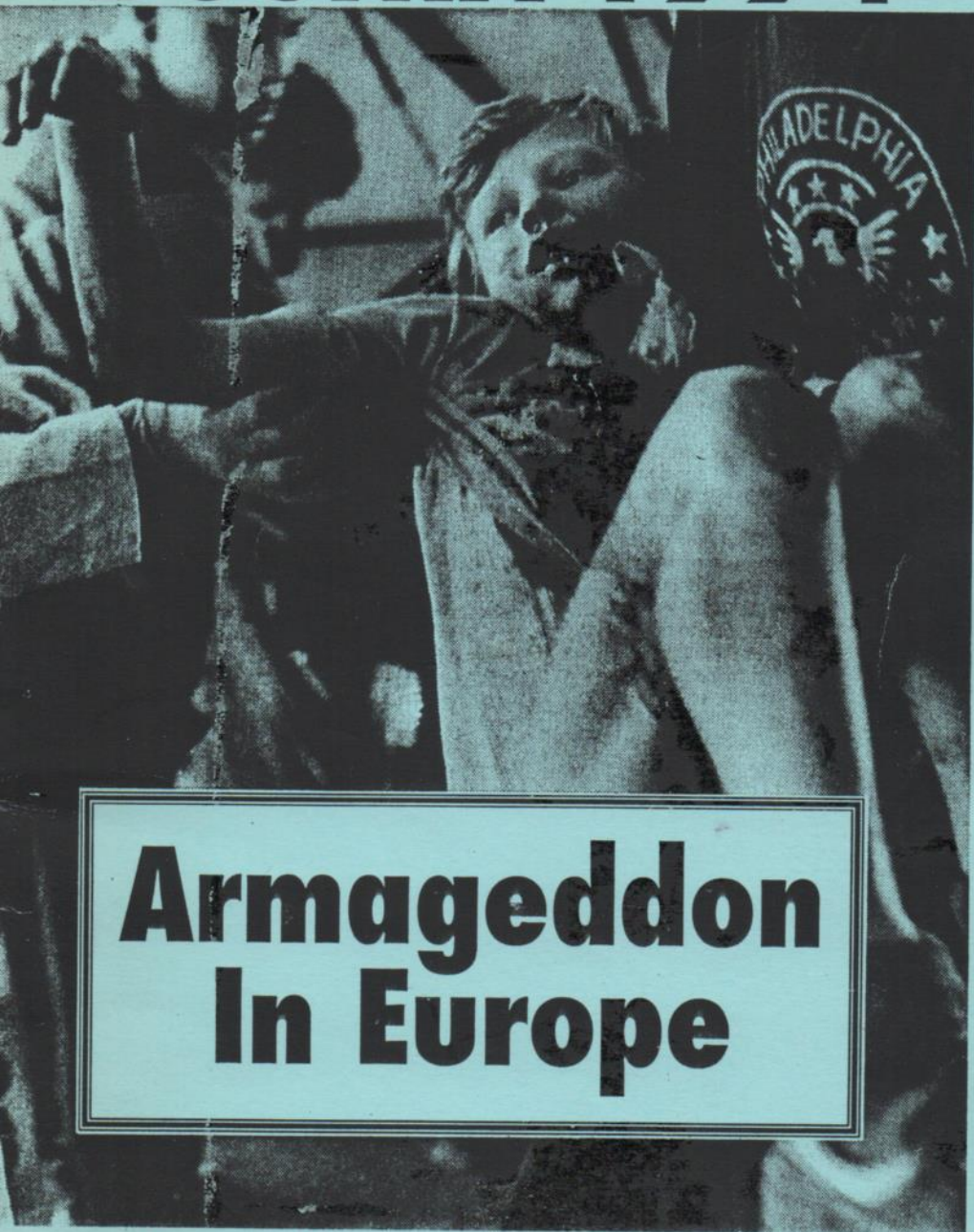
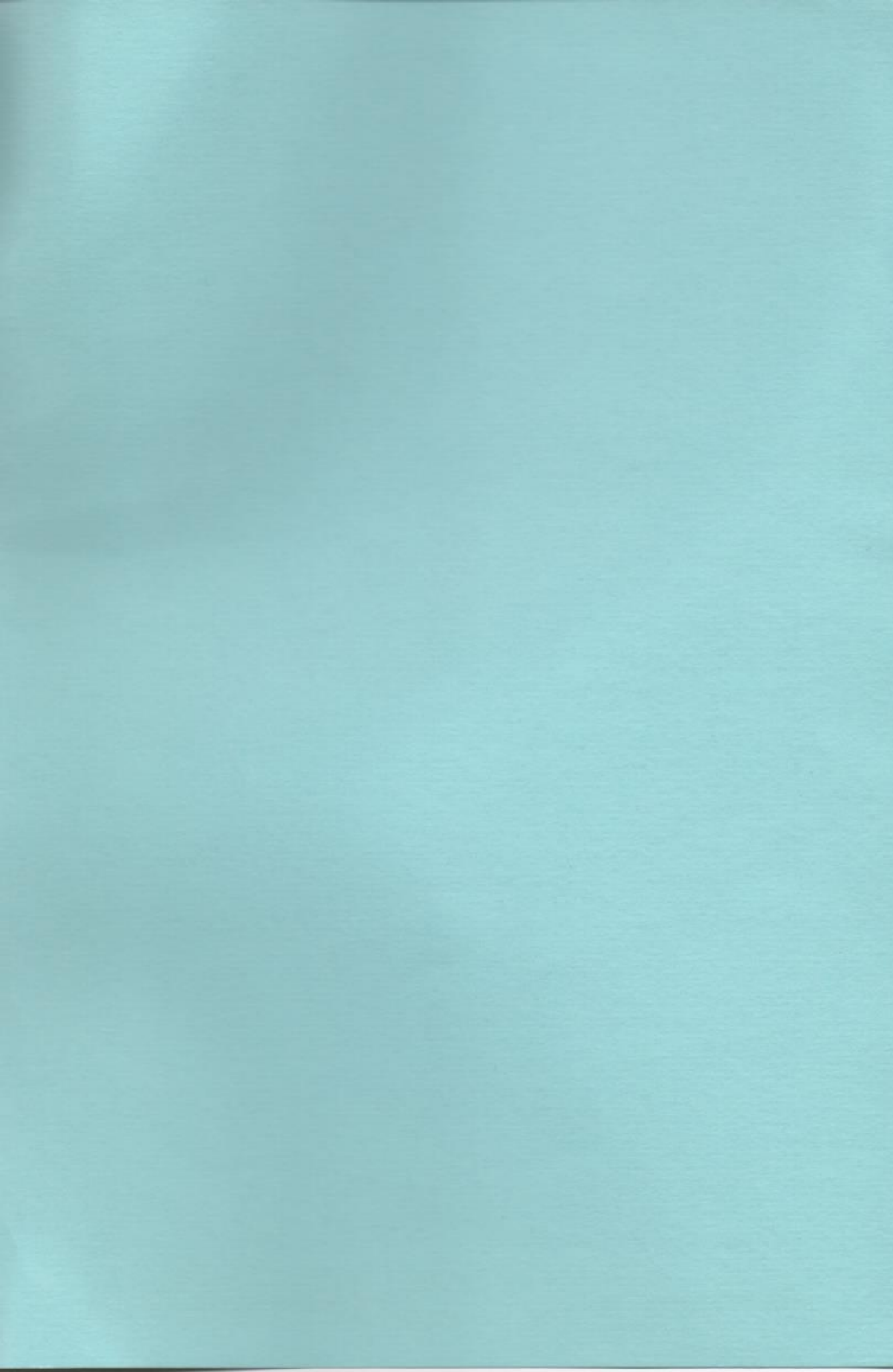


