article of eight pages, the *single* piece of evidence Chossudovsky cited to justify its title was that Interpol was “preparing a report ... on a connection between the KLA and Albanian drug gangs”, quoted from the London *Times*.

The main connection between the KLA and drugs seems to be ethnicity. According to Chossudovsky, quoting Germany’s Federal Criminal Agency, “ethnic Albanians are now the most prominent group in the distribution of heroin in Western consumer countries”. We might as well have been reading claims by One Nation racists about Lebanese and Vietnamese being the chief drug pushers in Australia. Apparently it did not occur to Chossudovsky that any actual connection between Albanians and the drug trade might have something to do with the status of Albanians as the poorest people in Europe, which in turn is related to Kosova’s 85 years as a Serbian colony.

Chossudovsky also devoted several pages to the large scale drugs, arms and oil smuggling rackets engaged in by Albania's right-wing Berisha regime until its overthrow in 1997.

While Albanians of many political stripes have profited from this drug trade, so have many others. To whitewash the Belgrade regime when quoting from an article "The Gangster Regime We Fund", written by Andrew Gumbel two years earlier about the Berisha regime's rackets, Chossudovsky conveniently omitted Gumbel's observation that these rackets included "until the end of the war in Bosnia, large-scale sanctions-busting via oil sales to Serbia and Montenegro". Likewise, he quoted Geopolitical Drug Watch regarding the heroin traffic through the region without mentioning GDW's claims regarding the large-scale direct involvement of top Serbian leaders, including Arkan, in this trade. Neither the drug lords nor the Berisha regime had any ethnic biases when it came to business. Throughout that war, Greece and Italy both sold Albania more than double the amount of oil it needed, the rest of which was sold to Serbia.

In all the pages on the Berisha regime, Chossudovsky offered not a shred of evidence to link it to the KLA, yet casually concluded this section by stating, "The proceeds of the narcotics trade has enabled the KLA to rapidly develop a force of some 30,000 men". This is an extraordinary sleight of hand. Berisha ruled between 1992 and 1997. The KLA appeared in 1996 as a tiny group. If it had built its army on the proceeds of Berisha's regime, it would be odd that it had hardly any arms when he fell. It developed into a force of 30,000 only in 1998, after the mass uprising against Berisha freed up to a million guns from Albania's armouries.

Berisha denounced the KLA as "Arkan's men", referring to the Serb nationalist mass killer, implying the KLA were agents provocateurs of Serbia. Until the NATO bombing began, the newspaper of the KLA's supporters in Germany promoted the works of former Albanian Maoist leaders Enver Hoxha and Ramiz Alia, who was overthrown by Berisha. According to virtually all knowledgeable sources, the KLA is more connected to the Albanian Socialist Party which came to power following Berisha's overthrow, while Berisha is strongly connected to Rugova and his government in exile led by Bukoshi in particular.

Another Milosevic apologist, Gary Wilson of the US *Workers World*, cites as "evidence" against the KLA a "secret" document which comes from "someone" in a "strictly confidential and high position in the German government" via an unnamed Catholic priest who "has kept the individual's identity secret."<sup>70</sup>

The propaganda about the KLA's links to drug trafficking was also rife in right-wing media. Virtually the same articles that Chossudovsky was writing were being

written at the time by the mainstream bourgeois media, like the May 5 *San Francisco Chronicle*<sup>71</sup> or right-winger Mark Almond's virulent piece in the London *Spectator*,<sup>72</sup> and of course, by the ultra-right, like the virtually identical piece in the May 24 *New American* cited above. These alleged links were being cited by Western rulers as another excuse for *not* supporting the KLA. Western intelligence agencies were investigating the KLA financial support network after allegations of links to organised crime, made "mainly from Belgrade ... some [KLA] accounts have been found to breach Swiss banking rules and have been closed", although "it is not known whether links to organised crime were proven".<sup>73</sup>

Chris Hedges went even further in *Foreign Affairs*, claiming that the KLA leaders were the "sons and grandsons" of fascists. Apart from the dubious view that ideology is a genetic trait, and his classifying of any Albanian national movement (including leftist ones) of the early 20th century as "fascist", the main problems with this story were the complete lack of evidence of descendants, and the obvious contradiction between Hedges' claim and the well-established facts of the Stalinist political inheritance of the main nucleus of the KLA.

## The KLA & the Serb minority

One reason often given for refusing support to the KLA was that it was an ultra-nationalist organisation, that its members had attacked Serb civilians as well as military occupation forces and that the leadership tended to say little about the place of the Serb minority in a future Kosovan state.

These charges are indeed important, but before looking at the record, we need to ask a general question: do we have the luxury of demanding that liberation movements fully pass the democratic test before lending them *critical* support when they are in a struggle for their nation's very existence? Unfortunately, violations of democratic rights by liberation movements are not unheard of. There was in fact less evidence of such acts from the KLA than many well-documented cases by units of the Kurdistan Workers Party, Tamil Tigers, the IRA, Hamas and other Palestinian factions and many other liberation movements the left has long supported.

A better instrument than the KLA would indeed have been preferable, but what needs to be addressed is whether the Kosovan people, under genocidal attack from the Serb occupation forces, had the right to armed self-defence. The fact that elements of the KLA committed violations reflects the atmosphere of state violence and absolute lawlessness in which this movement, and the above liberation movements, arose.

We need to distinguish between the general support we give to a struggle, whatever its leadership, and *political support* to a particular leadership. The *politics* of the KLA

core group, which evolved from Stalinism to simple Albanian nationalism, do not deserve the support of the left. A more internationalist group would have more vigorously appealed to Serb workers to break from Milosevic and offered them equality in an independent Kosova. It would have more vigorously fought the attacks against Serb civilians by some of its cadre. However, primary responsibility here lies with the working-class leadership *within the oppressor nation*. The lack of a movement among the Serb working class in either Serbia or Kosova to defend the oppressed Albanians dimmed the likelihood of an internationalist current growing among the oppressed nation.

While nationalist, the KLA's political declarations do not give any evidence of ultra-nationalism. They call for an "independent, democratic Kosova". If the demand for independence, and the rejection of "any short term solution that may leave Kosova under or within Serbia",<sup>74</sup> are considered "ultra-nationalist," then so are most other liberation movements that fight for national self-determination.

The KLA expressed little in the way of ideology, claiming, "We do not fight for party or political interests, as do the political parties in Kosova and Albania".<sup>75</sup> This may reflect a "militaristic" tendency to reject all political struggle, identifying the failed politics of Rugova with political struggle in general, or it may reflect the fact that by then the KLA was made up of members and former members of a vast array of different political parties, being the armed force of the whole movement.

This political heterogeneity dictates caution about claims of the KLA being ultra-nationalist or anti-Serb. The fact that so much of Rugova's LDK and members of the non-violent movement, long admired for their "moderation", had joined the KLA by late 1998 underlines this point. For example, KLA commander Shaban Shala was formerly an activist with the Council for the Defence of Human Rights and Freedoms in Glogovac.

Moreover, the KLA had by mid-1998 adopted the political leadership of Demaqi's "moderate" group. Demaqi initially demanded that the KLA accept his "Balkanija" project, which by definition meant negotiation with anti-nationalist Serbs. Demaqi had always clearly emphasised that the Serbs must have minority rights in a Kosovan state. He stressed, "Those who are fighting should realise that freedom cannot be won only by arms, just as we have seen that it cannot be won by politics alone".<sup>76</sup> During the 1999 war, KLA leader Jakup Krasniqi stated that the Serb minority would have "all the rights of every minority in Europe".<sup>77</sup>

Under Demaqi's leadership, political struggle was engaged in, particularly with the period of "self-restraint" from October 1998 to January 1999. During this time, the KLA ended attacks on the Serb military, allowing, unfortunately, a considerable

consolidation of Serb positions. It was the more “moderate” Demaqi faction which rejected capitulation on autonomy, while the more “militaristic” wing accepted it.

The KLA’s targets were overwhelmingly the armed forces of the Serbian occupation regime. Most of its non-military targets were not Serbs, but Albanians accused of “collaborating”. However, there were also numerous Serb civilian victims, whether the attacks were condoned by the KLA leadership or not.

The KLA denied any involvement in attacks on civilians. According to Krasniqi: “The KLA did not pick up weapons to fight Serb residents or journalists, but to fight against Serb terrorists and soldiers”.<sup>78</sup> Similarly, Demaqi told Radio B-92 from Belgrade, “When I talked to certain people from the headquarters, I saw that there was a united view on one thing: we do not deal in kidnappings. If some groups do it on their own, and if we have influence on them, we always intervene and kidnapped persons are released.”<sup>79</sup> According to Shala, “We are at war with the Serbian police and military forces, as well as other Serb paramilitary formations. We are not at war with civilians, innocent people, with children and the handicapped ... the KLA General Headquarters has not and will not issue an order to pursue, kill, or massacre innocent people, or loot or destroy Serbian property.”<sup>80</sup> There were plenty of statements such as these, but they did not make it into the Western media.

The problem was that in conditions of war, of years of unbearable oppression, of massive ethnic cleansing and of a general breakdown in law and order, it was inevitable that some resentful Albanians, without the power to fight the occupation authorities, would take action against easier targets. As Krasniqi points out, “After all this terror and destruction seen in Kosova, it is impossible to control the feelings of hate and revenge that have been planted by the enemy itself, despite our insistence that the Albanian war does not take the features of the barbarous war conducted by the enemy”.<sup>81</sup>

The conditions of war affected Serbs, and many left areas either of heavy fighting or of heavy Albanian concentration, though we are talking about hundreds, as opposed to the 300,000 Albanians expelled even before the 1999 genocide began. In particular, following years of illegal abductions and disappearances of Albanians, many Serbs over 1998 were also abducted by armed men, whether KLA or not. It appears that attacks on Serb civilians were extremely few in number in the first months of the conflict, but grew by mid-year as the hatred and vengeance intensified. In some cases, Albanians intervened to free Serbs from abduction. The main purpose of kidnapping seems to have been for exchange of hostages.

What did the KLA leadership do in cases of such violations? Shala noted, “Not everything can be controlled during a war”, but claimed that “such cases are punished

by the KLA, even if its soldiers conducted them”. Krasniqi claimed, “There have been cases in which they have been kidnapped, but in this event they have been handed over to international organisations, of course when they have been innocent”.<sup>82</sup> Such accounts are confirmed by the Helsinki monitors, who reported that KLA leaders continually condemned attacks on Serb civilians from “undisciplined elements”. Even Hedges, while trying to discredit the KLA, pointed out, “KLA commanders often spent as much time trying to find out what these militias were doing — closing down unauthorised roadblocks and curbing excesses by local warlords — as they did fighting the Serbs”.<sup>83</sup>

Furthermore, when arms arrived from Albania in 1997, they were carried not only by the KLA, but also by organised criminals, who terrorised local Albanians and Serbs alike, especially in border areas. Some gangs consisted of both Serbs and Albanians. Locals believed that, in conditions where the Serbian police controlled everything, these criminal rackets had police connivance.

Some claims were even made that the KLA was equal in human rights abuse to the Serbian forces before the NATO attack. However, Helsinki Human Rights Watch’s February-September 1998 report compares the extent to which such violence against civilians was a central part of the actions of the two sides before the 1999 war. The report stated, “The vast majority of these abuses were committed by Yugoslav government forces of the Serbian special police (MUP) and the Yugoslav Army (VJ) ... [who] have committed extrajudicial executions and other unlawful killings, systematically destroyed civilian property ... attacked a string of towns and villages along the border with Albania in the West, with the specific intent of depopulating the region ... many villages were shelled while civilians were still present. Noncombatants who fled the attacks were sometimes fired on by snipers ... most villages in the region [near Macedonia] were looted and systematically destroyed, and farmers’ livestock was shot, to ensure that no one could return.” As of September 1998, 250,000 people had been driven from their homes.

Regarding the KLA, the report states it “has also violated the laws of war by such actions as the taking of civilian hostages and by summary executions. Although on a lesser scale than the government abuses, these too are violations of international standards, and should be condemned.”

The report noted, “The most serious KLA abuse involved the reported execution of 22 Serbian civilians in the village of Klecka, where the police claimed to have discovered human remains and a kiln used to cremate the bodies. The manner in which the allegations were made, however, raises serious questions and underlines the importance of an investigation by an impartial forensic investigations team ...”

The remains were completely charred, making it impossible to tell the nationality of the corpses. They were discovered following the Serbian army's conquest of the town. The only "witnesses" were two Albanians who appeared with contradictory "confessions" on state television. The KLA's Barhyl Mahmuti declared the two Albanians to be "collaborationists and smugglers" who had never been members of the KLA. It later turned out they had been arrested by Serb police a month earlier, on theft charges. The KLA called for this and all other crimes to be investigated by international experts. "If these crimes were committed by the Liberating Army of Kosova, then why did the Belgrade regime refuse a visa to the specialist international organisations?", asked the KLA.<sup>84</sup>

### Did NATO aim to destroy the Serbian economy?

The two main reasons given here for NATO intervention were, firstly, the need to restore stability by getting troops in to disarm the KLA and head off the threat of an independent Kosova, and secondly, to promote a victory of the US-NATO agenda in the post-Cold-War.

However, as the war escalated, NATO bombing caused large-scale destruction of Serbia's economic assets, leading to the view among a section of the anti-war movement that one of NATO's *aims* was the destruction of Serbia.

But if this was indeed an aim of the war, what would be the reason? The view of Serbian nationalists, that it was a natural part of the world-wide conspiracy against Serbs because they are Serbs, can be left aside. Others believe imperialism aimed to punish Serbia for maintaining some kind of "socialism" and acting as a block to full imperialist penetration of eastern Europe — a view at complete variance with the reality described above of the significant opportunities for the penetration of western capital in *bourgeois* Serbia, and the fact that it was the US, not Milosevic, holding back Serbian membership of the IMF while demanding certain *political* (not economic) changes (cooperation with War Crimes Tribunal, negotiations over Kosova).

To the extent that imperialism had problems with the Milosevic regime's economic policies, they were more related to its "crony capitalist" nature (which it shared with the regimes of Tudjman, Berisha etc) rather than any imaginary "socialism," but bombing would be an extreme way of dealing with this. And while its bombing often targeted militant working class centres, as described above, launching a war would be a rather inconvenient way of hastening the work of crushing vestigial working class militancy that Milosevic had been doing quite effectively.

In reality, this destruction did not only hit the assets of the Milosevic clique but of the Serbian ruling class as a whole, and a key imperialist aim is to replace the discredited

regime and its troublesome ultraright allies with more “pragmatic” sections of this class.

Rather, while the damage to the Serbian economy was severe, in fact this was a by-product of the way the war escalated beyond the calculations of NATO, which then desperately needed a solution that neither left a million refugees to destabilise the southern Balkans, nor led to the humiliation of NATO on its fiftieth birthday. Seeing the destruction of Serbia’s economy as the very aim of the war reflects too strictly an economistic approach — NATO above all needed a political victory. Moreover, the idea sits uncomfortably with the view that NATO expected a brief war.

That the level of destruction was a by-product rather than the war’s aim can be shown by the way the war gradually escalated, and how this contrasted with the maintenance of a far more enormous intensity of imperialist bombing during the war against Iraq in 1991. This contrast is instructive because there is some reason to believe that the destruction of Iraq was indeed one of the aims of that assault. Not because of the vile regime of Saddam Hussein, which had done its fair share of collaborating with imperialism, but because, in the long run, a powerful Arab nationalist state sat uncomfortably with imperialism’s mainstays of support in the region — Israel and the Arab oil sheikhdoms of the Gulf.

At the outset of the Kosova war, NATO had assembled 400 aircraft, half of which were attack aircraft. At the outset of the Gulf war, the US-led coalition had assembled 2600 aircraft, including 1800 attack aircraft. In the first two days of the Kosova war, NATO attacked 50 targets, flew about 50 sorties a day, and had launched 100 cruise missiles in the first week. This level of intensity was in fact much closer to the “Desert Fox” US-British attack on Iraq in December 1998, which went relatively unnoticed in the international media, than to the “Desert Storm” massacre of 1991.

By contrast, in 1991, within the first five minutes, “nearly 20 air defence, C3 (command, control and communications), electrical and leadership targets were struck. Within an hour, another 25 similar targets were struck...”<sup>85</sup> There were 1300 strike sorties (i.e., sorties leading to actual attacks on the first day). This included 400 on Iraqi troops in the field.

In Iraq, this overwhelming intensity continued throughout the war, with an average of 1300 strike sorties a day. By contrast, in the first three weeks of the Kosova war, NATO launched 84 strike sorties a day. In the first two weeks of the war, most targets were scattered air defence targets and command and control facilities far from major cities. Downtown Belgrade was spared. Serbian troops and heavy weaponry in Kosova was barely touched.

This “Phase 1” of the war revealed a strategy of neither wanting to destroy Serbia

nor militarily defeat it in Kosova. It thus fits in with the objectives described above, of forcing a political capitulation of an intact Yugoslavia to the Rambouillet Accords, avoid helping the KLA and obtain a military victory for NATO, while giving Yugoslav forces some time to degrade the KLA before handing them over to NATO. This period corresponds closely to the modified “short period” within which NATO expected Milosevic to capitulate.

However, because Milosevic moved to expel the whole Kosovar population and showed no signs of wanting to deal, NATO moved into its second phase, desperate for a political victory in time for the NATO summit. From about mid-April, “Phase 2” was launched; the number of sorties doubled to roughly 150-200 a day, and targets were expanded to include a greater amount of civilian infrastructure that NATO considered had “military” uses. Milosevic’s home, TV station and party headquarters came under attack.

This rolled into “Phase 3” following the G8 summit of May 6, when all gloves were removed to obtain a victory in time to get the refugees home before winter. The number of sorties rose dramatically to about 700 a day, though on average 250 were strike sorties; massive damage was wreaked on Serbia’s economy. Only now did Serbian military forces in Kosova come under some attack — 40% of total damage to the Serbian war machine there occurred in the last week of the war, and 80% in the last two and a half weeks.<sup>86</sup>

In the Kosova war, NATO flew some 35,000 sorties, including 12,000 strike sorties; in the Gulf, the US-led coalition flew 112,000 sorties, including 47,000 strike sorties. Some 1500 Yugoslav civilians were killed in 1999, plus 576 soldiers, while 47,000 Yugoslav troops withdrew — 7000 more than at the outset. By contrast, 10 months after the Gulf war, “the Medical Educational Trust in London published a comprehensive study of casualties. Up to a quarter of a million men, women and children were killed or died as a direct result” of the US-led attack, aside from tens of thousands of Iraqi conscripts and another 1.5 million since as a result of sanctions.<sup>87</sup>

## NATO and the Yugoslav military

Moreover, in its efforts to force Serbia’s political capitulation, NATO had little choice but to hit economic targets, because to hit Serbian military forces operating in Kosova had long been declared to be against western interests because it would aid the KLA. It is remarkable how, even at the height of the war, NATO remained loyal to its pledge to not be “the KLA’s airforce.”

While its capacities were reduced, the Yugoslav Army cannot be said to have been badly damaged. It turned out that NATO had destroyed a grand total of 13 out of 300

Serbian tanks in Kosova. As the Yugoslav Army marched out, “at least 250 tanks were counted out, as well as 450 armoured personnel carriers and 600 artillery and mortar pieces,”<sup>88</sup> along with hundreds of other vehicles and massive quantities of equipment. Moreover, the bombing “effected little degradation on a modern integrated air defence system,” according to Admiral James Ellis, commander of the US joint task force in the war.

NATO bombers did not fly below 15,000 feet. Hence while it was relatively easy to make lots of ghastly “mistakes” and to target large infrastructure, it was difficult to target mobile heavy weaponry or Serbian paramilitary gangs. Lower flying helicopters and jets were needed for such a task.

According to Edward Luttwak in *Foreign Affairs*, “NATO has a panoply of aircraft designed for finding and destroying such vehicles ... but no country offered to send them into Kosovo ... When US Apache helicopters were finally ordered into Albania ... they required more than three weeks of “pre-deployment preparations.”<sup>89</sup> In the end they saw no action at all. Besides the Apaches, “NATO had aircraft deployed on Italian bases that could have done the job ... US A-10 ‘Warthogs’ built around their powerful 30 mm antitank guns and British Air Force Harriers ideal for low altitude bombing at close range. Neither was employed.”

The non-use of such craft is usually explained as western powers not wanting to risk any lives on behalf of the Kosovars. That may well be the case, but it’s likely they would have risked some lives if they really thought their interests were at stake — the US public easily handled losing 146 lives in the Gulf war. In fact two US lives were lost — in one of the Apache accidents while training in Albania! It may well have been palatable for the US public to lose a few more lives if they thought their pilots were doing something useful like actually defending the Kosovars.

In reality, NATO did not use such craft because this was perfectly consistent with its policy of not wanting to hit the Yugoslav military. Apart from wanting to avoid helping the KLA, it was against long-term imperialist interests to destroy the Yugoslav military in and of itself. Milosevic’s clique had to go, but while encouraging the tame bourgeois “opposition,” western leaders feared that a catastrophic defeat of the Yugoslav army could have led to popular uprisings which may have got out of control and headed in a direction not in western interests, resulting in a collapse of capitalist state order. A strong state apparatus was needed in case of such an outbreak.

Moreover, such a catastrophic defeat of Serbian nationalism would have undermined not only Milosevic but also the “opposition” and the entire Serbian ruling class, who are needed by the west to help build a stable, post-war capitalist Serbia.

In *Foreign Affairs*, William Hagen notes that “NATO’s destruction of the Serbian

polity will not satisfy the Serbs' justifiable grievances, nor will it stabilise the Balkans," but "will create a crisis about which few responsible Western officials are currently speaking. This will result from the forcible defeat of Serb nationalism ...this will leave a huge authority and legitimacy deficit in the Serbian lands." Hagen then asks "How will NATO fill this vacuum" given that there are no "Serbian political elites" moving beyond nationalism towards a "liberal, pro-western Serbian culture."<sup>90</sup>

## Was the US aiming at the European economy?

From another angle, the destruction wrought on Yugoslavia largely by the US may also have been a way of doing economic damage to its European rivals. In its drive for a NATO political victory, the US was much less affected by the negative effects of the destruction of the Serbian economy. Not only did EU countries have considerable investment in Serbia, but the road, rail and waterways which run through Serbia were above all *their* connection to the Black Sea, the Caucasus/Caspian region, the Mediterranean and the Middle East — not the US's.

The Danube River is a major northern economic route which is important to the economies of Germany, Austria, Italy, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Bulgaria, Roumania and the Ukraine, as well as Serbia which it passes through. It carries 100 million tonnes of cargo a year. The destruction of the bridges across the Danube at Novi Sad, which fell into the river and hence have blocked traffic ever since, as well of as important industrial plants which have caused massive environmental damage to the river, was of no consequence to the war in Kosova hundreds of miles away.

By doing some one billion deutchmarks damage to the Serbian electrical power grid, NATO bombing also greatly disrupted the backbone of south-eastern Europe's power supply ring, which is fully integrated through Serbia — Europe obtains 30% of its electric power supplies from imports from this region.

Was all this linked to the "struggle over oil corridors" through the Balkans? Linked to the Danube route is the proposed oil corridor "10" from the Roumanian port of Constanta on the Black Sea, through the Serbo-Croatian Pannonian plain, to the northern Italian port of Trieste. This route passes through areas of northern Serbia, Vojvodina and Croatian Slavonia which already have some oil production and hence a network of refineries and pipelines. This would allow more oil to pass directly from the Caspian Sea via Russia to western Europe, without any American intermediaries, and without having to go through the Turkish controlled Bosphorus.

This would reduce western European dependence on US control of Middle East oil, and contribute to what the US sees as the dangerous possibility of a European regional deal between the Franco-German economic/military project and Russia's

diplomatic and military weight, effectively leaving the US out of Europe.

The bombing of the Danube bridges, oil refineries and other infrastructure along this route may have aimed to destroy this possibility.

The US is pushing a Caspian oil pipeline from Azerbaijan on the Caspian, through Georgia and Turkey and out through Turkish port of Ceyhan in the east Mediterranean. This avoids Iran and puts the US in ultimate control via its powerful influence in the Turkish military. It also largely avoids Russia, but a version of it could go through part of Russia, according to US strategists, to “help the Russian economy prosper,” which would “help stabilise the region,”<sup>91</sup> but *it would not link Russia to Europe but directly to the US-controlled route.*

Meanwhile, another tentative route is Balkan pipeline “8” from the Bulgarian port Varna, through Skopje in Macedonia and out at the Albanian port Durres, across the Adriatic from Italy. This also avoids Turkey and connects Russia to Europe, though not as directly as pipeline “10”. While of no particular advantage to the US, it may be that by establishing a NATO base in the southern Balkans, the US would be in a better position to maintain some influence here than over the Danube route.

It is hardly surprising that the main European powers had a different approach to the US on the war. In contrast to US intransigence, France continually blocked US plans to bomb various sites throughout the war, including the Yugoslav navy in Montenegro, the Danube bridges in Belgrade, and various other targets in Belgrade.<sup>92</sup> After the war, on October 21, US General Short denounced France for imposing “extraordinary” restrictions on NATO operations. The French government responded on November 11, claiming that the US carried out many bombings unauthorised by NATO anyway. “The USAF refused to abide by phases one, two and three . It intended to hit military and political targets everywhere ... We were on the verge of an open clash with Washington.”<sup>93</sup>

Germany, with large-scale economic interests in Russia and obvious benefits from such eastern economic routes, emerged as leader of the NATO “peace camp.” During the war, the German company BASF and Russian GASPROM signed a major gas and oil agreement. From the early weeks of the war, Germany brought Russia into negotiations as Belgrade’s intermediary, and was distinctly cool about escalating the war. Italy called for an end to the bombing in the first week of the war; while NATO bombers took off from Italian bases, Italian planes did not take part. Greece took no part from the beginning. Austria refused to even allow NATO planes to cross its air space.

## G8 plan & 'phase three' of the war

The differences of approach between the US and the main EU countries became most apparent in the last month of the war, when the heaviest bombing was carried out — following the opening for a peace settlement that was offered by the May 6 meeting of the G8 countries (the G7 plus Russia).

The G8 proposal underlined the fact that NATO's terror bombing of Serbia had had nothing to do with helping the Kosovars. The world's great powers again ruled out Kosovan independence, calling for an "interim political framework" to work towards "substantial self-government" for Kosova, which however must take "full account of ... the principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia". Also like Rambouillet, it included the disbanding of the KLA and the withdrawal of most, though not all, Serb-Yugoslav forces, even Madeleine Albright stressing that the Yugoslav army could continue to have a role. NATO and Serbia had long been in agreement on all that.

The proposal called specifically for the "demilitarisation of the UCK" (KLA). The KLA rejected its demilitarisation and refused to give up on independence. In a statement released the same day as the G8 declaration, the KLA said, "After all that has happened, we cannot discuss any more the disarming of the KLA", while the "recognition of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Yugoslavia over Kosova does not guarantee peace and stability in the region".<sup>94</sup>

The sticking point in March had been the issue of an international security force. With Russia now acting as the intermediary between NATO and Milosevic, and other important roles being played by the German and Italian governments in negotiating with Russia, the G8 declaration was an exact compromise between NATO and Serbian positions in March. There was no reference to NATO forces, but rather the formula was the deployment of "effective international civil and security presences, endorsed and adopted by the United Nations, capable of guaranteeing common objectives". UN approval of such a force was insisted on by France, "the central purpose of such a requirement to constrain the American superpower".<sup>95</sup> This security force would include Russian and Ukrainian forces, which Serbia considered to be allies.

The imperialist powers and the Milosevic regime agreed that Kosova must remain in Serbia, that some autonomy would be allowed, that the KLA must be disarmed and that there would be a foreign security presence. Before the war, they were already in agreement on the first three points; on the last, NATO had demanded a foreign presence under its own control while Milosevic had conceded only unarmed foreign monitors under the UN. The rest of the war was thus fought over the interpretation of that one point, on which both had now approached middle ground.

The difference now amounted to this: Serbia insisted that none of the NATO countries engaged in the war could be part of the force, while NATO countries, principally the US, insisted that NATO would form the “core” of the operation.

Soon after May 6, Serbia announced its general support for the G8 principles. Milosevic announced a “partial withdrawal” from Kosova due to the “victory” over the KLA, so that when “UN forces” arrived, the Yugoslav army could return to levels “before NATO aggression began”. The regime newspaper *Politika* reprinted the G8 declaration on its front page, the official newsagency Tanjug declared it a positive step, and, from Milosevic’s inner circle, mega-capitalist Bogoljub Karic, a minister without portfolio in the Serbian government, made an immediate positive response. His brother, Dragomir, was dispatched to Vienna for discussions with US and Russian leaders over a deal that bridged the small gaps between them. If the foreign force could be called a UN peacekeeping force, the Serbian regime could rescue its credibility at home by claiming to have avoided a NATO occupation of Kosova.

Astonishingly, the war not only continued for another month over this tiny difference, but the US also launched “phase three”, the most destructive phase of the war, when the number of sorties tripled to an average of 700 a day.

The continuation of the war after May 6 was largely due to the need of both sides to save their credibility. The way the deal was phrased was important for its sale to respective audiences. How would Milosevic justify to his people allowing foreign forces into “Serb territory” (occupied Kosova) when they had been dying under NATO bombs supposedly to avert this? How would NATO leaders justify to their citizens a war to “protect Albanians from genocide” if the refugees could be returned by bringing in Russia and the UN and a slightly compromised formula, which the US had rejected in March?

Was the continuation of the war by NATO related to any issue of principle? In other words, did the G8 compromise formula in any way risk being ineffective, allowing the Serbian regime to continue to slaughter Albanians, and preventing the refugees from returning? It is difficult to see how. Rather, the difference was, once again, the rivalry within the Western alliance and the need of the US to demonstrate that the disaster could end only as a result of massive military force, which only it possessed.

Throughout May, France, Germany, Italy and Greece (the NATO countries with the greatest economic interests in the Balkans) continually pushed for a different approach. Soon after the bombing of the Chinese embassy, Italian President Oscar Scalfaro said NATO should pause its bombing “because we are very worried to see that the raids are apparently moving away from military targets and are being directed towards civilian targets”.<sup>96</sup> Greece also called again for a bombing pause. German

Chancellor Gerhard Schröder continued his shuttle diplomacy with Russian envoy Victor Chernomyrdin. Schröder responded to the British push for a ground war by declaring, in his role as chairperson of the EU, that Germany would *block* any NATO ground intervention, and said he would “not participate in this specifically British debate on war theories”.<sup>97</sup> France also strongly opposed a ground war, declaring that “bombing plus diplomacy is the only way we can hold a consensus”.<sup>98</sup> Both France and Germany strongly insisted there could be no peace deal without involving Moscow. A meeting of the defence ministers of the EU on June 3 stressed the need for a diplomatic resolution and noted there was a consensus against a ground war.

The US agreed there would be no ground war — only Tony Blair’s Labour government in Britain pushed this position — but it also began making clear that it was not ruled out as an option. The US and Britain insisted that the bombing not only continue but be stepped up, until Milosevic unambiguously accepted the entirety of the US interpretation of the G8 plan.