BOSNIA 1994



Armageddon In Europe

**Why socialists support multi-ethnic Bosnia
against Serbia's war • Edited By Geoff Ryan**



INTRODUCTION.

By Geoff Ryan

Last week various imperialist politicians, including John Major called for the opening of Tuzla airport. They even threatened the use of air strikes to achieve this goal. A week later the threat of air strikes has been dropped. Indeed they are now talking about pulling all troops out of Bosnia-Herzegovina and abandoning any attempts at providing aid.

Such a change of heart has not been brought about by any concessions on the part of Milosevic and Karadzic. On the contrary the Bosnian Serbs, openly aided by the so-called 'Yugoslav' army have been intensifying their attacks on Bosnian cities. They have been reinforcing their units with tanks and other weaponry under the very noses of UN forces.

Socialist Outlook has always opposed UN intervention. We are not in favour of UN or NATO air strikes. We support an alternative policy - providing arms to the Bosnian resistance so that they can defend themselves. We draw attention to the hastily withdrawn threats of military action simply to show that imperialism continues with a totally cynical policy towards the destruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina. They make threats to bomb the Serbs but their real policy is to force Bosnian President Izetbegovic into accepting the carve-up of Bosnia by ensuring people starve this winter.

Unlike John Major *Socialist Outlook* has consistently called for the opening of Tuzla airport. Indeed it has been Major and his allies - not the Serbs - who have kept Tuzla airport closed to aid. UN forces have been able to use the airport to supply their own forces. As Dave Packer argues

in his contribution it has been a deliberate policy on the part of imperialism to keep Tuzla airport closed in order to starve the Bosnian people into accepting the division of their country.

Socialist Outlook has consistently supported the people of Tuzla. We have drawn attention to the working class and multi-national composition of its people and their struggle to preserve a multi-national Bosnia. That is why we played a leading role in establishing International Workers Aid for Bosnia and why one of our supporters, Mick Woods, participated in the IWA convoy which successfully reached Tuzla in November 1993. Mick provides an account of the first six months of International Workers Aid and how the convoy finally reached Tuzla - the first independent convoy for more than seven months.

In Tuzla the IWA members received a rapturous welcome. Among those they spoke to was Selim Beslegic, mayor of Tuzla. We include here an interview with Selim conducted by Jenny Mees, a member of the Belgian section of the Fourth International, with which *Socialist Outlook* is in solidarity.

The rest of the pamphlet was written by me. While some of the text has already appeared in our previous pamphlet on the break-up of Yugoslavia it has been substantially rewritten and includes large amounts of new material.

PART ONE

From The Kingdom Of Serbs, Croats And Slovenes To The Second World War

The first Yugoslavia was formed in 1918 as the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, changing its name in 1929 to the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (which means State of the South Slavs in Serbo-Croat).

It incorporated the previously independent Kingdoms of Serbia and Montenegro, the former Austrian controlled territories of Slovenia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Dalmatia, the Hungarian ruled Vojvodina and Croatia-Slavonia and part of Macedonia (1), which achieved independence from Turkey in 1912 but was immediately annexed by Serbia. As the original name implies the first Yugoslavia only recognised the existence of three Yugoslav nations: Macedonians and Montenegrins were classed as Serbs whilst Muslims were 'nationally uncommitted'. The many non-South Slav nationalities had no rights at all.

The first Yugoslavia rapidly became a state dominated by the Serbian monarchy in which all nations and nationalities were expected to assume a 'Yugoslav' identity. Significantly the first Constitution was adopted on *Vidovdan* (2) - St. Vitus' day, the 28th June - which is also Serbia's national day, commemorating the defeat of Serbian Prince Lazar by the Ottoman armies at *Kosovo Polje* in 1389.

The history of the first Yugoslavia reveals some of the important themes that were to tear Yugoslavia apart in the late 1980s, not least because in both cases the

dominant currents were nationalist: centralised state versus federalism, the creation of a single 'Yugoslav' identity or recognition of different nationalities.

Just as in the 1980s the opposing camps were virtually the same: Serbs favoured a strong, unitary state and the development of a 'Yugoslav' nationality - which means a Serb dominated state in which 'Yugoslav' nationality is synonymous with Serb hegemony. This concept was summed up in the 1980s by Slobodan Milosevic in his oft repeated slogan "Strong Serbia, strong Yugoslavia". The order of the words is by no means accidental. The alternative to these conceptions was led by Croats and, to some extent Slovenes and Macedonians, who argued for a federation which recognised national rights and provided for autonomy.

In both the first and the second Yugoslavia there were Serbs who favoured federalism and Croats or Slovenes who supported a unitary state: Federal Prime Minister Ante Markovic [a Croat] and Deputy Federal Secretary for National Defence Vice-Admiral Stane Brovet [a Slovene] opposed Croatian and Slovene independence in the 1980s, for example. Nevertheless, the dominant trend has been for Serb nationalists to see Yugoslavia as a centralised state under Serbian hegemony. Within this state all nations lose their identity in a common 'Yugoslav' consciousness [which means, in this context, that all nations dissolve into the Serb nation] and for Croat, Slovene, Muslims etc nationalists to argue for a federal structure

which recognises national rights and autonomy.

Croatia was finally granted some autonomy in 1939: significantly the Croat leader Macek did not argue for the extension of autonomy to other nations or nationalities. Indeed the 1939 *Sporazum* (agreement) between Macek and Serbian Prime Minister Cvetkovic divided up Bosnia-Herzegovina between Serbia and Croatia. Echoes are found in the secret negotiations between current Croatian President Tudjman and Slobodan Milosevic, or their henchmen Mate Boban and Radovan Karadzic to carve up Bosnia.

The Second World War

Much of the rhetoric used by both Serb and Croat nationalists today dates from events during the Second World War. Indeed, not just the rhetoric mimics World War Two. Some of the modern day Serb nationalists wear the long beards favoured by the *Cetniks* whilst the uniform of the Croat 'Black Legion' recalls the war-time *Ustase*. Some background information is necessary.

The first Yugoslavia collapsed following the fascist invasion in 1941. In Croatia, following the German invasion, the Nazis created the so-called *Nezavisna Drzava Hrvatska* (NDH, Independent Croatian State) headed by the puppet *Ustase* regime of Ante Pavelic (3). The NDH was neither independent nor purely Croatian since it encompassed virtually the whole of Bosnia and contained many non-Croats. The Kosova (4)¹ region (and parts of Montenegro and Macedonia) were controlled by the Italian Army and were formally incorporated into Albania (also under Italian domination), whilst other parts were occupied by the armies of Bulgaria and Hungary. Slovenia was divided between Italy and Germany, as was Croatia, and Serbia was primarily under German occupation, though the government was nominally in the hands of Serbian General

Nedic. The result was to pit each national or ethnic group against the others (with the exception of Slovenia where the national homogeneity made the conflict a war between pro and anti-fascist forces from the beginning).

No-one knows exactly how many Yugoslavs died, though slightly over one million is probably the most accurate estimate.(5) The *Ustase* forces in the NDH carried out a policy of expelling, converting to Roman Catholicism (6) or murdering the Serb population - supposedly in equal proportions, though the evidence tends to suggest that physical extermination was more frequently used than either expulsions or conversions. Jews, Romanies, Muslims and anti-fascist Croats were also massacred, though some Moslem units fought alongside the *Ustase*.

However, contrary to Serbian nationalist myths the *Ustase* did not have a monopoly on extermination. Similar barbarism was carried out by all nationalist forces: the *Cetniks*, the collaborationist government of Milan Nedic in Serbia, the Slovene and Croatian *Domobranci*, the Albanian *Balli Kombeter* and others.

The majority of Jews, for example were not murdered in the *Ustase* concentration camp at Jasenovac: more were killed by Nedic's regime in Serbia than in the whole of the NDH.

Nor were the vast majority of Serb deaths at the hands of the *Ustase*, as Serbian nationalists would have us believe. Just over half of all Serb deaths occurred on the territory of the NDH. These include large numbers of *Cetniks* killed by the Partizans (the majority of whom were Serbs) and Serb Partizans killed by *Cetniks*. Proportionately the greatest number of deaths was suffered by the Slav Muslims.

None of this is to deny that the *Ustase* committed atrocities or that the Serbs suffered large losses. Nor is it to welcome the destruction of the Jasenovac memorial by Croat nationalists during the recent war in Croatia. Jasenovac was, in its own way, as

important a memorial to capitalist barbarism as Auschwitz. Nor do we deny Tudjman's anti-Semitism and his attempts to minimise the atrocities committed in the NDH. It is, however, to reject the claims by Serb nationalists that only the *Ustase* were guilty of atrocities and the portrayal of all Croats as *Ustase*, a stock-in-trade of Milosevic.(7)

Notes

1. *Macedonians are a distinct Slav nation, though this is disputed by Greater Serbian nationalists and the governments of Greece and Bulgaria. The part of Macedonia formerly inside Yugoslavia is sometimes referred to as Vardar Macedonia. Macedonia in Greece and Bulgaria is referred to as Aegean Macedonia and Pirin Macedonia respectively. It was only in Tito's Yugoslavia that the Macedonians were recognised as a nation. In Greece and Bulgaria they continue to be seen as Greeks or Bulgarians.*

2. *It was also on Vidovdan in 1914 that Gavril Princip, a Bosnian Serb, assassinated Archduke Ferdinand of Austro-Hungary in the Bosnian capital of Sarajevo, thereby unleashing a chain of events which led to the First World War, the collapse of both the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman Empires and the creation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes.*

3. *Pavelic was actually a client of Mussolini, who had supported him throughout the 1930s and it was from Italy that Pavelic returned to head the NDH.*

4. *I have used the Albanian form Kosova throughout, rather than the more common Serbo-Croat Kosovo.*