By this stage of the war, the bombing campaign, associated mostly with the US and Britain, was looking like a disaster on all fronts, its key achievements being endless “mistakes” in which Serb civilians were slaughtered, the strengthening of Milosevic at home and the historic catastrophe of the ethnic Albanians. Precisely because the US-led NATO had created so much disaster, it was imperative that the war be brought to a halt on unambiguous US conditions through massive use of US firepower. The victory of a peace process initiated by Germany, a country always lukewarm on the bombing, would indeed look bad and not be a good advertisement for the continuation of US dominance in Europe:

If the crisis ends in an ambiguous diplomatic compromise with Slobodan Milosevic, the disillusionment may be sharp and the political reverberations intense. NATO’s unity of purpose in entering the war will not preclude transatlantic finger pointing and recriminations ... Disillusionment in Kosovo will lead them [the Europeans] to step up these efforts [to assert autonomy from the US] with a vengeance.<sup>99</sup>

Behind the scenes, the main form of “ambiguous diplomatic compromise” being pushed was partition, whereby Russian forces would have their own non-NATO zone in the north, where Serbs would gravitate — giving Serbia control of the valuable Trepca complex. Aside from Moscow, the other main regional actor pushing this solution was Milosevic’s long-time strategic ally, Tudjman. On May 21, Tudjman invited G8 ministers to Zagreb and, after lecturing them about Kosova being “the cradle of Serb statehood and nation”, proposed “the withdrawal of all Serb forces and the Army of Yugoslavia to the northern part of Kosovo where peace would be kept by UN forces ... probably of the Russian Federation. In the rest of Kosovo, international military forces would

be deployed which would enable return of refugees.”<sup>100</sup>

The “soft” positions of the French-German-Italian-Greek bloc essentially meant acceptance of this solution. And such a partition is exactly what NATO has put into place since the end of the war. However, openly to accept such an “ambiguous compromise” at this point would not have been good for NATO credibility. Moreover, the way the proposal was pushed was that it allowed a Russian sphere separate from NATO, rather than under NATO, something the US did not want to compromise on; in the postwar deal, NATO itself partitioned the north for Serbian forces. The harder conditions put by the US included that NATO must form the “core” of the UN force — the US was not going to be excluded from control of the Kosova force. But, given that partition happened anyway, it would seem the harsher conditions were put more in order to justify stepping up the massive bombing, to gain a clear political victory for NATO, than because of their inherent importance.

In order to bring about a capitulation of Milosevic, the US made a number of changes of strategy in the last phase of the war. These included:

- By late May the intensity of the bombing runs was tripled, to nearly 700 a day, now hitting even more basic civilian infrastructures like the electricity grid and water facilities.
- In the last week of May, US and British leaders released intelligence on Milosevic’s role in war crimes to the UN War Crimes Tribunal in the Hague. They had long had this intelligence; in fact, the US had concealed intelligence related to Milosevic’s role in the slaughter in Srebrenica in 1995. It was a political decision to release it at this point, to help force Milosevic’s surrender, while also pressuring the German-French-Italian bloc—because this was a UN tribunal, they would have to support it.
- Hints were dropped about the possible use of ground troops, including a late May announcement that the US was planning to send 50,000 troops into the region, supposedly to prepare to become a peacekeeping force.
- Perhaps of most concern to some of the NATO opposition states was that in the last week of the war, NATO gave close air support *for the first time* to some well-controlled actions of the KLA operating from across the Albanian border, in the nearby border region of Mount Pastrok. This was dangerous, because NATO had avoided either arming the KLA or giving air cover to its operations throughout the war, precisely so as not to strengthen it and then have to deal with it later. This relatively short ground conflict had a big impact, as the KLA attacks flushed out Serb troops and heavy weaponry from under cover, exposing them to NATO attack.

## New European defence identity

How successful was the US's aggressive prosecution of "phase three" in cementing its leadership of the NATO alliance? On the one hand, it kept the alliance united throughout the war, resisting the dovish European powers without them ever making an open break. "Throughout most of the Kosovo war, the alliance has shown an impressive solidarity. A success in Kosovo would guarantee the primacy of NATO in Europe's future. There would be no doubt that NATO was the pre-eminent and indispensable security institution on the continent ... In short, the transatlantic mood was good."<sup>101</sup>

This US optimism masked far deeper problems. Having launched the war together with the US, the European powers could not afford an open break during the war. While their interests were often in conflict with the US, an open split might have had even worse consequences. They all had an important investment in the operation. For France, the strong role of its military forces was important in order later to strike out for more autonomy; furthermore, the government was in the process of convincing its citizens of the need to build a professional army. For Germany, the war offered the first opportunity in the postwar period for important military action; for Italy, NATO bombers taking off from Italian bases gave it a new strategic position. As the US and Milosevic deepened the crisis, there was no guarantee that this new European prowess was yet strong enough to handle the situation alone.

On the contrary, the war demonstrated Europe's relative military weakness, and its need to catch up with the US if it was going to have any real autonomy of action. Hence there was a renewed emphasis on boosting military spending. In particular, the European powers were greatly inferior in satellite intelligence and strategic military transport capabilities. According to German foreign minister Joschka Fischer, "The Kosovo war was mainly an experience of Europe's own insufficiency and weakness".<sup>102</sup>

However, the dissatisfaction with US handling of the conflict, and the inability of European powers to put forcefully their views on strategy, led to a renewed push for a more independent European military structure as the war was coming to a close. "In Kosovo ... Europe now sees US leadership as contributing only to gridlock",<sup>103</sup> according to the analysts in Stratfor. In late May, President Chirac and Chancellor Schröder met to launch a new European rapid reaction force. Building on the December 1998 St Malo agreement, they now tied the concept both to their long-term Eurocorps project, and to a projected military arm of the European Union — something which by definition would go beyond NATO, since there are EU members outside of NATO and vice versa.

Germany now emerged as a more vocal backer of European autonomy. According to Karl Kaiser, a German foreign affairs analyst and adviser to Schröder, "Until now it

was France which took the lead in pressing for a pan-European military force”, but now Germany was playing a leading role as well.<sup>104</sup> Germany, consistent with its strategic interests, insists there can be no real system of European security without full Russian participation.

While resistance in Europe to boosting defence expenditure to the level necessary for real independence is strong, it can be offset by the French push for a pan-European defence industry to rival the US. “France is already pressing Germany to co-finance the development of military satellites and an attack helicopter code-named ‘Tiger’.”<sup>105</sup>

In June, the EU summit in Cologne officially launched its new defence arm and appointed Solana, who stepped down as NATO chief, as the EU’s first defence and security coordinator. But it was clear that the two key military powers, Britain and France, had different views on its role, related to their different roles in the Kosova war. In the words of the new British NATO chief, George Robertson, the new force would strengthen NATO, not become its rival. The Europeans do not get value for money in military spending, “because we duplicate, because we compete” with NATO.<sup>106</sup>

By contrast, France was pushing a plan for a European general staff and a council of 15 EU ambassadors to run the new force. Reacting to US concerns, the French chief of staff, General Kelche, suggested that US rulers “would like strategic functions to be undertaken by the United States, while the Europeans below provide the troops”.<sup>107</sup> As the war of words heated up, Chirac and his foreign minister both denounced the US-led “unipolar world”, especially “the unilateralism of a single hyperpower”. Karl Kaiser, adviser to Schröder, agreed that Chirac “spoke for me and for all Europeans”.<sup>108</sup> The EU summit in Helsinki on December 13 launched the new force of 60,000 troops, with its own command structures and intelligence bases, capable of full deployment within 60 days.

This alarmed Washington. Deputy secretary of state Strobe Talbot commented on a greater European defence role: “Will it keep the alliance together, European and non-European, EU and non-EU? We would not want to see an ESDI (European Security and Defence Initiative) that comes into being first within NATO but then grows out of NATO and finally grows up away from it and could even compete with it.”<sup>109</sup> The US Senate passed a resolution demanding that “in matters of transatlantic security, NATO should be the first and principal means of collective response, and the EU should take autonomous missions only if NATO so delegates”.<sup>110</sup>

While Blair went out of his way to reassure the US, the Tory opposition denounced the force and accused Blair of capitulating to France. Shadow defence secretary Iain Duncan Smith told the US Congress that France and Germany were destroying NATO. But while Blair wants a British influence within Europe, he still keeps aloof from the

euro and other Europe-wide economic institutions. Behind this was continuing rivalry with both France and Germany which came to a head with the Anglo-French “beef war” and an open clash between Blair and Schröder just before the Helsinki summit.

## **US pushes rival bloc in Balkans**

On November 30, Chirac and Schröder issued their “Paris declaration” calling for their Eurocorps to take control of Kosova peacekeeping operations from 2000. Besides Germany and France, the Eurocorps includes Belgium, Luxembourg and Spain. However, the US has been encouraging a rival military corps from the south-eastern flank of NATO, which has emerged as a potential competitor for the assignment. On the same day as the Paris declaration, US defence secretary William Cohen addressed a meeting of defence ministers from NATO members Italy, Greece and Turkey, and also Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Albania and Slovenia, stressing the potential for a “growing pattern of cooperation within the region”. Cohen noted that these countries, led by the three NATO countries, had set up a joint peacekeeping brigade.

Cohen advocated “the region’s full integration into Europe”, which was a stab at the EU, which has remained implacably opposed to extending EU membership to Turkey. Turkey is highly critical of the EU defence push, which would leave it out in the cold.

The US attempt to use this south-eastern front in competition with the Franco-German alliance further reveals that the war had more to do with controlling Europe’s gateway to the Middle East and Black Sea region than with Kosova. Two of the three NATO states in this bloc, Greece and Italy, were the most dovish on NATO’s war, had the best relationship to the Milosevic regime and had the most significant economic investment in Yugoslavia. Even while NATO planes took off from Italy, it maintained diplomatic relations with Yugoslavia. If the US issue were really Milosevic, these would not be its front-runners.

However, these states do not have the level of combined military-economic power of the Franco-German bloc. By imposing a NATO base in the Balkans, Washington is now offering NATO cover to these weaker imperialist states that can rival German influence in the Balkans — which has essentially become a deutschmark zone. On November 2, Greece announced a \$500 million investment plan for Balkan reconstruction, the first concrete funds in the much vaunted “stability pact” for south-east Europe. This Greek investment would include rebuilding of destroyed Yugoslav infrastructure, despite the US attempt to dictate that no reconstruction take place while Milosevic remains in power.

Greece is already the biggest foreign investor in Macedonia, the second biggest

(after Italy) in Albania, the sixth in Bulgaria and, with Italy, among the biggest in Yugoslavia. Greek capital's tentacles also extend to Ukraine, Russia, the Caucasus and other ex-Soviet republics. There is of course historic rivalry between Greece and Turkey, particularly since the prospect of oil in the Aegean arose in the 1970s. While Italo-Greek relations are far smoother, rivalry has occasionally manifested itself, as in 1997, when both insisted on being the last to withdraw their troops occupying Albania after the mass uprising that year.

The US interest is in smoothing these rivalries in order to present a common front in rivalry with western Europe. This will probably mean a new US effort to negotiate a Greek-Turkish deal over Cyprus, while giving Turkey a prominent role in the Caucasus-Caspian region, particularly through the pipeline deal (Azerbaijan-Georgia-Turkey-Mediterranean Sea), and Greece a prominent role in the Balkans. Turkey can be bought off in the Balkans, where it has completely failed economically in any case, with NATO "protection" of Moslem ghettos in Bosnia and Kosova. Meanwhile, Greece and Italy can provide an indirect US link to the Serbian elite.

The EU, by offering membership to Cyprus in 1997, but not to Turkey, is pushing the opposite track. Turkey threatened to formally annex the part of Cyprus it occupies. This situation puts Greece, an EU member, in direct confrontation with Turkey. In the long list of conditions put by the EU before Turkish membership can be considered — human rights, Kurdish issue, Cyprus, economic issues — always included is a resolution of its problems with Greece over the Aegean. Greece, with its dominating position in the Balkans and the Aegean, and its strong Russian links, is strategically located for both blocs. Conflict with Turkey pushes Greece solidly into alliance with its EU partners. A Greek-Italian-German alliance in the Balkans directly connects the whole of Europe to Russia and the Black and Caspian seas, greatly loosening US control over the region.

## **Conservative & ultra-right opposition to the war**

As the Kosova war was largely led by European Social-Democracy and US "liberals", who used to promote an allegedly "humanitarian" variety of imperialist intervention, it is interesting that there was far more reticence about the war from the more conservative sections of imperialist leadership, something of a role reversal.

French and German conservatives denounced what they saw as a war for US interests. According to analyst Rosa Liebknecht, "anti-Americanism in Germany is very popular now. You can read in the journals of the bourgeoisie and in papers like *Spiegel* and *Focus* (similar to the US *Time* magazine) about "US imperialism," "UC (KLA) terror" and so on." In France, the right-wing Gaullists around Philippe Suguin opposed the war. Veteran Gaullist senator Alain Peyrefitte called the war "illegal and

immoral” and declared that NATO “will always be a tool of America.”<sup>111</sup> Right-wing ‘Euro-Skeptics’ group claimed “bellicose Americans” were “setting Europe on fire.”

In Britain, Margaret Thatcher, representing the strongly pro-American wing of the Tory opposition, fully supported Blair’s warmongering, while many other Tories were highly critical.<sup>112</sup> The right-wing former defence minister Alan Clarke employed anti-American rhetoric while denouncing NATO for its “clumsy, wasteful and shambolic” operation. He accused the KLA of being “a bunch of thugs deeply involved in the arms trade” — not surprising from someone who also believed that Britain should solve the Irish problem by assassinating 600 key IRA leaders — the IRA/KLA parallel was too strong for such conservatives. Tory MP Sir Peter Tapsell spoke of the “Serbian patriotic people, who are one of the great fighting people of Europe” and denounced the war as “the most incompetent operation ... since the Crimea.”

In the US, opposition to the war came from right-wing isolationists like Pat Buchanan — who oppose NATO just as they oppose the UN, even NATO is too “multilateral”. However, mainstream conservatives like Henry Kissinger and a large section of the Republican Party were also soft on the war. Their position is based on opposition to the liberals’ pretense of “humanitarian intervention” — they argue this clouds “the basic problem of establishing priorities in foreign policy.”<sup>113</sup> As Kosova had no strategic interest to the US, they believed the US must not “stretch ourselves too thin in the face of far less ambiguous threats in the Middle East or north-east Asia.” By May 1999, the Republican party was calling for a negotiated settlement.

In Israel, while the opposition Labour Party took the side of its warmongering Social Democratic kin, the right-wing Likud government took over a week to issue formalistic support to the US. On Likud’s right, the “butcher of Beirut,” foreign minister Ariel Sharon, declared “Israel should not legitimise NATO’s aggression ... Israel could be the next victim .. imagine if one fine day the Arabs declared autonomy for the Galilee and links with the Palestinian authority.”<sup>114</sup> Israeli leaders and media expressed the view that an independent Kosova could become an “Islamist” base in Europe, and warned of Iranian support to the KLA.

Indeed, the Serbian nationalist propaganda about its “historic mission” to defend “European civilisation” against “Islamic terrorism” was a key ideological reason for the anti-NATO and pro-Milosevic positions of the international ultra-right, which were as unanimous as the pro-war positions of international social democracy. This underlines the importance of the stance from which the left opposed the war.

In France, the National Front of Le Pen openly supported Milosevic, leader Bruno Megret accusing Chirac and Jospin of being “President Clinton’s lapdogs”. The National Front had long been the major European ally of Serbian nationalism, no doubt envious

of its ability to murder and expel Moslems in such large numbers. In January 1997, Le Pen visited Vojislav Seselj in Belgrade and the Karadzic leadership in Republika Srpska, declaring, "I have come to express to you the greetings of French patriots. All the patriots of the world have in common a set of identical values which make us all a community of civilised men and women".<sup>115</sup> In 1998, Seselj, as Serbian deputy prime minister, made Le Pen an honorary citizen of a Belgrade municipality.

In Italy, the neo-fascist National Alliance is a strategic ally of the Milosevic regime, due to what it sees as Italian nationalism's historic alliance with Serbian nationalism against Croatia, due to its advocacy of the reconquest of the Istria region for Italy. It saw the NATO war as a US attack on Europe. The right-wing, separatist Northern League also came out in favour of Serbia against the NATO action.

Even in Germany, which does not have the same "historic" ties to Serbia that French and Italian ultra-rightists base their case on, "There are also German fascists on the demonstration with the slogan 'Foreign troops out of Germany, German troops out of the Balkans!' and 'No German blood for foreign interests.'"<sup>116</sup> The Norwegian anti-fascist *Monitor* reported that neo-Nazis across Europe were supporting Belgrade and calling for volunteers, because they see the Moslems as "a threat to Europe".