5. *See the figures given by Bogolub Kocevich (quoted in B. Magas, *The Destruction of Yugoslavia*, p314) and Vladimir Zerjavic (quoted in S. Ramet, *Nationalism and Federalism in Yugoslavia 1962-1991*, p255). Whilst there are some differences in their figures they are remarkably similar estimates. Kocevich is a Serb and Zerjavic a Croat.*

6. *Sections of the Roman Catholic Church actively supported the Ustase. Archbishop Saric of Sarajevo for example was an Ustase member whilst Archbishop Stepinac of Zagreb was able to see the hand of God at work in the N.D.H. Franciscan friars served in the Ustase government and staffed the concentrations camps at Gospić and Jasenovac. Contrary to Serbian chauvinists, however, not all Catholic clergy supported Pavelic and the hands of the Serbian Orthodox clergy were not exactly clean.*

7. *In fact the majority of Serbs in the N.D.H. rejected the Cetniks precisely because of their anti-Croat actions. The overwhelming majority of Serbs supported the Partizans, though inside the N.D.H. the majority of Partizans were Croats.*

PART 2.

The Communist Party of Yugoslavia Takes Power.

The great achievement of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia was to be able to unite the different nationalities into a common struggle against the fascist invaders, their local quislings, and the government-in-exile (based on the Serbian nationalist *Cetniks*), a struggle which led to the overthrow of capitalism. Tito's success can be explained by a number of factors.

Firstly he rejected previous stageist conceptions in favour of an immediate struggle for state power. Whilst it is sometimes argued that Tito carried out a socialist revolution because he was forced to do so in order to survive Milovan Djilas (a then leader of the CPY) wrote that in May 1941

'Tito established a new thesis: the possibility of a direct Communist takeover of power; the denial of the need for the revolution to go through two stages, the bourgeois-democratic and the proletarian, which had been the party position until then, following the Comintern decisions'. (1)

Tito himself claimed

'We did not want to stop halfway: to overthrow the king and destroy the monarchy, come to power and share it with the representatives of the capitalist class... This was the will neither of the working class nor of the vast majority of the Yugoslav people. We decided, therefore, to enter boldly on the road of complete liquidation of capitalism in Yugoslavia'. (2)

Whilst there were a few bourgeois ministers in Tito's government at the end of the war they only lasted a short time

March-October 1945) and exerted little, if any, influence on the policies pursued.

Tito also created a genuinely popular Partizan army which, by the end of the 2nd World War, numbered some 800,000 members. Whilst the units of the Partizan army were frequently locally based Tito also created Proletarian Brigades, which brought together working class militants of all nationalities from throughout the Yugoslav state. Because of the broad support for the Partizan army it was able to defy the orders coming from Moscow, where Stalin and Molotov had agreed that Yugoslavia should be part of the British sphere of influence. They argued the CPY should form an alliance with the *Cetniks* and support the return of the monarchy. In particular Stalin and Molotov objected to the formation of 'proletarian brigades' within the Partizan army. Tito refused to comply on all counts. The Partizans were forced to fight without assistance for nearly two years, relying on weapons they could capture from their enemies. Despite Stalin's insistence on the CPY dropping any reference to socialist revolution in case they frightened off the Allies it was, ironically, Winston Churchill who was forced to recognise the reality that the Partizan army was the main force actually fighting the Nazis and therefore, eventually supplied arms. (3) Moreover, the partisan Army was based on the *Antifascisticko vijece narodnog oslobodjenja Jugoslavije* (AVNOJ: Anti-Fascist Council for the National Liberation of Yugoslavia), which was the only genuine national authority. AVNOJ was also formed on a federative basis that prefigures the future

Republics. At its 2nd conference, held in Jajce, Bosnia-Herzegovina, AVNOJ agreed to refound Yugoslavia on a federal basis, though most of the details of what exactly that would imply were left unclear. The AVNOJ was also transformed into a Provisional National Government.

The new position in support of a Federal Yugoslavia was yet another change in the line of the CPY on the national question. It is useful to look at the way in which its line changed during the existence of the first Yugoslavia. Many of these changes were the result of direct pressure from the Comintern, particularly after the consolidation of the Stalinist bureaucracy but it is too simplistic to see all the changes simply as machinations from Moscow. The different positions and the debates that surrounded them also reflected internal pressures and different assessments of what 'Yugoslavia' meant.

Communist Party Positions on the National Question

There had been frequent debates inside the CPY since its foundation on what attitude to take to the national question. From 1919 to 1923 it argued for a centralised unitary state based on the three named nations, dismissing national demands as essentially bourgeois. Such a view was particularly strongly expressed by Serbs, even by left-wing Serbs who split from the Serbian Social Democratic Party, to join the CPY. In some cases this was a result of Great Serb chauvinism but there was also a view that in the process of developing the new Yugoslav nation old national loyalties would disappear in favour of working class unity. The party believed that Serbs, Croats and Slovenes were simply three different words for one nation and Slovenian was a dialect of Serbo-Croat. From 1923 however, following the adoption of a federal policy in the Soviet Union, fierce debate raged inside the CPY

between advocates of a centralised state and supporters of a federal structure. By 1928 the CPY had been brought to heel by the Comintern leadership and put forward a line on the need to break up Yugoslavia into individual states, as a prelude to forming a Balkan Socialist federation. This line lasted until 1934 when the Comintern, after the victory of Hitler, decided that the national question could be resolved in a single Yugoslav state - though lip-service was still paid to the right to secession. The line on a Balkan Federation was consequently down-played. However, the practice of the CPY was often at variance with this stated position. For example, separate party organisations were established in Croatia and Slovenia (1937) at the same time as Kardelj (the main theoretician of the CPY) was arguing that

'although it is necessary to recognise the right of the Slovenes and Croats to self-determination, nevertheless, every separatist action that at this moment attempts to break up Yugoslavia is in reality a preparation for a new enslavement, and not for self-determination'.(4)

The CPY and the National Question During the War of National Liberation

The approach of the CPY to the National Question during the course of the war was essentially pragmatic. According to Djilas,

'We looked on the national question as a very important question, but a tactical question, a question of stirring up a revolution, a question of mobilising the national masses. We proceeded from the view that national minorities and national ambitions would weaken with the development of socialism, and that they are chiefly a product of capitalist development...Consequently the borders inside our country didn't play a big

role...We felt that Yugoslavia would be unified, solid, that one needed to respect languages, cultural differences, and all specificities which exist, but that they are not essential, and that they can't undermine the whole and the vitality of the country, inasmuch as we understood that the communists themselves would be unified'. (5) However, whilst the CPY had a pragmatic approach that does not mean they did not take national rights seriously. As Tito put it

'The term National Liberation Struggle would be a mere phrase and even a deception if it were not invested with both an all-Yugoslav and national meaning for each people individually...The liberation and emancipation of the Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, Macedonians, Albanians, Muslims, etc...Therein also lies the essence of the National Liberation War.' (6)

The practice of the CPY on the national question, whatever its theoretical shortcomings, was vastly superior to that of any other Communist Party. For example, whilst the CPY championed the national rights of the Macedonians the Communist Parties of Bulgaria and Greece refused to raise the issue. Indeed they frequently adopted the same chauvinist attitudes as the Bulgarian and Greek bourgeoisie. (7)

On the basis of its new positions on the national question the CPY was the only force capable of organising on an all-Yugoslav scale. Because of these largely correct positions on the national question, and their practical application in the structures of the AVNOJ, the CPY was able to turn the war in each of the future Republics into a civil war between pro and anti-fascist forces, not a war between the different nationalities. (8) The Titoist slogan of *bratstvo i jedinstvo* (Brotherhood [sic] and Unity) was given a concrete form.

Nevertheless, these basic strengths of the Yugoslav CP also contained within them the seeds of the destruction of Yugoslavia.

Notes

1. Quoted in C. Samary, *The Fragmentation of Yugoslavia*, p32.

2. Quoted in B. Magas, *op cit*, Note 19, p43.

3. In fact collaboration between the Allies and Tito continued after the war. Escaped Cetniks and Ustase and other collaborators were handed over to the Partisans by the Allies, usually to be executed.

4. S. Ramet, *op cit*, p49. Kardelj also argued that with economic progress and the acceptance of communist values the national question would eventually wither away. He was neither the first nor the last to put forward such ideas. Much of the left today still holds to these views in various forms.

5. Quoted in L. Cohen, *Breaking the Bonds*, p24. Djilas remarks may show a pragmatic approach to the national question but they also reinforce the view that the CPY consciously set out to seize power.

6. Cohen, *op cit*, p23.

7. For a detailed account of the debates between the Communist Parties of Bulgaria, Greece and Yugoslavia see S. Vukmanovic (*General Tempo*), *Struggle for the Balkans*.

8. With varying degrees of success. The CPY was most successful in Bosnia and Croatia, which both fell within the N.D.H. and where the main battles of the war were fought. It was relatively successful in Montenegro and, eventually, Macedonia. It was at its weakest in Kosovo and Serbia. Given the weakness of the CPY in Serbia the fact that a majority of the Partisans were Serbs shows the massive level of support for the CPY amongst the Serbs of Bosnia and Croatia.

PART 3

Economic and National Questions in Tito's Yugoslavia

Weaknesses of the Tito Project

A Federal Yugoslavia

The victorious Partizans established the Federative People's Republic of Yugoslavia (changed to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, SFRY, in 1963). This recognised five 'nations': Croats, Serbs, Slovenes, Macedonians, Montenegrins. Each 'nation' had a Republic which could serve as a reference point for those members of that 'nation' left outside of its boundaries. The settlement left 25% of Croats outside Croatia, 28% of Serbs outside Serbia and many Muslims and Albanians outside Bosnia and Kosovo, for example. Thus Serbs outside Serbia or Croats outside Croatia could accept that the existence of the Serbian or Croatian Republic would guarantee their national rights.

The main exceptions to this were the Slav Muslims (1) who had no 'national' Republic. Part of the reason for Tito creating a separate Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina was to provide a reference point for the Muslims, who were a large minority there. The Muslims of the *Sandzak* found themselves divided between Serbia and Montenegro.

Whilst it is not true that the federal structure adopted was some sort of plot by Tito to weaken the Serbian nation (as Serb nationalists claim) it is undoubtedly the case that it made the rise of Great Croatian

and particularly Great Serbian nationalism much more difficult.

The other major losers were the Albanians who, despite Tito's previous support for Albanian national rights were, in practice denied any such rights. The Albanians were classed as one of the 'nationalities' of Yugoslavia, not one of the 'nations'. (For an account of the difference between 'nations', 'nationalities' and 'national minorities' in Yugoslavia see below). Although concessions were made to the Hungarian minority in Vojvodina the majority Albanian population of Kosovo were only given limited autonomy within the Serbian Republic. This denial of national rights to the Albanians was partially because at the time the Yugoslav leaders were still committed to the idea of a Socialist Federation of the Balkans but also a capitulation to Serbian nationalists who endow Kosovo with a semi-mythical status in Serbian history. Djilas explains

'I considered, as did many others, that unification - with the truly voluntary agreement of the Albanian leaders - would not only be of direct value to Yugoslavia and Albania, but would also finally put an end to the traditional intolerance and conflict between the Serbs and the Albanians. Its particular importance, in my opinion, lay in the fact that it would make possible the amalgamation of our considerable and compact Albanian minority with Albania as a separate republic in the Yugoslav-Albanian federation. Any other solution to the problem of the Albanian national minority seemed impracticable to me, since the simple transfer of Yugoslav

territory inhabited by Albanians would arouse violent opposition in the Yugoslav Communist Party itself'. (2)

Whilst there is no reason to reject Djilas's explanation as to why the CPY did not grant the Albanians the status of a 'nation' this failure was, nevertheless, a clear violation of their national rights. There is certainly no excuse for the brutal suppression of the Albanian revolt that inevitably occurred.