The Australian National Action, denouncing "New World order terrorism", declared, "The Australian people are not being told ... about Serbia's history as a bulwark of Europe against Asia, of Christianity against Islam ... that Serbia was a friend of Australia in two world wars."<sup>117</sup> In *Spearhead*, associated with the British National Party, we read that Albanians "moved in" to Kosova and began a "war of demographics" just as Irish Catholics are doing in northern Ireland! "But Britain, unlike Serbia, does not have a government with backbone ... It is of course quite natural that a political class which favours British surrender in Northern Ireland would not be able to understand Serbian leaders' unwillingness to surrender in Kosovo".<sup>118</sup>

On May 10, South Africa's Boer Resistance Movement offered to send troops to help defend Yugoslavia against NATO. "We want to help the Serbians because they are nationalists and Christians like us", said leader Andrew Ford. He said the force would be made up of white former South African Defence Force members and police.<sup>119</sup>

In the US, the right wing of the Republican Party, led by the Senate Republican Policy Committee, is connected to pro-Serbian, neo-Confederate, anti-immigration and other ultra-rightist causes. Its advisers on the Balkans are led by Yossef Bodansky and James Jatras, leaders of the pro-Karadzic Serb Unity Congress (SUC). Jatras is author of anti-Moslem articles about "heathen Araby" and the like, and is connected to the Christian right-wing Rockford Institute, whose platform is based on opposition to immigration of non-white, non-Christian peoples.

The chairperson of the Rockford Institute is David Hartman, who made clear the paranoid link for the right between what they see as the occupation of Kosova, “once inhabited only by Serbs”, by Albanians, a “foreign and alien people”, and the growing immigration into Texas of Mexicans, who have now “been allowed to become a majority in what was once a predominantly Anglo-Celtic state”.<sup>120</sup> The Rockford Institute is tied to DixieNet and the League for the South, neo-Confederacy groups.

Another leader of the Rockford Institute is Bob Djurdjevic, a *Washington Times* columnist and Serb-American ultra-nationalist. According to Djurdjevic, the US has become a “mutt nation” (full of non-white “mud people”) due to a conspiracy by Wall Street bankers, their anti-Christian New World Order and lax immigration laws.

Louis Beams, a leader of the Ku Klux Klan, announced he was ready to fight on behalf of the Serb cause in Kosova, identifying the Serbian struggle against “Moslem hordes” with his own struggle for a racially pure USA.<sup>121</sup> In 1389, “77,000 Christian knights and soldiers exacted such a tremendous toll upon the Islamic soldiers that the advance into the heart of Europe was halted” according to Beams.<sup>122</sup> William Pierce, leader of the Christian Identity Movement, came out with a similar position.

The ultra-right John Birch Society and its journal, *New American*, were also leaders in the pro-Serbian campaign, for all the same reasons. According to William Norman Grigg, “The chief beneficiary of the US military intervention, the so-called KLA, is a terrorist criminal syndicate, Maoist in its ideological bent, hard-wired into the international heroin trade, and tightly allied with Osama bin Laden”.<sup>123</sup> Grigg also warned of the parallel between Albanian demands for an independent Kosova and those Mexican radicals seeking an independent “Aztlan” in the US south-west. ■

## 10. Postwar Kosova — Partition, Violence, Colonialism

Who won the Kosova war? According to Western leaders, NATO did, and Milosevic “totally capitulated”. According to Milosevic, the war ended with a “victory for Serbia’s peace policy”. According to the KLA, it won Kosova.

While NATO clearly achieved victory, “total capitulation” by Milosevic is overstated. NATO got its way that its troops would control the military operation in Kosova; all Yugoslav forces had to withdraw before “hundreds” could return, whereas at Rambouillet, 2500 would have stayed. On the other hand, NATO’s troops are under the UN flag; in rejecting Rambouillet in March, the Serbian parliament left the door open to some kind of UN presence. Furthermore, at Rambouillet, the NATO forces would have had the right to roam anywhere in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, not just Kosova; now they have no such right. And the foreign forces include troops from many non-NATO countries, including thousands of pro-Serbian Russian troops.

Hence on the key issue of the nature of the armed international presence, the final agreement is a compromise between Serbian and NATO positions. On all the other points there was already complete agreement between NATO and Serbia at Rambouillet. NATO forces, under the UN flag, are committed to policing Yugoslavia’s borders and maintaining Yugoslavia’s alleged “integrity”, i.e., official rule over Kosova.

What of the third party, the Albanian majority and the KLA? Albanians initially felt a great sense of elation as they watched their oppressors leave. This jubilation has since been tempered as they returned to a country completely in ruins. About half have no house to live in; schools, hospitals, mosques and the like have been destroyed by Serbian forces; and much infrastructure was destroyed by NATO bombing. Traumatized refugees are returning to mass graves of relatives. Civic organisations built over many years have been destroyed. Pristina has filled up with homeless refugees from the countryside, without a semblance of order. Albanians are more and more feeling the effects in a massive crime wave, with a lack of any legal system to deal with it. Pec and Djakovica in the west are burnt-out ruins. “Everything was destroyed”,

claims the new head of Djakovica's provisional government, Maslon Kumanova.<sup>1</sup>

After all this, the Albanians are denied the independence they long fought for. Indeed, independence is much further away as a result of the apocalypse. Indeed, while Rambouillet had included a vague clause which *hinted* there might one day be a referendum, this clause was completely dropped following NATO victory. KLA leaders now say, "if not in three years, then maybe in 10 years" they will hold a referendum. For now, there are more pressing tasks. Independence? For most, a roof over their head is more of a concern, which deepens their dependence on the UN and NATO, both opposed to Kosovan self-determination.

As Yugoslav troops withdrew northward, KLA forces took control of some southern towns near the border, such as Prizren. NATO forces arrived more slowly. During this "power vacuum", thousands of Serb civilians joined the retreating Serb military, frightened of reprisals by returning Albanians. Some 50,000 Serbs initially fled their homes, either to Serbia or Montenegro, or to parts of Kosova with a bigger Serb population.

Russian troops arrived before NATO and seized Pristina airport, creating a minor media crisis. Russia had played a prominent role in ending the war; as it understood the G8 declaration, it would be on equal footing with NATO in running Kosova. NATO, however, hijacked the G8 process, interpreting "unified command" to mean "unified NATO command".

Serb civilians felt safer with Russian troops than with the NATO troops who had been bombing them. Russia capitalised on this fear by proposing a separate Russian sector, equal to the US, British, French, Italian and German sectors. Serbs would no doubt have flocked to this sector, while no Albanians would have returned to their homes there. Partition would have been complete.

The NATO-Russian agreement of June 18 "recognises the stakes that Russia and NATO share in Europe's future", according to US defence secretary William Cohen. The agreement set up a ten-member Russian military delegation to NATO's Brussels headquarters and another three at the southern command in Naples, so Russian forces in Kosova could report directly to Russian superiors, who have, however, been more integrated into NATO via this agreement. Russian troops were given three "significant areas of responsibility" in parts of the French, US and German zones, as well as shared control of the airport and a logistics base in the British sector. Ironically, this arrangement is better for Kosova Serbs than the Russian proposal — they have three sectors to gravitate to, not just one. But Russia's aim was not so much to protect Serbs as to cut out its own region and to protect Serbia's strategic interests in the massive mineral wealth around Trepca.

To the last, withdrawing Yugoslav troops and special police burned and looted Albanian villages and continued random killing of Albanians. Likewise, many returning Albanians, whether in KLA uniform or not, burned and looted homes of Serbs who had fled, and carried out random killings and abductions. In some cases, Albanians claim they are seizing back property that was stolen from them, or looting because they have nothing left themselves; clearly, however, there was a large degree of pure vengeance against innocent Serbs. Having committed a holocaust against the Albanians, the Serbian chauvinist forces put these civilians in the firing line of vengeful reaction by Albanians. In the past, the KLA had avoided attacks on Serb churches or monasteries; now there have been many reported attacks by returning Albanians, following the wholesale destruction of historic Albanian mosques during the genocide.

Both Serbs and Albanians accused the NATO forces of bias against them and lack of action in their defence. For example, in Pec the KLA noted the “strange indifference” of Italian troops to the burning and looting of Albanian homes by Serb police, who were “now dressed as civilians” while keeping their arms.<sup>2</sup> French troops in the abandoned town of Grace stood by as returning Albanians looted and burned Serb homes, until British troops arrived and sealed off the area, making a number of arrests. Rather than bias, these cases demonstrated the inability of a foreign force with no roots among the population to prevent the rage and the desperation of armed and unarmed civilians unleashed by the bombing and the genocide.

NATO, Milosevic, the KLA and the Serbian Orthodox Church all appealed to Serbs to return to Kosova. Whereas Milosevic, who caused their catastrophe, began forcing busloads back and his regime’s media called frightened Serb refugees “traitors”, Serbian Orthodox Archbishop Pavle set the example by personally going to live in Kosova. The Orthodox Church also finally changed position and called for the overthrow of Milosevic. NATO had escorted 2000 Serbs back to Kosova by the end of June, still in the vain hope that they would feel secure under its “protection”. In returning 70 Serb civilians to Pec, NATO used three attack helicopters and “nearly as many military vehicles as [civilian] cars”.<sup>3</sup>

In other cases, NATO intervened forcefully to stop vengeance attacks or arbitrary justice by undisciplined KLA forces. In Prizren, German troops raided the police station where KLA forces were holding and beating Albanian, Serb and Gypsy prisoners. The KLA soldiers were disarmed, and German troops began stopping cars and seizing weapons from the KLA.

While such examples appear justified, they served NATO as part of the propaganda for the necessity of its presence, and part of the broader offensive to disarm and demilitarise the KLA. US troops in Zagre, as soon as they arrived, began routinely

searching cars returning from Macedonia and stripping Albanians of weapons. When one 200-strong KLA unit refused to disarm, US marines threatened them with Cobra helicopter gunships and armoured vehicles, and ordered the commander to lie down on the road. Their weapons were seized and six fighters led away in handcuffs.

The KLA leadership took a highly responsible position. KLA leader Hashim Thaci claimed, “The phenomenon of Serbs leaving is upsetting to us ... We ask all the Serbs who left and haven’t done any crimes to come here and live in a democratic Kosova.”<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Thaci promised severe punishment for Albanians carrying out reprisals against Serbs. Other KLA leaders made similar statements.

The problem was controlling the anger in the ranks in the short term. NATO claimed it could control it by disarming the KLA, and this might appear soothing to the Serb minority who view the KLA as their main enemy. However, there is an inherent contradiction here: NATO’s actions strip the KLA leadership, the only real authority with any roots in the population, of the ability to impose discipline on the ranks. At the same time, there was no guarantee that NATO could do much better.

NATO and the KLA reached an agreement on demilitarisation and disarmament on June 21. The KLA was required immediately to stop setting up checkpoints or conducting any kind of military activity, and within a month to hand over all automatic weapons and long-barrelled guns, including AK-47s, to be put in storage sites controlled by NATO. Within 90 days, they had to stop wearing any uniforms or insignia and disband.

Media reports suggested that NATO would allow the KLA to transform itself into a peacetime army “like the US National Guard”. In reality, this was strongly opposed by NATO, considerably holding up discussions. In the final text, the KLA is allowed to state its *desire* to set up such a force, but the agreement only allows for it to be “considered” in the future. Such a territorial defence force was part of the autonomy that Kosova had before 1989 — underlining that it is a *reduced* form of autonomy being envisaged. Further, the KLA would not even become the new police force, the agreement merely allowing “consideration” of individual KLA fighters for posts.

Under the Rambouillet agreement, this civilian police force would have included a proportional number of Serbs and other minorities. But following the war and the genocide, the idea that the two main communities would live in the same areas, let alone jointly police such areas, was a delusion, used by the UN/NATO administration to justify its rule over the province.

The UN/NATO codeword for this policy is building a “multi-ethnic” Kosova. Where the UN and NATO insisted for years that Bosnia, a genuinely multi-ethnic society, be partitioned along ethnic lines, it appears strange that they now want to

create a multi-ethnic society out of a province that never was one, but simply a Serbian colony. Moreover, the UN/NATO war policy deepened the ethnic divide. Serbs, once holding all jobs in government, administration, the police and the public sector, are fleeing the wrath of the locals just as surely as French civilians fled Algeria in the 1960s. For the UN/NATO, “multi-ethnic” society is simply code for Kosova remaining inside Yugoslavia, based on the false assumption that Kosovan independence can only be negative for non-Albanian minorities.

### Towards partition?

According to the *New York Times*, “Serbia proper begins at the heavily guarded bridge here in Kosovska Mitrovica, some 30 miles south of Kosovo’s actual border with Serbia”.<sup>5</sup> The term “Serbia proper” generally means Serbia without Kosova. This raises the question: did Serbia “lose” Kosova, or did it “gain” part of it and extend its own borders 50 kilometres south?

Partition had long been the solution favoured in Serbian nationalist circles. The problem with partition was that Serbs and Albanians were scattered across the province, often living in mixed villages. Physically separating the two peoples was put up as a solution to the seemingly endless instability of the region. While ethnic tensions had remained very high since Milosevic had abolished Kosovan autonomy in 1989, it was the NATO air war and the Serbian attempt to empty much of Kosova of its Albanians that cemented ethnic hatreds to a level making separation inevitable. The revenge attacks by Albanians and the poisoned ethnic atmosphere are creating the conditions for the solidifying of certain “Serb” areas, which in the future would join Serbia proper in a partition.

Certainly, Milosevic “lost” in terms of the size of the “Serb” part in the partition. For Milosevic, the aim of the war was to put “facts on the ground”, so that many of the regions ethnically cleansed could become the Serbian part of Kosova. However, despite the toying with this idea by various imperialist rulers, it could not be done so blatantly, because the Albanian refugee problem threatened to further destabilise the southern Balkans. Their return was also necessary if NATO’s credibility was to survive — one of the West’s key war aims.

According to veteran Kosovan human rights campaigner Veton Surroi, Milosevic “gambled all or nothing, and he lost”.<sup>6</sup> He also points out that most Kosovan Serbs “gambled all or nothing with Milosevic, and they lost”. However, while it is certainly true that those Serb civilians who gambled with Milosevic are now paying the price, that is different from what Belgrade has lost. “Serbia proper” is now annexing about a sixth of Kosova, mostly in the north and the east near the borders of Serbia.

As Serbs were only a tenth of Kosova's population, one-sixth of the territory is not bad as partitions go. However, this partition brings little advantage to most Kosovan Serbs, who were scattered all over the province. But for the Serbian regime, the question is quality rather than quantity: the northern region being annexed is where the great bulk of Kosova's mineral wealth is located.

The Trepca zinc, lead, cadmium, gold and silver mining and metallurgy complex in the north of Kosova has been described as the "most valuable piece of real estate in the Balkans".<sup>7</sup> It is valued at about \$5 billion. And the Trepca complex goes beyond the raw materials. According to Hedges, "The Stari Trg mine, with its warehouses, is ringed with smelting plants, 17 metal treatment sites, freight yards, railroad lines, a power plant and the country's largest battery plant".

For the regime of Milosevic, the wealth of the far north of Kosova means far more than the presence of medieval monasteries abandoned many centuries ago; the "cradle of Serb culture" was just useful propaganda with which to use a generation of now abandoned Kosova Serbs to keep control of the cradle of the Serb ruling class's wealth.

Already from late June, the northern city of Mitrovica, Kosova's second largest, became firmly partitioned between a Serb-ruled north and an Albanian-ruled, completely destroyed, south. The Ibar river is the border. When Albanians, who previously formed the majority in the north, try to cross the bridge and return to their homes, they are confronted by two obstacles: Serb paramilitaries who staff the crossing in shifts and physically abuse them, and their allies: French NATO troops, who tell the Albanians it is not safe to cross, prompting the obvious question, "What then is your role?"

To the north-east of Mitrovica is the Trepca complex. The Serb paramilitaries have declared the whole of Kosova from their side of the river to the Serbian border, a "Serb zone". The towns to the north, such as Zvecan and Leposovac, both of which also have important Trepca facilities, are overwhelmingly Serb in population, but northern Mitrovica and the Trepca region of the Stari Trg mine, before the war, were not. Albanians have also not returned to several villages in the region, such as Ceraje and Bistrice. As for the Albanians who lived near the Stari Trg mine, every house was destroyed during the war; the mere five families remaining had been assiduously avoided by the UN's efforts, as winter approached, to provide even a single warm room or winterised tent.