It was by no means inevitably wrong to have ethnically mixed states, with some nationalities spread over one or more Republics. On the contrary, the idea of 'ethnically pure' states is a reactionary abomination. Unfortunately the bureaucratic nature of the CPY and the lack of any real socialist democracy meant that the masses had little influence over the drawing of the borders between the Republics. And, precisely because there was (and is) no easy answer to the complex national problems posed in such an ethnically heterogeneous area as Yugoslavia (and the Balkans as a whole) then the only way a satisfactory solution could be found was through the greatest possible participation of the masses. Failure to do this stored up problems that could be exploited by nationalist forces.

Only A Partial Break From Stalinism.

Because the federal structure did allow some real autonomy - albeit heavily bureaucratized - the only way to hold everything together was through the one force that existed at a federal level - the CPY itself. Thus, despite his partial breaks with Stalinism in order to carry out what was undoubtedly a real, popular revolution Tito remained committed to a key aspect of Stalinist ideology - the "leading role of the party" within a single party state.

This "leading role of the party" affected all areas of Yugoslav social and political life, including during the war of national

liberation and the revolution. Thus whilst the Partizan army was a genuinely popular army it was under the control of the Central Committee of the CPY. Similar considerations apply to the AVNOJ where the vast majority of delegates were CPY members.

And although the Republican Communist parties also had some degree of autonomy - including the right to exist as separate parties with their own leadership - they too were subordinated to the control of the Federal CPY. Hence there was a constant tension between all those bodies which nominally (and, to some extent, in reality) had decision making powers and the CPY, which attempted to hold the whole structure together.

This absence of any real decision making power for the masses, the single party, the lack of the right to tendencies and factions inside the party - in other words the absence of socialist democracy - were to prove decisive in the future break-up of Yugoslavia. Denied the possibility of creating alternatives to the CPY on a federal level the masses turned to the only option open to them: nationalist parties.

The Consequences Of The Break With Stalin

From 1945 until 1948 Tito remained a loyal ally of the Soviet Union. He described himself as a Stalinist. The 1946 Constitution was modelled on that of Stalin's 1936 Constitution for the Soviet Union. Economic policies too were based on the Stalinist model with heavily centralised planning, except in agriculture. (3) Tito was seen as second only to Stalin - both by the world Stalinist movement and by imperialist governments. Large numbers of volunteers, inspired by the Yugoslav revolution, came from around the world to help rebuild the shattered country. Thus the expulsion of Yugoslavia from the Cominform in 1948 caused enormous shock waves not only inside

Yugoslavia but throughout the Communist Parties of the world.

The ostensible reasons given were "nationalism" and a "pro-capitalist orientation". In reality Stalin objected to the unwillingness of the CPY to give Moscow control over the Yugoslav economy and Tito's continued espousal of a Balkan Federation. The proposal for a Federation was supported, to varying degrees, by the ruling CPs in Albania and Bulgaria as well as by the Greek CP until its final defeat in the civil war. Such a Federation would have posed as a rival pole of attraction to Moscow and therefore had to be prevented.

Tito, however, had had to assert his independence from Stalin in order to make the revolution. The Yugoslavs refused to back down and maintained their stance, whilst carrying out purges of 'Cominform agents' in Yugoslavia. (Whilst there undoubtedly were real Cominform agents in Yugoslavia the purges were often indiscriminate).

Workers' Self-Management And The Turn To The Market

The expulsion from the Cominform had important consequences for the future development of Yugoslavia. Firstly Tito developed an independent foreign policy, to be concretised at a later date in the founding of the Non-Aligned Movement. However, in 1950 this led to the Yugoslavs wrongly supporting the United Nations aggression against North Korea, thus confirming - for Stalin - his claim that "the Tito clique never had anything in common with socialism or democracy". Secondly, again confirming Stalin's self-fulfilling prophecies, the CPY turned towards imperialism for economic aid. Thirdly, partly as a result of Djilas' attempts to come to terms with the expulsion by analyzing the bureaucratic degeneration of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union

(4) and partly, probably, by accident Djilas and Kardelj developed the policy of self-management. The way in which self-management was applied in a one party state increasingly orientated towards the market were also to have important consequences for the future of the Yugoslav Federation.

The period up to the 7th Congress in 1958 saw much debate about whether or not a multi-party system could exist in a workers' state - even though the CPY leadership answered in the negative there was a real discussion, unheard of anywhere else in Eastern Europe. The decision to change the party's name to the League of Communists of Yugoslavia at the 6th Congress in 1952 is a reflection of the much looser nature of the Yugoslav party. (For simplicity I have continued to use the initials CPY throughout).

Moreover, the 7th Congress adopted the position that the self-management system should be the norm for all workers' states. Despite the limitations of the "self-management system" practised in Yugoslavia this position was a step forward in relation to the views of every other Communist Party.

However, whilst the concept of the role and nature of the party embodied in the change of name and the promotion of the policy of self-management were, in some ways, a step forward, they also contained potentially enormous dangers. In reality, because there was no real socialist democracy, self-management and the concept of a League of Communists meant that the only arenas open for political discussions - even within the party - were in the structures of the Republics. Thus, rather than reducing the growth of nationalism, they tended to encourage it.