The bulk of Trepca facilities are in regions under Serb control. The Stari Trg mines, two more mines to its north and three mines in Serbia proper account for 70% of total mining production. Two of three flotation facilities are in Stari Trg and Leposevac, and the smelting plant, the largest in the Balkans, is in Zvecan. The industrial complex is roughly divided between north and south Mitrovica. In 1996, exports were worth \$100

million.<sup>8</sup>

On August 7, a thousand Albanians tried to cross the bridge to return to their homes. They were driven back by French troops with armoured vehicles. The following day, another 150 Albanians were blocked, prompting them to call the French troops “terrorists”. An attempt by the KLA to seize control of the Trepca plant was thwarted by French troops on July 3.

French imperialism has long had a special relationship with Serbia. Most Bosnian Serb leaders wanted for war crimes, including Radovan Karadzic, live in the French sector in Bosnia. When French Major Bunel was arrested in October 1998 for passing NATO intelligence to the Serbian military, French army officers demonstrated under the banner “The Army with the Serbs — Free Major Bunel”.<sup>9</sup>

The French company Société Commerciale des Metaux et des Minéraux announced in July, just as French troops were being deployed to the north, that it had bought a stake in Trepca, alongside the Greek company Mytilinios. A joint French-Serbian international trade bank was established in Mitrovica on July 14, whose chief tasks are “capital expansion, financing development projects, export and import programs, speedy incorporation into the international financial market and the reconstruction of Kosmet”.<sup>10</sup>

Under French protection, Trepca still has the same all-Serb management board. Attempts by the independent miners’ union, representing the 13,000 Albanian miners sacked in 1989-90, to return to the mine have been blocked by French troops. When miners’ leader Bajram Mustafa was invited to speak at a solidarity meeting in Paris, he was refused a visa by French authorities.

While this region has become a refuge for fearful Serbs from other parts of Kosova, it is also filling up with former police and paramilitaries from Serbia. As Kosova is still considered part of Serbia, there is nothing to stop “an awful lot of hard young men with no apparent ties to Kosovo” from streaming in,<sup>11</sup> according to UN officials. In this region, the Serbian dinar remains the currency, Serbian newspapers are on sale, and the Serbian government pays wages and pensions on time, which it does not do in Serbia.

The other major area of Serb concentration is along the eastern border with Serbia, in the northern part of the US zone, around the towns of Kamenica and Novo Brdo — where there are also some Trepca assets. This is one of the Russian zones. Considerable harassment of Albanians by Russian troops has been reported, and in some areas there has even been a renewed Albanian exodus. Albanians report masked men speaking Serbian among the Russian troops. In one case, Russian troops detained KLA commander Agim Ceku. Serb paramilitaries in the border regions have also expelled many Albanians from villages to the east of Kamenica and Gninalje. When

Russian troops actually shot dead Serb paramilitaries who were murdering a number of Albanians, of the three dead Serbs, one had a card from the Serbian Interior Ministry, while another had a uniform from a paramilitary group.

On August 4, two thousand Albanians marched against the Russian troops in Kamenica. US forces allowed the demonstration to proceed, but threateningly hovered above it in Apache helicopters — which had been brought to the region supposedly to hit Serbian tanks, but never saw any action until used to forcibly disarm KLA units.

This region of Kosova borders on a part of southern “Serbia proper” with an Albanian majority. Since the end of the war, some 20,000 of these Albanians have been driven from their homes into Kosova.

There are a number of other Serb enclaves, some quite isolated, as in the northern sector of Orahovac. A more significant enclave centres on the famous Gracanica Monastery just south of Pristina, extending into the northern part of Lipljan district, where Serbs from throughout Kosova have flocked and conditions are relatively secure. Yugoslav troops are supposed to return to this region, as part of the UN resolution ending the war, which allows troops to “protect” Serbian monasteries and monuments. To the north, Gracanica is connected to Kosovo Polje, a western region of Pristina heavily populated by Serbs. Russian forces have a major base of operations there. While this enclave does not border Serbia, there is the potential for it to link to the Kamenica zone, just to its east.

Back to the north, Russian forces have a zone within the French zone, not the northern part of the French zone, where the French are already doing a good enough job at partition, but the southern part, with a more mixed Albanian-Serb population.

Just south of that, in the northern part of the Italian sector, around Kosova’s western border with Serbia and Montenegro, there were many reports of Serb paramilitary activity. On July 27, Albanian television reported that Serb paramilitary units had laid siege to the village of Moistir. Just south of there is the patriarchate of Pec, the seat of the famous medieval Serbian patriarchate. The extraordinary brutality of Milosevic’s forces in their destruction of the city led to the total exodus of Serbs in fear of Albanian revenge. However, the Serbian regime aims to bring its troops back here as part of the UN resolution. Moreover, there is a large concentration of Serbs still living in the region of Gorazdovac, between Pec, Istok and Klina. Considerable numbers of Serbs who fled are returning to this region, which borders on the Russian zone in the northern tip of the German sector around Klina.

Aside from the northern region, it is highly uncertain which of these regions will develop in the direction of fully fledged Serb enclaves useful for partition, and which will simply be ghettos for terrified Serbs surrounded by vengeful Albanians. However,

it is clear that areas of Kosova's western and eastern border regions have the potential to join the north in a creeping partition, enforced by French NATO troops, Russian troops, Serbian paramilitaries and/or returning Yugoslav troops.

## Attacks on Serb minority

A September report by the UNHCR and OSCE gave a meticulous breakdown of how many Serbs and other minorities remained in each region of Kosova. A total of around 100,000 Serbs remained, half the estimated original number. As the report explained, many more had fled their homes, but rather than leaving the province, large numbers were moving *inside Kosova* to areas of greater Serb concentration, creating a number of “mono-ethnic enclaves”.

Those Serbs remaining outside the enclaves suffer in a “climate of violence and impunity”, with “widespread discrimination, harassment and intimidation directed against non-Albanians”, despite a significant decline in attacks against minorities in November.<sup>12</sup> From the withdrawal of the Serbian occupation forces in June until December 10, there were 414 murders reported in Kosova. This figure includes 150 Albanians and 140 Serbs — which, given how small the Serb minority is, means Serbs are disproportionately represented as murder victims.

Many media reports casually blamed the KLA for the terror against Serb civilians. A larger fantasy sees the UN and NATO as supporting the KLA in “ethnic cleansing” of Serbs. “NATO Has Installed a Reign of Terror in Kosovo”, was the heading of a long article by a noted left apologist for the Milosevic regime, Michel Chossudovsky.

Such analyses would have difficulty in explaining why NATO would have such an aim. It would also conflict with NATO's disarmament of the KLA, during which 10,000 automatic weapons were handed in or confiscated, or why the disarming and disbanding of the KLA made no difference to the level of violence against Serbs and minorities. It would also be difficult to explain the role of French NATO forces in the north.

Claims that NATO is “tolerating” anti-Serb violence conjure up images of KLA units marching on Serb villages to violently eject the populations as NATO just stands by. In reality, the KLA was confined to barracks by NATO months before its disbanding. The overwhelming bulk of violence has been individual acts of burning, looting, assault or murder, the kind of acts one would expect in a massive crime wave in a destroyed society. (Even at this level, crime statistics are still lower than in some less devastated societies, including Moscow, Johannesburg and major US cities.) NATO has hundreds of Albanians in its jails charged with such crimes. In many areas, NATO troops are even living in the same blocks of units with Serbs to deter attacks. NATO and the UN have been keen to use the anti-Serb violence as their key propaganda point for refusing

to devolve any power to the Albanian majority, refusing to recognise or fund the KLA-dominated Kosova Provisional Government and opposing independence.

In early July, the KLA-led provisional government issued a joint appeal with the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Kosova-based Serbian Resistance Movement: “We urge all Kosova inhabitants, whether of civilian or military status, to refrain and to actively discourage others from any acts of violence against their neighbours ... those responsible will be brought to justice.”<sup>13</sup> Both sides also condemned the crimes of Milosevic against the Albanian population.

Following the brutal murder of 14 Serb farmers in the village of Gracko, south of Pristina, in mid-July, Hashim Thaci, head of the KLA and its provisional government, declared, “We strongly condemn this act ... it has nothing to do with the progressive democratic forces in Kosova ... we must cooperate closely with the international community to assist in the investigation that will lead to the capture of those who are guilty.” Thaci went on to call for working towards “a harmonious coexistence, tolerance and understanding between ethnic groups”.<sup>14</sup>

On August 18, the KLA released a communique which once again “forcefully condemns these actions ... and invites all the Kosova citizens that belong to the Serb and other minorities not involved in crimes ... to stay in Kosova, so we altogether could work for the building of a safe future for all its citizens”.<sup>15</sup> The KLA released a full page declaration in the main Kosova daily condemning such acts and calling on its members to desist and to cooperate with international troops and police to bring perpetrators to justice.

KLA leaders admit that some of the violence has been carried out by undisciplined former members. This is hardly surprising, since the KLA was the armed force of the entire Kosovan population, and hence the vengefulness felt by many Albanians is reflected in its ranks. Human Rights Watch and UN human rights agencies have released reports that have implicated members of the KLA in many attacks, but have not found evidence of any support from the KLA leadership.

It is a reasonable criticism that the KLA leaders could have acted more vigorously against the violations which it condemned, although, being confined to barracks by NATO, their ability to do so was limited. There is little doubt that the KLA has not placed enough emphasis on this question. There is also no doubt that among its ranks are more chauvinist sectors that can use the climate of vengefulness and social breakdown to their advantage. However, there are also pragmatic reasons to believe the leadership is genuine in its condemnations. Expelling Serbs from many areas of Kosova where their numbers make them harmless causes them to concentrate in areas which can then form the basis of partition, particularly of the economically vital

north. KLA leaders can also see that the climate of revenge is being cynically used by the Western powers against Kosovan independence.

Ethnic cleansing coordinated from above usually has a political purpose. There is nothing at all to be gained by the KLA from ethnically cleansing the Serb minority, because nowhere in the world does the existence of a minority of 10% block the right of the majority to self-determination. It is only the UN/NATO administration that blocks Kosova's independence.

However, the climate of revenge among Kosovar Albanians is beyond the control of their leaders. Albanian refugees returned to mass graves of relatives, to burnt-down houses, their possessions stolen, their farm animals killed. For example, Pec in Western Kosova is a blackened hole — Albanians, who formed 80% of the prewar population, returned to find only Serb houses standing. Revenge is hardly surprising.

Collective punishment has been exacerbated by the fact that there was never any movement among the Serbs to defend the oppressed Albanians or to oppose the apartheid policies which favoured them. Many local Serbs also took part in the terror. The bulk of these Serbs fled with the police and military immediately after the war, taking their loot to Serbia; those who remained mostly did so because they had done nothing, but are suffering the consequences.

Other factors also contribute to maintaining vengefulness among Kosovar Albanians. Some 3000-5000 Kosovars, all of whom have relatives in Kosova, are still rotting in Serbian jails — they were ignored in the peace treaty. On the other hand, the fact that so few Serbian war criminals have been brought to justice inflames the situation, especially the perception that considerable numbers are being protected in the Serbian enclaves, and the fact that the French, Italian and Russian troops, in particular, have shown little interest in making arrests. And while the growth of Serb enclaves is a result of the anti-Serb violence, conversely the open talk of partition is further contributing to the resentful atmosphere.

The large-scale destruction of Albanian housing by Serbian forces resulted in a scramble for housing, especially as winter approached. The UN estimated between 300,000 and 500,000 people were without adequate shelter as the first snows began to fall in late 1999. A lot of "plastic shelter kits" notwithstanding, the UN and Western countries that launched the war donated a mere trickle of money to reconstruct homes. A typical situation is that of the family of Bukurije Deliu and his neighbours in the village of Rezalla. Twenty people share a summer tent and one room of a barn with four mattresses, three blankets and no winter clothes — everything else was burned. While it is unjustified, it is hardly surprising that many Albanian victims seek to seize the undamaged houses of Serbs.

In recent months, Kosova has come more and more to resemble parts of Albania since the failure of the 1997 revolution. Considerable evidence exists of large criminal rings organising house seizures as they attempt to grab real estate. "Much of the violence in southern Kosova appears to be linked to organised crime, a good proportion of which can be attributed to citizens from Albania."<sup>16</sup> According to the Albanian Interior Ministry, dozens of criminals followed the refugees back into Kosova, figuring that Kosova in transition might even be more lawless than Albania. Albanian police compiled a list of 72 of the most wanted criminals, who they believe have found refuge in Kosova.

In one widely publicised case in August, a mortar fired into a Serb village in eastern Kosova killed two teenagers. The Albanians arrested were two 15-year-old women, part of a group of young teenagers given grenades and mortars by gangsters masquerading as KLA, and told it was their duty to expel Serbs. The gangsters had no connection to the KLA, and the teenagers were being manipulated in order for the gang to seize property.

The fact that 150 Albanians have also been killed is further evidence that there is a crime wave that is not purely "ethnic" but has much to do with the fact that Kosova is a social catastrophe. Most of these Albanians have been killed by criminals without particular ethnic biases. Albanians are also being evicted from their homes by criminals. According to Masar Shala, KLA-appointed mayor of Prizren, "Girls are kidnapped, taken to work as prostitutes in Italy, cars are stolen or hijacked, houses are looted and there are shootings at night",<sup>17</sup> referring to the criminal gangs from Albania. One thing both KLA and Serb leaders agree on is more efficient policing of the Albanian border.

By November, reports of kidnappings of (mostly Albanian) girls were rife, along with rumours of a market in body parts. By December, the crime rate was *increasing* to its June levels. "Peja (Pec) dies by five o'clock in the evening. We do not dare go out after dark", says Arlinda, a young Albanian woman from the western town racked by daily killings, kidnappings and robberies.<sup>18</sup> Notably, 62% of all crimes in November occurred in Pristina, which has been filled up with dispossessed Kosovars from rural regions; the population has doubled. Add to this constant cuts to electricity and water, traffic chaos and no legal system. On December 17, 1000 Kosovars marched through Pristina's streets against the surge in violent crime. Vigilante groups have appeared among Albanians that arrest, try and execute criminals.

According to a UNHCR report, the most recent victims of rising violence have been Slavic Moslems (Bosniaks), whom no-one has accused of collaborating with Serbian forces, and whose leadership collaborates with the Kosova Provisional Government. In December, Thaci made a state visit to President Izetbegovic of Bosnia, aiming to improve ties. It would hardly be in his interest to foment attacks on this

minority. Similarly, virtually the entire Kosovan Croat minority has fled to Croatia, something unlikely to be an aim of the KLA. Even ethnic Turks have fled Prizren, despite Turkey being officially a backer of Kosova. Bosniaks, Croats and Turks have undamaged houses, and in the climate of general social breakdown, minorities are an easy first target.

Perhaps the worst affected minority has been the Rom (Gypsy) population, most of whom have been driven from their homes. In this case, Kosovar Albanians do point a finger of alleged collaboration with the Serbian occupation authorities. This is more cynical than the concrete charges against many Serb civilians — in most cases, Rom were simply forced, at gunpoint, to bury Albanian corpses. While attacks on Serbs represent revenge, mixed with the violence generated by social breakdown, in the case of the Rom the catastrophe has reignited traditional chauvinism against these people common to all Balkan countries. The fact that Rom refugees arriving in Serbia were routinely sent back is evidence enough of this.

## Who is ruling Kosova?

Since NATO-led KFOR troops entered, it is unclear who is ruling Kosova. The UN set up a temporary authority, UNMIK, which will rule the province as an international protectorate for a number of years. Its tasks include setting up a civil authority based on Kosova's populations, which will eventually have political autonomy within Serbia, in Yugoslavia.

UNMIK is determined to keep as much power as possible in its own hands, refusing to devolve it to the Kosovan Albanian and Serb populations. The KLA and other Kosovan parties set up their "Provisional Government", separate from the UN, but the UN refused to recognise it. In reality, in many parts of Kosova, municipal governments set up by the KLA are keeping the country running, providing basic services which the UN thus far does not have the personnel to do. However, the UN preferred to rule by consulting its "Transitional Council", consisting of a few handpicked representatives of the two communities, where no votes are taken and UN governor Bernard Kouchner has the final say.

The outgoing UN "interim" governor, Sergio Vieira de Mello, declared of these KLA mayors, "We will have to determine on a case to case basis" whether they are performing their functions according to Western dictates. If they are not, "You sack them, absolutely", he said, making it clear this included the use of force.<sup>19</sup> This attitude led to clashes. On August 5, British troops arrested high-ranking KLA official Syleiman Selimi for "refusing to show identity papers". The following day, there were 16 arrests following seven overnight shooting attacks on KFOR checkpoints. The KFOR head,

British General Jackson, warned that for the KLA to refuse to disarm and to leave power to the UN “would be the most foolish thing to do”.

The refusal of the UN-NATO authorities to recognise the Provisional Government and its system of local authorities contributes to the view that the UN is imposing a form of colonialism. As Hashim Thaci complained, referring to Kouchner, “We are not asking for a king”.<sup>20</sup>

Non-recognition means refusal to fund these bodies; yet, in most cases, they are the only structures allowing a minimum amount of order and keeping vital infrastructures working. By not funding these structures, so that the KLA-appointed local governments cannot produce the goods, the UN-NATO administrators aim to discredit them. According to Kosovan analyst Ylber Hysa, the KLA-appointed local governments “claimed to be some kind of government. If you say you’re the government, people expect you to govern.”<sup>21</sup> The October 17 *Washington Post* cynically claimed, “The KLA unrealistically raised expectations that it could get things done”. Because no money is going to the Provisional Government, “resentment has rebounded on Thaqi’s government”.<sup>22</sup> The lack of funding for essential infrastructure further contributes to the law and order disaster. It also opens the way to corruption of local cadres.

The UN bureaucracy has been very slow in getting its own structures into place. The UN has inherited the justice system of the Serbian occupation regime, which the Kosovan population refuses to recognise and which Albanian judges are unanimously boycotting. The Albanians make the elementary demand for the restoration of the pre-1989 legal code of Kosova. The UN rejects this and refuses to recognise the ad hoc system being set up by the Provisional Government. The justice system remains in limbo.

Those accusing the UN/NATO regime of collaborating with an Albanian drive to “ethnically cleanse” Kosova of Serbs miss the point entirely. It is precisely because the UN/NATO are attached to the view that Kosova must remain part of Serbia that they are *not* moving to set up real locally based state institutions. While arresting hundreds of Albanians on criminal charges, they are forced to let them go, due to the lack of a legal system. Another reason for letting them go is the refusal to cooperate with policing by KLA-based forces. According to Rexhep Selimi, former KLA minister for public order in the Provisional Government, his unrecognised police “have arrested about 30 criminals [in the town of Pec] and handed them over to the Italian troops of KFOR. They were freed within days.”<sup>23</sup> According to a source close to Thaci, KLA police caught five gangs of kidnappers and handed them to KFOR. “They were held there for 48 hours, then released. Now our men, who caught them, are receiving threats ... We also tracked down the robbers with masks. And KFOR began to detain

our men for overstepping our powers.”<sup>24</sup>

A UN police force of 3000 is being set up, supposedly to ensure security for both Albanians and Serbs. So far, their main role appears to be car registration and licensing. In the meantime, KFOR troops, who do not have policing experience, are attempting to play that role. As one KLA leader said, the UN “keep saying they’re in charge, but they’re doing next to nothing. At the same time, we’re to blame for everything.”<sup>25</sup> Only a local Kosovan police force, based on both populations, could begin to provide some order.

While such a local police force is being set up, it is under the strict control of international police. To make it clear that this is no step towards self-determination, these police will have fewer powers than any other in the world, and will play no role in coordinating overall security and police intelligence — that remains with the colonial administration. The first batch of 402 recruits began training at a police academy in Vuciturn in early September 1999. According to Serb sources, this group included 63 Serbs, far in excess of their percentage of the population. This is probably another of the UN’s toothless displays of “multiculturalism”, and subsequent evidence suggests few of the Serbs targeted for recruitment in mixed batches turned up. Only 151 of the 402 in this batch were former KLA members.

The need to coopt some KLA cadres was behind the setting up of the Kosova Protection Corps (KPC) when the KLA was disbanded. This revealed the opposite aims of UN/NATO and the KLA. The KLA viewed the end of the liberation army as the time to set up a normal army of Kosova, or something along the lines of the US National Guard. The colonial administration rejected this, seeing it as a step towards independence. The KPC will be a completely disarmed body, under UN control, whose role will be to fight natural disasters, organise reconstruction and the like — Kouchner likened it to the French civil service. Even KPC attempts to direct traffic, which no-one else is doing, encounter opposition from KFOR. At least 10% of its members must consist of minorities. Again, this is little more than window dressing: virtually all Serbs have boycotted the KPC.

In December 1999, Kouchner forced the provisional government to dissolve into his new Interim Administrative Agency of Kosova, consisting of four members of the UN mission, three Albanians and one Serb: the 90% majority gets 37.5% of the power, and the structure is dominated by anti-independence forces. Despite Thaci being pressured to take part, other factions of the KLA have vigorously condemned this new body, which makes Kouchner “the king of Kosova”.<sup>26</sup> However, leaders of the Serb minority have also refused to take part.

Devolving real power to local authorities would be a catch-22 for local Serbs — a

system of justice would exist, but they would have little confidence in the Albanian-dominated structures. Devolution of power would also have to mean to local Serbs as well — but the UN’s “multi-ethnic” showpieces aside, this essentially means in their own separate regions. Kosova was never a multi-ethnic society; the two peoples have long been divided into oppressor and oppressed. The Serbs have set up their own provisional government in their enclaves, the Serbian National Council, and their own Serb Protection Corps, which, needless to say, has extended no invitation to Albanians to join. The Serb leadership is pushing for the regions under its control to be officially declared “cantons”.

While the declared aim of Serb leaders — the Serbian Resistance Movement and the Orthodox Church — is protection of their people, their refusal to join Kouchner’s Interim Administrative Agency reveals less savoury aims. The voice they are being offered is far in advance of their percentage of the population, and the agency, with total UN control, is in no way a step towards independence — just the opposite. Yet in rejecting it, they claimed it placed Serbs in a “humiliating” position; they are still working in the political framework that the 10% minority has a right to rule everybody else.

One of the rationales of the UN-NATO refusal to devolve power to the local population is the need to “protect Serbs” from independent Albanian state structures. A false dichotomy is then created: Kosovars willing to submit to the colonial administration are “moderates” who support a “multi-ethnic Kosova”; those wanting to wrest more power for the Kosovars are “extremists” who aim to drive out Serbs. But the local government in Prizren has fallen out seriously with the UN authorities over the latter’s attempt to restrict its control, yet Prizren is one case where a Serb serves on the local government. This false dichotomy is related to a greater one: the UN slogan of “multi-ethnicity” is cynically used to mean an autonomous Kosova within “Yugoslavia”, while the advocacy of independence by the overwhelming majority is interpreted as being intolerant and anti-Serb. Veton Surroi has called on the UN authority to stop using the term “multi-ethnicity” because of the way it was interpreted by the Kosovars — and no-one can accuse Surroi, who has denounced anti-Serb violence as “fascism”, of being intolerant and anti-Serb.

Opposition by the UN-NATO regime to Kosovan independence *contributes* to the violence. For the radicalised Kosovar population, the fact that the colonial administration is using “Serb rights” and “multi-ethnicity” as an argument against Kosovan self-determination is another factor making the remaining Serbs a target.

The local Serb nationalist leaders contribute to this by continuing to oppose the democratic right of the Albanian majority to independence, rather than offering a hand of partnership to help build such an independent state and pushing for equality

within it. Marxists would point out:

... the defence by the workers of the oppressor nation of the right to self-determination of the nations their rulers oppress is the most effective means of breaking down nationalist illusions and prejudices of the workers of both nations. As Lenin observed, “the right to self-determination and secession seems to ‘concede’ the maximum to nationalism” but “in reality, the recognition of the *right of all* nations to self-determination implies the maximum of *democracy* and the minimum of nationalism” because it helps promote the internationalist “class solidarity” of the workers of oppressor and oppressed nations”.<sup>27</sup>

Independence has been *unconditionally* ruled out, as everyone from Bernard Kouchner to US, UN and EU leaders has continually insisted. On September 23, for example, outgoing NATO chief Javier Solana, discussing possible outcomes, again insisted that “one outcome will *not* be independence for Kosovo”.<sup>28</sup> There is thus no reward to offer to the vengeful section of the population if they stop their violence. The Kosovars have never been offered the prospect of independence even on the condition that minorities have equal rights. The solution of taking concrete steps towards an independent, multi-ethnic Kosova has simply never been put on the table.

How realistic this prospect would be after the genocide of early 1999 is difficult to say. For the time being, Serbs and other minorities certainly deserve protection. But those asking why 40,000 KFOR troops and 1800 UN police have not been able to protect minorities numbering at most 200,000 usually imply the wrong answer: that the occupation forces are not doing enough to crack down on former KLA fighters. It is amazing how colonial this attitude is: do they really want foreign armies to impose a police state on local Albanians and check under every bed for guns? If KFOR and the UN police concentrated their forces in the enclaves where Serbs have now gathered, there would be little difficulty protecting them. The problem is that the colonial forces are also trying to police the Albanian majority. They need to let the Albanians sort out their own policing and legal structure, stop blocking their democratic right to self-determination and provide massive funding, such as they spent on the war, to reconstruct housing and other infrastructure, while defending minority areas *but ruling out partition* — all the complete opposite of UN/NATO strategy.

## Who owns Kosova’s resources?

What can “remaining in Yugoslavia” mean for a Kosova in which, except for the Serb regions, there are no organs whatsoever of the Yugoslav government? Even the return of limited numbers of Yugoslav troops has been held up by the UN, because it knows it cannot yet guarantee their safety. Yet the UN’s denial of power to local Albanian

state structures does have a concrete meaning.

The fundamental issue is not Albanian control of their own municipal affairs, but who owns Kosova's resources and industries. "Autonomy" has a specific meaning in the Yugoslav context. The state bodies which have any real self-rule are not "autonomous" but rather are "republics", these being Serbia and Montenegro. Strangely, the upgrading of Kosova's status to that of a third republic within Yugoslavia has been consistently rejected by the Western powers, despite the fact that international borders would not be changed. "Autonomy" means Kosovans will eventually have political self-rule, when the UN is confident they will not go beyond that, but within Serbia. As such, Kosova's economic assets will still be owned by that republic.

Serbia's attempt to partition the north may not even be necessary for it to maintain ownership of Trepca — but it is taking no chances with something so valuable. For foreign companies wanting to buy into Trepca, removing it from workers' control in 1989-90 was a step forward. This was part of the Milosevic regime "integrating" different parts of the Serbian economy by taking them out of the hands of workers' collectives and making them joint-stock "state" companies in preparation for privatisation. Foreign investors would rather buy into a large "integrated" industrial complex, and Trepca covers both Kosova and Serbia proper.

According to Yugoslavia's 1990 privatisation law, the workers are still entitled to a percentage of shares when industries are privatised — but all Albanian workers were driven out in 1989-90. Giving workers their shares would leave less for foreign partners and make it more difficult to sell the industries. In January 1998, regarding foreign companies taking advantage of Milosevic's bargain basement sale of Kosova, the underground Kosova parliament denounced such "flagrant violations of the rights of Kosovar employees and citizens" and warned foreign governments and businesspeople that these deals were "invalid" and that "the Albanian people will treat them as neo-colonialists and demand reparations".<sup>29</sup>

At Trepca, the majority of the work force before 1989 were Albanians. These Albanian workers are being illegally denied their shares as Milosevic deals with foreign companies. It is thus in the interests of Western investors for Albanian workers to be deprived of their rights.

This introduces the real *class aspect* of the Kosovar national struggle and of imperialist opposition to Kosovar independence. While insisting that Serbia is the owner of the industries and resources under the pretence of "legality", the UN and Western powers overlook the illegality of Milosevic destroying the old Yugoslav and Serbian constitutions, under which the legal owners were the workers, the bulk of whom are sacked Albanians. Both the KLA and Rugova factions of the Kosovar political leadership

and the Miners' Union have demanded not only the workers' right to limited shares, as under Milosevic's 1990 constitution, but the restoration of the workers' complete ownership of these assets as in the old constitution. Restoration of the pre-1989 Kosovar constitution would mean not only the restoration of national rights, but the restoration of a socialist constitution.

Yet even a Kosova truncated by partition would be unlikely to be allowed independence by its imperialist masters. Kosova is far too poor to be considered "viable" by imperialist powers interested in investment potential, while union with Albania would accentuate the problem. Not only is Albania the poorest country in Europe, but the current unstable climate and continued collapse of the state apparatus since the 1997 uprising are keeping investors away.

Serbia remains the geographic heart of the region and its largest economy, so the same factors that led the West to support a strong Yugoslav state throughout the century are still at play. While Milosevic has shifted from being a "partner" to a liability, the West aims for a rapid replacement by more rational sectors of the Serb nationalist ruling class. Thus its interests must be taken into account, especially in Trepca. Further, for imperialists wanting to buy into Trepca, Kosovar independence is not much good, Trepca being intimately linked to the Serbian economy. For the Kosovars, the loss of Trepca would doom any drive towards economic independence. For imperialism, internal partition would be the best of both worlds: an internal separation of hostile forces, making the situation easier to control while avoiding the destabilising effects of a change in international borders.

## **Working-class revolt against Milosevic**

The Western aim of replacing Milosevic by a more rational section of the Serbian ruling class requires that a revolutionary overthrow be avoided. Despite the angry outbursts of the impoverished Serb masses straight after the war, the regime has remained entrenched — largely due to the nationalist homogenisation caused by the war and by the postwar sanctions on reconstruction aid. Similarly earlier, the most massive revolts against Milosevic occurred between March 1991 and May 1992, before the imposition of sanctions over the Bosnian war, and then in 1996-97, following the ending of these sanctions.

Comparing the June-July 1999 mass demonstrations against Milosevic to those of 1996-97, a strange irony is apparent: on the one hand, the anti-Milosevic movement has deepened in the working-class towns of southern Serbia, many of which were quiet last time; on the other hand, the 1999 movement lacked the size of the previous one — above all, the middle class layers of Belgrade, key in 1996-97, remained quiet.

The Serbian working class finally said no to a regime of criminals that had looted the state enterprises. The ultimate insult occurred just after the war: when Belgrade could find no money to pay destitute workers whose factories had been bombed, or soldiers returning from the front, Milosevic's son Marko opened a private fun park at a cost of half a million dollars. They said no to a regime that covered its theft with state-orchestrated chauvinism, marching the working-class victims of its domestic policy off to fight wars of ethnic slaughter against their fellow workers in Croatia, Bosnia and Kosova.

The postwar revolt broke out in the southern industrial cities: Leskovac, Uzice, Kragujevac, Kraljevic, Cacak, Krusevac, and the northern city of Novi Sad. During the later part of the Kosova war, among the same cities an anti-war movement flourished. In a series of mass demonstrations, working people had demanded "Bring Our Sons Home from Kosovo". Following brutal treatment by the regime's armed thugs, hundreds of soldiers from these towns deserted the front. This working-class anti-war movement revealed the complete lack of any progressive content in Serbia's so-called "resistance" to NATO. The only reason Serbian workers continued to be bombed and soldiers continued to die was that Milosevic was using the bombing as a cover for genocide.

The revolt centred on these cities for a number of reasons. The working class here had long been impoverished by the policies of Milosevic's capitalist regime. A third of Yugoslav workers are unemployed, while many of those "employed" are on forced leave with half or no pay. Independent working-class forces, such as the trade union federation Nezavisnost, have long challenged the regime's chauvinist ideology and linked this to its economic looting. The workers in the Zastava car plant in Kragujevac twice launched mass campaigns against Milosevic, demanding "the factories to the workers". This factory has now been destroyed by NATO. In Cacak, Milisav Kovacevic, an unemployed factory worker, said, "I am left without a job, and what do I get in return? Bogus patriotism precisely from people who managed to get rich on other people's misery."<sup>30</sup>

Until recently, many other workers in these regions were trapped by the regime's ideology. Without access to alternative media like the middle classes of Belgrade, many swallowed the propaganda of both regime and bourgeois "opposition" that all the "enemies of the Serb nation" were out to get them so they had to stick together.