Economic Crises

Although there had been a marked increase in the standard of living of the peoples of Yugoslavia from the revolution - despite the Cominform blockade - the

economy went into recession in the early 1960s. Moreover, the effects of the previous economic policies had been to increase the wealth of the richer northern Republics at the expense of the south. This was despite massive investment in the poorer Republics and Kosovo. Investment in these regions was primarily in heavy, basic industry. There was some rationale to this. Kosovo is rich in minerals with the Trepcia mines alone producing 25 percent of Europe's lead and 13 percent of Europe's zinc. It also has important coal deposits. Bosnia-Herzegovina too has large reserves of coal, iron ore, timber and potential sources of hydro-electric power. The effect, however, was to increase the wealth of the richer Republics and Vojvodina by supplying them with raw materials for their much more profitable light industries. Moreover, because investment decisions were sometimes made on political rather than economic bases - in order to satisfy local bureaucrats - this led to the duplication of industries and, often, inefficiency. Thus the shift of steel production from Slovenia to Bosnia made it cheaper to import steel rather than produce it in Yugoslavia. As a result neither the relatively rich Republics of Croatia and Slovenia (and to some extent Vojvodina - the major agricultural region of Yugoslavia - and the Belgrade region of Serbia), nor the poorer Republics were satisfied.

The solution was a further turn to the market and the key criterion became profitability. This was accompanied by the transfer of considerable responsibility for administration of the economy from the federal government to the Republics (who were expected to be self-supporting). In addition the banks and economic enterprises also took on a more important role at Republican level. There were marked increases in the price of raw materials, agricultural goods and other commodities and services. The federally controlled General Investment Fund was abolished. Thus the 1965 reforms resulted in a greater role for the Republics and the Re-

publican controlled enterprises at the expense of the Federal government and the Belgrade banking monopoly. (5)

The tensions between the different Republics were held in check - with brief exceptions such as the 'Croat Spring of 1971' - so long as the CPY was able to hold everything together. In turn the CPY was able to retain its "leading role" as long as it was able to keep the economy relatively stable.

However, many of the measures taken to keep the economy stable also contained dangerous centrifugal tendencies, particularly within the framework of the increasing reliance on market forces pursued by the CPY from the mid-1960s.

For example, whilst the 'workers' self-management' allowed from the early days of the Tito regime was very limited and subject, ultimately, to party control it was, nevertheless jealously guarded by the Yugoslav working class who fought every attempt to abolish or restrict it.

However, once the logic of the market came to exert its influence then "workers' self-management" developed into competition between different factories, different groups of workers and - in the 1980s - helped fuel the national antagonisms that were to result in the disintegration of Yugoslavia. Self-management within the frame-work of the market and without socialist democracy will always be impossible. In Yugoslavia, the deformed workers' state most integrated into the market, it rapidly turned into a disaster.

The turn to the market in the 1960's - which accompanied the purge of the hard-line Stalinist faction around Rankovic - nevertheless opened up the possibility of political challenge to the Tito regime. In 1968 a wave of protests by students, soon joined by workers, swept the country. Because of the historical legitimacy of the Tito regime - and particularly its independence from Moscow - Marxism retained an appeal to broad layers of Yugoslav society. Students and workers raised slogans such as "Down with the Red

Bourgeoisie" and demanded real workers' control. The Marxist journal *Praxis* had a wide circulation; Marxists from all over the world - including leading members of the Fourth International - participated in annual discussions on the island of Korcula. The French Trotskyist paper *Rouge* was widely available.

Tito dealt with this crisis in his usual fashion: a mixture of repression and concessions. A long campaign was carried out to remove the central figures involved with *Praxis* from their posts in the Philosophy department at Belgrade University - eventually achieved by using the self-management structures! Purges of the Republican parties were carried out. On the other hand Tito adopted some of the students' and workers' demands as his own, blaming local bureaucrats for all the problems! The final attempt by Tito to resolve the acute political, economic and national problems of Yugoslavia was the 1974 Constitution.

The 1974 Constitution

The 1974 Constitution marked a further step in the devolution of decision making to both the Republics and the enterprises through a broadening of "workers' self-management". Republics and the two Autonomous Provinces had the right to enter into negotiations and make agreements with foreign enterprises. Wages were also raised to head off the increasing working class discontent. Above all the 1974 Constitution granted Kosovo the status of an Autonomous Province within Serbia (on a par with Vojvodina). Whilst this fell short of full Republican status the Albanians were clearly the biggest beneficiaries from the new constitution. Albanian became an official language (in practice the main language in civil affairs); an Albanian university was opened; Kosovo was entitled to its own flag (the flag of Albania), police force etc; the civil apparatus became rapidly Albanianised. These were real gains for the Albanian

population, not merely sops. Most importantly Kosovo was able to participate - along with Vojvodina - on an equal basis with the 6 Republics in the 8 person Presidency set up to replace Tito on his death. [This collective presidency was also a way to resolve the difficulties of replacing the ageing Tito, around whom there was an undoubted "cult of the personality" and the lack of any "successor" with the same credibility on an all-Yugoslav scale].

However, the 1974 Constitution was itself fraught with dangers. Firstly it gave the Army a much greater role in both state and party activities. This was to prove decisive for the centralising project of Slobodan Milosevic. At an economic and political level the proposed solutions stoked up further problems - in particular massive discrepancies in wealth between Slovenia and Croatia (with living standards nearing those of, say, Austria) and the wide-scale poverty of Kosovo and Macedonia. Unemployment was high in many regions (over 1 million throughout Yugoslavia) and a further million Yugoslavs found work abroad.

The whole Titoist project for dealing with the still unresolved problems was to engage in delicate balancing acts in order to attempt to defuse nationalist tensions. Thus the 1974 Constitution made significant concessions to Croat, Slovene and Albanian nationalist sentiments by granting even greater devolved powers to the republics. Indeed, it tended towards the creation of a confederation. On the other hand, for example, Serbs in Croatia were given a much greater proportion of leading positions in the Party and Republican institutions than their numbers in the population of Croatia would warrant. This was, at least partly, a way of keeping Croat nationalism in check.

Moreover, the economy was kept going by more and more loans from the IMF. It is no accident that the break-up of Yugoslavia began in the early 1980s. Capitalism was heading for slump and the international bankers were becoming con-

cerned about their ability to get back the monies they had loaned - Mexico, Brazil and a whole host of countries were on the verge of bankruptcy. Once the IMF began to demand repayments then the Yugoslav economy was heading for catastrophe.