The Kosova war dramatically changed this. The regime sent disproportionate numbers of soldiers from these cities to the front, no doubt because the better off sectors in Belgrade, who cheered on the war effort, had much better avoidance mechanisms.

These troops were hence overexposed to being bombed for nothing, while back home their means of life were also being destroyed. They were also for the first time exposed to the regime's brutality, which had been hidden from them during the Bosnia genocide. In hundreds of interviews with Albanian refugees, it was consistently reported that Serbian conscripts were far less vicious than the regime's paramilitaries, and in many cases even helped Albanians when they saw the nature of the ethnic cleansing. There were many reports of soldiers deserting precisely because they objected to this ethnic cleansing. Returned soldiers joined the demonstrations in large numbers, including those blocking roads in southern Serbia demanding their pay.

Many of the demonstrations expressed outrage not only that the regime led them into a disastrous war, but also against the atrocities committed against Kosovar Albanians. As an example of the difference in mood, during the war, while well-off Belgraders engaged in singing and dancing in the streets every day in "patriotic" concerts, often led by mass killer Arkan, the "civic parliament" set up in the industrial city Cacak instead organised "prayers for peace". The civic parliament, led by the oppositionist mayor of the town, Velimir Illic, wrote to Milosevic denouncing the war and the driving out of Kosovo Albanians. "We were disgusted by the fact that so many people had died for nothing", according to one participant in the "parliament". "It was not our war, it was Milosevic's."<sup>31</sup>

The hatred of the regime cannot be translated into pro-NATO sentiment in these devastated towns. Dragan, a soldier taking part in protests in Kragujevac, claimed, "We hated NATO. We were defending our families here", referring to his operation of an anti-aircraft unit.<sup>32</sup> Another soldier in the protests, Dobrivoje, also hated NATO, while claiming, "We were brainwashed for 10 years by Milosevic and his gang ... I would gladly see Sloba go before a firing squad." He saw atrocities against Albanians in Kosova, carried out not by ordinary soldiers but by "bearded savages who called themselves volunteers ... and other nasty characters in camouflage fatigues".<sup>33</sup>

Many of these demonstrations were led by parties which joined an unwieldy coalition called the "Alliance for Change". This alliance includes many organisations that have long resisted not only Milosevic but also the Serbian nationalist ideology: the Civic Alliance, led by long-time oppositionist Vesna Pesic; the Social Democratic Party, led by former general Vuk Obradovic; anti-nationalist groups in Vojvodina; new groups that have developed in opposition to the war, particularly the civil leadership in Cacak and the New Serbia Party; and the independent trade union Nezavisnost.

The combination of anti-nationalism with rejection of the regime's anti-working-class policies is clearest in the case of Nezavisnost. Its May Day statement, identifying the chauvinistic policies of the regime with its anti-labour policies and seeing NATO

and Milosevic as “the internal and external enemies”, flowed from fundamentally different class interests from those of the Western powers. The latter were interested in supporting the bourgeois elements within the alliance in order to guarantee a continuation and deepening of the austerity and privatisation policies of Milosevic after his replacement.

The key forces in the bourgeois wing of the alliance are largely formerly part of the Milosevic regime. They include the Democratic Party, led by Zoran Djindjic, who on many occasions opposed Milosevic for not being nationalist enough; Dradoslav Abramovic, Milosevic’s former head of the central bank, who claimed the NATO destruction of many old factories should be seen as an “opportunity” because they were unproductive and a burden, which no-one wanted to buy; Milan Panic, Milosevic’s former prime minister, who is also a millionaire owner of a pharmaceuticals multinational in the US and Serbia; Momcilo Perisic, Milosevic’s long-time head of the Yugoslav Army, implicated in the Srebrenica massacre but sacked in October 1998 for opposing plans for the ethnic cleansing of Kosova; Dobrica Cosic, intellectual “father” of Serb nationalism and former president under Milosevic, bringing with him a section of the nationalist intelligentsia; and Vuk Draskovic and his Serbian Renewal Party (SPO), which has been part of Milosevic’s ruling coalition since January 1999, and which rules Belgrade’s municipal government with the connivance of Milosevic’s party.

Another important force in the Serb nationalist coalition which has now turned against the regime is the Serbian Orthodox Church. Seeing the exodus of tens of thousands of Serbs from its “holy land” of Kosova, the church finally struck out. Serbian Orthodox patriarch Pavle placed himself squarely to the left of much of the bourgeois opposition: while many opportunistically attacked Milosevic for “losing” the war, Pavle, after seeing first-hand evidence of the crimes committed against Kosovan Albanians, declared that if Greater Serbia could exist only through crime, then it should not exist.<sup>34</sup>

These bourgeois opposition forces were fearful of the working-class mass movement, trying to prevent the situation from getting “out of hand”. Perisic warned of the “danger of civil war” resulting from wrong moves by the regime *or opposition*, maintaining that Yugoslavia must not go down the path of “hatred and violence” in the effort to oust Milosevic. Almost identical words were mouthed by Draskovic at his first rally in Kragujevac — except for actions under his own control, he opposed all the demonstrations. Even when he had planned to lead them jointly, he pulled out at the last moment. When his party took control of the spontaneous street protests in Leskovac, “As soon as the protesters try to force the organisers to call for Milosevic’s ouster, the demand is blocked [by the SPO]. All else is possible, but not that.”<sup>35</sup> The

leader of the largest opposition party, he thus deprived protesters of the support of his base and helped sabotage the revolt.

The bourgeois opposition aims to encourage some kind of rearrangement within the ruling elite which would allow Milosevic to stand down “honourably”. Some of these bourgeois leaders attempted to maintain Milosevic in a figurehead position. Most opposed sending him to trial at the Hague for war crimes, arguing that this prospect might encourage him to hang on to power.

A split within the ruling Socialist Party, in which a more pragmatic section breaks with Milosevic, is part of their strategy. The insistence by the US that it will not provide reconstruction aid to Yugoslavia until Milosevic steps down is aimed at encouraging such a rearrangement — by focusing on the individual, it gives the ruling class and its regime the option of minor change for the sake of a new stabilisation.

Perisic has important contacts within the military high command and is also close to sections of Milosevic’s party, particularly Yugoslav deputy prime minister Zoran Lilic, with whom he has proposed setting up a new party. In August, Lilic revealed the regime’s first cracks, declaring, “Yugoslavia must stop quarrelling with the world ... If some of our people have committed crimes they must be held accountable.”<sup>36</sup> Draskovic is also close to sections of Milosevic’s party shunted aside in recent years to make way for people handpicked by his wife’s party.

Perisic and Draskovic are also close to Montenegrin leader Milo Djukanovic, and part of their strategy is to include the Montenegrin leadership. Djukanovic, similarly to the rest of the bourgeois opposition, is the former leader of Milosevic’s nationalist movement in Montenegro; in recent years, seeing the suicidal nature of some of Milosevic’s policies, his Party of Democratic Socialists has moderated its stand. This led to a split within the party, as the Milosevic loyalists, led by Momir Bulatovic, formed an opposition party. Milosevic engineered making the Bulatovic opposition Montenegro’s representatives in the Yugoslav federal government, rather than Djukanovic’s ruling party, as required by the constitution. Serbian bourgeois opposition leaders are trying to oust Bulatovic as part of their relegitimation of the regime. This is also creating divisions in the regime, a leading pro-Milosevic businessman and government minister, Bogoljub Karic, strongly backing this course.

The US has spoken out in favour of the Djukanovic regime, but has consistently opposed its threats to declare independence from Yugoslavia.

Senior US officials have declared that Djindjic is not favoured by Washington and that the Alliance for Change, which he leads, is hopelessly divided. Djindjic has been virtually alone among the bourgeois opposition leaders in strongly backing the proletarian mass movement. That he embarked on such a dangerous and opportunistic

course was largely due to his total isolation within Serb ruling-class circles — intensified by the fact that he fled Belgrade to the safer Montenegro during the bombing. Ironically, the fact that Djindjic has been more brazen in openly dealing with the Western governments that bombed Serbia has been an impediment to Western support, because it has increased his isolation within the ruling class.

Whatever “oppositionist” sections of the Serbian ruling class imperialism backs to oust Milosevic will be bound to the regime in two main ways. Firstly, much of the ruling class is directly connected to the two ruling parties of Milosevic and his wife, since much of its wealth has been accumulated through corrupt state connections. Secondly, the Serbian capitalist class arose in the late 1980s with the ideology of Serbian nationalism. All the bourgeois “opposition” factions vying for control in a post-Milosevic Serbia came out of the Milosevic-led Serb nationalist movement. It is still their ideology, but with a clearer understanding of when expansion reaches its practical limits.

In July, opposition leaders were talking about organising a million-strong march from provincial centres to Belgrade. By the end of the month, the plan was shelved. There are two possible reasons for this. One was the fear of taking too far their game with this mass movement; while demonstrations are an important form of pressure on Milosevic to depart, this working-class provincial-based movement might get out of their control.

Secondly, the movement does not appear to have the crucial support within Belgrade. Both Djindjic and Draskovic admitted on July 18 that the momentum was not there for a movement big enough to oust Milosevic. One of the reasons for this seems to be the Western support for ousting him. NATO’s bombs bolstered the nationalism which his power is built on, particularly among Belgrade’s patriotic middle classes, who do not have class reasons for wanting to destroy the regime. That is why serious bourgeois figures like Draskovic have tended to stay closer to the regime in their “oppositional” activities, where they can better read the mood of their social base.

The ultra-right Serbian Radical Party, which initially quit the regime in protest against Milosevic’s “capitulation,” soon rejoined — it became clear that its attempt to galvanise a right-wing, ultra-nationalist opposition among returning soldiers and Kosova Serb refugees misread the mood of the masses.

Milosevic calculates that Serbia’s importance to the region will split imperialism on reconstruction, because it is in Western interests to have Serbia rebuilt and restabilised. If he can hang onto power long enough, the US will have to drop its diktat on reconstruction, or have it broken by the Europeans.

## The place of Serbia in the Balkans

Besides the destruction of Serbia and Kosova, the economy of the whole region has suffered. “Sheltering refugees has put a huge strain on social and economic conditions in Albania and Macedonia; disruptions in trade and transport have hurt Bosnia and Macedonia, for which the FRY has been a major export market; Bulgaria and Romania are forced to find alternative and more costly transit routes around the FRY since the Danube river is blocked with the wreckage of bombed bridges. Tourism has been affected in Croatia, and the crisis has adversely affected the confidence of foreign investors in the region.”<sup>37</sup> Kosova was already the poorest region in Europe before the war began.

If the US aim was to destroy the region that links Europe to the east, the job was done well. What Europe gets out of it is harder to fathom — except that with the EU in charge of reconstruction via its Stability Pact, European investors are likely to do better out of contracts. As the last shots were being fired, “Companies across Europe have been circling the region like sharks, preparing to bid on the EU reconstruction contracts ... The competition is so fierce that even while mines lay active, British executives last week were planning a checkbook tour of Kosovo.”<sup>38</sup> US officials argued against the convention of “tied aid” — provided on the condition that reconstruction contracts are awarded to the donor country — because this would mean that Europe, as the biggest donor, would get most contracts. In their opinion, the US should get an equal opportunity to profit because it had borne most of the cost of destroying the country which now had to be reconstructed!

However, as the World Bank points out, it will be difficult to reconstruct Kosova while avoiding Serbia, because Kosova’s economy and infrastructure, including the road network, power and water supplies and the telecommunications system, are linked to Serbia, while the absence of a Kosova national bank means the World Bank cannot supply credit. The World Bank director for Bulgaria and Romania, Andrew Vorkink, pointed out, “The key [to the whole Balkans] is what’s going to happen in Serbia. Serbia is a key partner that needs to play a significant role in the development and if Serbia continues in the current situation, it would affect the economies around because of the issues of transit, of trade and because of the general instability we’ve seen over the past year.”<sup>39</sup>

Already, various Italian chambers of commerce have visited and expressed interest in the financing and reconstruction of industries in Yugoslavia; and Italian Finance Committee chairman Sergio Rossi visited and declared support for establishing a joint Yugoslav-Italian bank. In early July, Greece and Russia announced they would harmonise joint projects for reconstruction of the power grid, communications and

infrastructure. Greece hosted a conference of south-east European cities, calling for reconstruction of the whole region including Serbia. Italy and Greece are major foreign investors in Yugoslavia.

The South Korean giant Daewoo toured destroyed sites and expressed interest in investing in the reconstruction of electric power, metal industries and the Zastava car plant, though French Peugeot and Italian Fiat are also possible partners. Russia has kept Belgrade supplied with gas, while Croatian oil refineries temporarily took over refining Serbian oil during and after the war. However, Yugoslavia reopened the Pancevo oil refinery in late September, and the major copper mine at Bor and its largest steel making plant, near Belgrade, were also repaired and reopened.

In early October, French foreign minister Hubert Vedrine called for the reconstruction of power plants and reconnection of the electrical supply. Greece and the Netherlands made similar calls, including the end of oil sanctions. On November 4, Albright announced that US policy had shifted, and now reconstruction aid would be available as soon as Milosevic announced elections. Germany then tried to take this a step further and lift reconstruction sanctions earlier, which it believes will better help the opposition.

The vice-president of the European Investment Bank, Wolfgang Rot, spoke against the US diktat on reconstruction, claiming it was necessary to immediately begin financing the reconstruction of Serbia, especially the bridges of the Danube, whose destruction prevents traffic along the Danube and is therefore a major blow to the economies of western Europe, particularly Germany, Austria and Italy.

Finally, the International Danube Commission, under EU influence, simply forgot the diktat on reconstruction and offered to rebuild all the bridges, but Belgrade rejected this offer unless it was readmitted to all international organisations, including the IMF. ■

# Conclusion

Western policy in the former Yugoslavia is usually seen as a “failure”. Few would argue that the Western powers, with all the economic and military resources at their disposal, did their utmost to prevent war and genocide in south-eastern Europe, with an incalculable human and socioeconomic cost, or that when they did intervene, in 1999, it was in a way that aided the peoples of the region.

There were real Western interests in Bosnia, in particular bringing the war to an end so as to stabilise the region and renew economic penetration, and preventing the conflict spreading to the Mediterranean and engulfing NATO allies/enemies Greece and Turkey. The region is of considerable interest to the West, but the West had no real interest in curbing Milosevic and his Serb nationalist movement. In fact, there was a much greater Western interest in preventing the multi-ethnic Bosnian state from fighting back, defeating the Serb nationalist forces and reuniting their country.

The Milosevic regime and its expansionist path represented the Serbian capitalist class emerging out of the ashes of “Communism” from the bureaucratic and military leaders who had dominated the old system. This was the most common transformation in eastern Europe — many leaders in the region now part of the political right were former Communist leaders, including Yeltsin in Russia, Berisha in Albania and Tudjman in Croatia. All the parties of the clear political right in Serbia had a Serb nationalist program at least as extreme as, if not more so than, Milosevic and were essentially his allies.

Western powers would at some stage desire to return to the same relationship they had with Serbia throughout the century, particularly since Serbs are the largest group in the region, and hence would be fundamental to its economic restructuring as well as its largest market. Serbia is also the centre of east-west transport routes and would play a central role in the region’s security. This remained the relationship between the Belgrade regime and the major Western powers in the period leading to the collapse of Yugoslavia. Traditional explanations for western policy, such as that the West feared the break-up of Yugoslavia would set an example for the break-up of the Soviet Union, and the resulting risk of nuclear weapons spread, are only half true.

Western support for the unity of both Yugoslavia and the Soviet Union was part of a more general opposition to fragmentation and support for “regional policemen”.

Moreover, in the Yugoslav case, there were other specific concerns, namely the extensive economic relations between very prominent Western leaders and multinational companies and the Belgrade regime and Yugoslav army, and above all the insistence of the IMF and World Bank on a more centralised state as a means of creating a Yugoslav-wide market and forcing debt repayment. This meant opposition to attempts by some republics to form a looser confederation, to stem the tide of centralisation that Milosevic’s regime was pushing.

To return to the traditional relationship with Serbia, the Western powers would have to deal with the reality of the Serb political and economic landscape. This meant a degree of acceptance of Greater Serbia, which was the ideological mainstay not just of Milosevic but of the Serbian ruling class and all its parties. Greater Serbia, however, got out of hand. Western powers needed the more pragmatic Milosevic, because the political right (particularly the Radical Party of Seselj and the Bosnian Serb SDS) were the more ideologically committed radical nationalists and hence less able to compromise with imperialism for regional stability.

It was precisely the distant “left” origins of the parties of Milosevic and his wife that made them more “pragmatic” nationalists, who knew when to make these necessary compromises. The view that imperialism had any argument with these parties maintaining some “left” social-democratic imagery within their reactionary bourgeois nationalist ideology is mistaken. On the contrary, it was precisely from the time his wife, Miriana Markovic, set up the “Yugoslav Left” (JUL) in 1993-94 to pull Milosevic’s Socialist Party away from its ultra-right Chetnik allies that Belgrade’s relations with imperialism began to improve.

Hence, Milosevic supported every Western partition plan, seeing in them a victory for a sustainable Greater Serbia, usually on about half of Bosnia’s territory; his more right-wing rivals saw no reason to withdraw from the 70% of Bosnia they had taken. The ultra-right were thus a major problem for Western strategy. The method chosen by imperialism was to lean on Milosevic to lean on them: in 1993, Milosevic threw the Radicals out of the ruling coalition and the following year began a campaign against the Bosnian SDS, starting his five-year career as “factor of stability” to many imperialist leaders. The sanctions imposed in 1992 were moderated in 1994 and then lifted following Dayton in 1995.

What was needed to counter the massive military might of the Chetniks was some kind of military defeat, or at least an upping of the military stakes. But short of a large-scale deployment of Western troops, the only armed force that could do this was the

Bosnian army — the arming of which was against Western policy. Sending tens of thousands of Western troops just to reduce the amount of territory occupied by the Chetniks, when Western powers were in complete agreement with them on the issue of principle (ethnic partition), was never on the cards. Western air strikes on heavy artillery, without sending in troops, were excluded because they would have given the military advantage to the Bosnian defenders.

Western interests are clear from the fact that the most effective form of Western military intervention in the war was the arms embargo against the Bosnian republic, enforced by NATO warships in the Adriatic and UN troops at Bosnian and Croatian airports. The fact that the embargo is not usually seen as intervention causes most analysts to miss the point. Most believe the West did not intervene enough; however, given the type of intervention it was carrying out, it is incongruous to believe that deeper intervention would have benefited the Bosnians.

The standard view, that the West pushed partition plans only because there was no other realistic way out given the “facts on the ground” created by war, falls down when analysed. There was *never any point*, even before the war started, when Western powers insisted that the maintenance of Bosnia’s multi-ethnic constitution, perhaps with some regional autonomy, was the best plan. On the contrary, before war had redistributed populations or intensified ethnic hatreds, the EC pushed the Carrington-Cutilheiro partition plan on Bosnia in March 1992. This, together with other major Western initiatives between late 1991 and April 1992, above all the Vance Plan, which allowed the Serb-dominated JNA to take all its heavy weaponry from Croatia into Bosnia, is clear evidence that Western powers never wanted an independent multi-ethnic Bosnia.

Partly this was due to the political landscape in Serbia, and increasingly in Croatia as well, which both saw partition of Bosnia as the fulfilment of their “national questions” and the key to peace between them. Another aspect is that a military defeat of the Serb nationalist forces, as opposed to their moderation through a diplomatic victory for Milosevic, risked a destabilising overthrow of the regime itself.

The other important point was the nature of the “brotherhood and unity” which had been maintained to a large degree in Bosnia, especially in the industrial cities, where there had been a powerful, militant working-class tradition. Moreover, the parties based on multi-ethnic principles, while representing a very large part of the Bosnian electorate, were generally part of the political left (including the reformed Communists) and hence not deserving of Western support. It would have been incongruous for Britain to send arms to the multi-ethnic popular militias in Tuzla, where the militant miners had sent aid to striking British miners a decade before.

The relentless Western push for ethnic partition between Serb and Croat

nationalists had the unfortunate side effect of promoting an “Islamic” movement among the hundreds of thousands of dispossessed Moslems crowded into the proposed “Moslem” mini-state. This phenomenon was even more frightening to Western powers, in an era when “Islamic fundamentalism” was seen as the new threat formerly posed by Communism, and the new justification for enormous US military budgets. The US seized the initiative to limit this by placing Bosnian Moslems and Croats together under the Croatian umbrella, essentially a division of the region between de facto Greater Serbia and Greater Croatia, which resulted in the Dayton accord.

Thus it is necessary to temper the view that the West failed. Certainly, it failed to stop or reverse ethnic cleansing and “not reward aggression” — if those were its aims. However, if the Western aim was ethnic partition and a new Serbo-Croatian balance, then the Dayton accord was an outstanding success, built on the increase in ethnic cleansing in 1995. And forcing Bosnia to rely on Western troops to keep a fig leaf of a united Bosnian state had the added advantage that Western financial institutions took over the running of the state in the Dayton constitution.

Aside from the lifting of the arms embargo, there were other non-military options for at least helping to preserve a multi-ethnic Bosnia, but they were rejected by Western powers. The argument that little could be done ignores the fact that the West made the most pro-partition choice at every step of the way. There were many other plans for regional decentralisation of Bosnia around in late 1992, but Vance and Owen chose the one *most* based on ethnic partition, and drew maps which seemed aimed at encouraging an open Croatian break with Bosnia and alliance with Serbia. During the far more shameful Owen-Stoltenberg process, attempts by the non-ethnic parties in the Bosnian parliament, representing 28% of the electorate, to be represented in negotiations, were rejected. Following the Moslem-Croat federation, the attempt by the Serb Civic Council to take part in peace negotiations on behalf of anti-Karadzic Serbs was rejected in favour of Karadzic and partition. Even then, Bosnia put an ethnically much fairer proposal for division, one that would have made full partition difficult, but it was rejected in favour of the full partition of the Contact Group plan. As Bosnia’s troops advanced in September and October 1995, again Bosnia put a plan for autonomous regions without full partition, and the Serb Civic Council again appealed to the world, but Washington had its Milosevic-Tudjman plan signed, sealed and delivered. It is difficult to say to what extent such initiatives might have helped reverse partition, rally multi-ethnic forces in the cities and rally anti-nationalist Serbs in both Bosnia and Serbia; what is certain is that the West was determined not even to attempt it.

What needs to be asked is why years of war were necessary to achieve a partition plan which, in terms both of ethnic justice and of the constitutional status of the ethnic “parts”, was far worse than might have been achieved much earlier. This is where there was a perceived failure of Western multilateral institutions, such as NATO, the EC and the UN Security Council, to rise to their alleged mission to defend the security of people in Europe’s “back yard” who were being slaughtered.

This reflected competition between blocs of Western powers, above all the US and the leading countries in the EC. The US had to respond to the challenge mounted by France and its “Eurocorps” ideas to NATO, which allowed the US to play the dominant role in European security; meanwhile the US was openly challenging the role of the UN and the restrictions it placed on US freedom of action. Yugoslavia was used as a test case, rather than a cause of real concern; hence the war dragged on as the US continually promised to come to the aid of the beleaguered Bosnians, encouraging them to resist EC and UN partition plans, and then failing to take any of the promised action.

When the US did move, in late 1995, it prevented a Bosnian victory. The same may be said of the US diplomatic offensive which led to the Moslem-Croat federation in early 1994; this was just as the Bosnians crushed the HVO. In both cases, defeat was snatched from the jaws of victory as the US enshrined the new regional balance between Serbia and Croatia.

However, while Dayton’s partition of Bosnia was a victory for Milosevic’s smaller Greater Serbia, the exact borders of this future entity were still unclear. Vojvodina had a slight Serb majority, and had remained fairly stable after the abolition of its autonomy; much of the Croat minority had fled, and the Hungarian minority remained quiescent. While Montenegro had remained firmly within the new “Yugoslav” federation, it was a republic in its own right, officially separate from Serbia, something which the ruling elite aimed ultimately to rationalise. Differences began to emerge between the Serbian and Montenegrin elites more over policy than any feeling of separate Montenegrin identity. And despite the victory of Republika Srpska, even the official international border was an issue to be resolved in the long term.

More serious was Kosova. How could the new Greater Serbia, constructed on an unambiguously ethnic basis, continue to rule over an area which was 90% Albanian?

When Kosovan resistance leader Ibrahim Rugova asked to be invited to the Dayton conference, to include Albanian grievances in peace discussions, he was rejected. Recognising the Bosnian Serb gangster “republic”, the US also officially recognised the borders of the new “Yugoslavia”, including Kosova. This rejection led to the upturn of the Albanian struggle in 1996-97. Then, the revolutionary uprising in Albania in 1997

gave a boost to a new armed struggle by the Kosova Liberation Army, as a flood of weapons from looted armouries coincided with increasing Kosovan frustration at the failure of the peaceful road of Rugova.

For imperialism, Serbian control of Kosova was part of the Dayton regional balance. Furthermore, any move towards independence for Kosova was seen as a major threat to the stability of other new bourgeois regimes in Albania and Macedonia, which it was feared would spill over to Greece and Turkey. This was seen as all the more a threat if carried out by an armed liberation movement. Hence the statement in Pristina in February 1998 by US envoy Robert Gelbard that the KLA “is, without any question, a terrorist organisation”, was a green light for Milosevic to crack down. It also corresponded to closer US-Belgrade collaboration in Bosnia.

The problem was the methods chosen by Milosevic. The uprising in Kosova drove the Serbian political elite to the right, and in March 1998 Seselj’s Radical Party was brought back into the ruling coalition. This was far from an insignificant force — it had garnered a quarter of the votes of the electorate in late 1997 elections, pulling behind its chauvinism many of those impoverished by Milosevic’s economic “reforms”. The ultra-right had never accepted Milosevic’s more pragmatic compromises, including Dayton; now the particularly brutal tactics used by Milosevic/Seselj — destroying and emptying villages — drove thousands of Kosovars to the KLA. Imperialism came to see that it would need its own troops in Kosova to stand between the KLA on one side and the Serbian ultra-right on the other.

The West continues to insist that Kosova cannot have independence (or even republican status) but only a weaker form of autonomy than it enjoyed before 1989. Autonomy within Serbia is seen as the best way of stabilising the situation without border changes.

As Western threats to intervene grew in late 1998 and early 1999, it became clearer and clearer that the KLA was viewed as the main problem; frequent statements by Western leaders and media stressed that the problem with bombing Serbian heavy weaponry in Kosova would be that it would give the advantage to the KLA.

Nevertheless, NATO bombing became unavoidable, especially as European powers, concerned about the instability in their “back yard”, again began hinting of the need for a European security force independent of NATO. For the US, a decisive military victory under its leadership became essential to further cement its leadership over European imperialism. To avoid giving the advantage to the KLA, Serbian heavy weaponry in Kosova was not targeted, but rather Serbia itself; NATO laid waste to Serbian civilian infrastructure, terrorising Serb civilians, while Milosevic’s thugs acted with impunity in driving the Albanian population out of Kosova.

For the Serbian ruling class, the aim was not so clear. While autonomy was preferable to independence, the stabilisation of an ethnic state may require shedding much of the troublesome Albanian population. Throughout 1998, voices were raised among the Serbian intelligentsia for the partition of Kosova, in particular by Dobrica Cosic, the intellectual “father” of modern Serb nationalism.

The problem remained how to draw lines and physically separate Kosovar Serbs and Albanians. The 1999 war appears to have achieved this. It appears virtually impossible for the two peoples to live together. The most dramatic effects are the exodus from Albanian dominated regions of a large part of the Serb population, fleeing revenge attacks from returning refugees. Meanwhile, Serb paramilitaries, backed by French NATO troops, are preventing the return of Albanian refugees to their homes in the north. These armed Serbs have declared the whole of Kosova from Mitrovica to the Serbian border a Serbian zone, a zone where the Trepca lead-zinc-gold-silver-cadmium industrial complex, worth \$5 billion, is located. It is this material wealth, not the “cradle of the Serbian nation”, that the Serbian ruling class wants to hang onto.

The status of “autonomous” means that, however much “self-government” the Albanian majority exercises, *ownership* of resources is officially vested in the Serbian republic, which has been trying to privatise them. Serbia may prefer to get rid of the people and keep the resources. For Kosovars, the loss of the Trepca complex would doom hopes for viable self-determination.

What if the destroyed, impoverished Albanian majority regions of Kosova decide to declare independence? It would be difficult for Yugoslav forces to return to try to stop them; as long as they control the valuable north, they may ultimately have little interest in doing so. It is also unlikely that the UN/NATO regime in Kosova will make open war on the Kosovar population — though it has disarmed the KLA just in case. The mineral-rich Serb-controlled parts, by not seceding from Yugoslavia, would be in accord with the international “legality” enforced by the UN and NATO. The West would refuse to recognise Kosova’s independence and thus deny it funds; even if recognised, it would be at the risk of losing its economically valuable parts.

While the fall of Milosevic now looks less imminent than immediately after the war, the West will continue to push for a palace coup, replacing him with a less tainted section of the same Serb nationalist camp. Serbia would then be able to join the European institutions and get IMF funding to complete its privatisation program. However, it is an open question how soon this “reformed” Serbia would be allowed to formally complete the partition of Bosnia and Kosova, allowing Republika Srpska to join Serbia and the parts of Kosova of no interest to Belgrade to leave.

For imperialism, there is a certain logic in supporting such a completion of regional partition along ethnic lines. New borders based on clear nations have the potential to be more stable; such national states also reflect the desires of imperialism's partners among the local capitalist classes. Articles have begun appearing in Western newspapers calling for the establishment of new and larger Serbian, Croatian and Albanian states, essentially the long-time program of Dobrica Cosic, the father of modern Serb nationalism.

However, for the time being, there are risks with taking this path too rapidly. The risk to imperialism is not in fact a larger Serbia at the heart of the Balkans, but what happens elsewhere. If part of Kosova goes free, it will be an economic basket case; if it joins Albania, it will be joining a worse one, which still has not recovered from the 1997 uprising. It would also risk splitting Macedonia and igniting the "nightmare scenario". Kosovar autonomy within Serbia, with the latter owning the resources in an informal partition, is still the favoured solution. Similarly, if RS joins Serbia, that will be relatively painless, "ethnically cleansed" as it is; but if Croatia moves beyond its informal partition of the Moslem-Croat federation to a formal one, annexing the Croat-controlled regions, it will leave a dangerously unstable, poverty-stricken Moslem mini-state in the heart of the Balkans. Croatia thus has to be convinced not to follow a Serbian annexation of RS, but to be content dominating half of Bosnia in a confederal set-up. The defeat of Tudjman by a more pro-western Centre-Left coalition in the January 2000 elections was welcomed by imperialism because the new regime seems less attached to Tudjman's more radical nationalist schemes.

Thus for imperialism, in both Kosova and the Moslem-Croat federation, de facto but not official partition is for the moment the best of both worlds — separation of peoples, making them easier to control, combined with maintenance of international borders. However, this imperialist "solution", because it fails to stabilise politically the situation of the Bosniaks and the Albanian Kosovars, contains the seeds of its own destruction — and the seeds of future Balkan "ethnic" wars. ■

# Notes

## 1. Yugoslavia in History

- 1 Turkish statistics, 1911, quoted by Institute of History, Pristina, *Expulsions of Albanians and Colonisation of Kosova*, Pristina. The Supreme Command of the Serbian III Army did a census with similar results on March 3, 1913, *ibid*.
- 2 Cohen, P, *Serbia's Secret War*, Texas A&M University Press, College Station, 1996, p. 96, citing sources from Communist Yugoslavia.
- 3 *ibid.*, p. 93, citing German sources.
- 4 *ibid.*, p. 33.
- 5 *ibid.*, p. 45, citing Tomasevich, J, *War and Revolution in Yugoslavia 1941-45: The Chetniks*, Stanford, California, 1975.

## 2. Keeping Yugoslavia United

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## 10. Postwar Kosova — Partition, Violence, Colonialism

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