Notes

1. *The Slav Muslims were finally recognised as one of the constituent 'nations' of Yugoslavia in the 1960s.*

2. *Quoted in B. Magas, Destruction of Yugoslavia, Note 28, p44. Similar considerations informed the compromise on the division of Macedonia, Tito believing that a Socialist Federation would allow the creation of a Macedonian state uniting Macedonians in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria and Greece.*

3. *The maintenance of private agriculture was one of the reasons cited by Stalin for the "pro-capitalist" nature of the Tito regime in 1948. Tito's response, to collectivise agriculture, did not prevent the expulsion of the Yugoslavs from the Cominform.*

4. *It was perfectly acceptable for Djilas to criticize the bureaucratic degeneration of the CPSU. However, when in 1954 he began to apply similar criteria to the CPY itself he was expelled and subsequently jailed.*

5. *For a much more detailed account of the economic debates during the 1960s see S. Ramet, op cit.*

PART 4

The Break Up of Yugoslavia

**The Kosova Uprising
And Its Aftermath**

By the time of Tito's death it was obvious that the massive borrowing undertaken in the 1970s (\$20 million) was having serious effects on the Yugoslav economy. This was experienced most acutely in the poorest, most backward region - Kosova where unemployment was over 20% (compared to 2% in Slovenia). In 1981 the people of Kosova demanded the right to become a full Republic. The prime motivation was not any perceived national oppression - indeed the 1974 Constitution had largely ended the oppressed status of the Albanians - but because they believed that it was only through full Republican status that they would be able to solve the massive economic problems Kosova experienced. Indeed, it was the Albanian youth who had been able to gain access to higher education as a result of the 1974 Constitution who were hardest hit. Their protest was met with savage repression, which continued at an even higher level after the 1989 miners' strike and the abolition of Kosova's (and Vojvodina's) autonomous status by Milosevic.

All the other Republics were also experiencing acute economic crises. However, their solutions were radically different. The richer economies of Slovenia and Croatia (with its revenue from tourism) objected to money being allocated to prop up the bankrupt economies (literally in some cases) of the poorer Republics.

These were not, of course, new objections. Similar views were expressed in the heated debates of the 1960s. But because of the absence of any genuine socialist democracy this very real problem of economic differentiation - and the necessary transfer of resources between the Republics - could not be democratically agreed upon by the people of Yugoslavia. Since every section of the bureaucracy, at Republican and Federal level, agreed on the need for even greater reliance on market forces, the result was to increase the centrifugal tendencies inherent in the Federal structure and the system of "self-management".

At a political level differentiations began to develop within the bureaucracy. In Serbia, economically backward compared to the northern Republics and facing a growing economic crisis, there was a growing nationalist movement in response to the Kosova rebellion - a mood that Slobodan Milosevic was able to latch on to in the course of the 1980s. This movement was both Serbian nationalist and centralist. Milosevic was hailed as "the greatest Serb leader since Rankovic" - the hated, ultra-Stalinist removed by Tito in 1965.

Crucially it was able to win the backing of the army leadership which, like army chiefs everywhere, preferred a strong, centralised state. The majority of army officers (about 70%) were Serbs and Montenegrins (1) (though it is far from clear that this was a deliberate policy - rather it was a reflection of the much stronger historic traditions of militarism in Serbia and even more so in Montenegro). However, Serbian domination of the army was consolidated and reinforced by the

use of Serbian as the official language of the army (a policy justified by claims about the need for a common language to allow a clear chain of command, understanding of orders etc). Such a policy clearly discriminated against those whose main language was not Serbian (including Croats who would have difficulty in understanding written communications), who made up the majority of the soldiers. Moreover, the army remained a purely Federal institution. The different Republics and the Autonomous Provinces had their own Territorial Defence Forces - set up because of the fear of Soviet invasion following the intervention in Czechoslovakia in 1968 - but not their own armies. The Defence Forces were subject to overall control by the Federal army - which facilitated their disarming in the period leading up to the invasion of Slovenia. This Serbian domination of the army at the highest levels, explains the way in which it has acted in support of Milosevic - or perhaps, more accurately, we should say that Milosevic has acted on behalf of the army. It was these Serbian army chiefs (active or retired) who tried to form a new Communist Party (League of Communist - Movement for Yugoslavia) (2) after the collapse of the League of Communists at its 14th Congress in 1990.

Because Belgrade was both the Serbian and Federal capital the Federal institutions also tended to have higher percentages of Serbs. In Croatia and - in particular - in Slovenia, on the other hand, the CP leaderships allowed much greater political freedoms and moved in the direction of further decentralisation. Their positions were essentially 'Republican' - that is, greater rights for the Republics as they currently existed, including their national and ethnic composition - not nationalist. Massive demonstrations against the Federal army took place in Slovenia in 1988 following reports that the army was preparing to intervene to put down the 'counter-revolution'. Three Slovene journalists and a soldier were put on trial for

handling a "secret military" document - in a blatant violation of the Federal Constitution the trial was conducted in Serbo-Croat, not Slovenian, further increasing Slovene nationalist feelings.

However, the leaderships of the other Republican parties largely failed to respond to the key question - the violation of Albanian national rights.(3) Apart from a few token protests they treated the repression in Kosova as an internal Serb affair. Despite the undoubted desire of the Croatian and Slovene CPs to maintain a unified Yugoslavia - albeit on a modified basis - their failure to defend Kosova, to organise opposition on an all-Yugoslav scale not only allowed the rise of right-wing nationalism in Serbia, it also created the conditions in Slovenia - and especially Croatia - for the rise of right-wing nationalist currents.

The Rise of Serbian Nationalism

The recreation of a unified Yugoslav state had only been possible on the basis of equality of nations and nationalities (apart from the Albanians). This required a guarantee that there would be no possibility of the rise of the strongest power - Serbia - into a dominant position, such as it had enjoyed in the pre-war 1st Yugoslavia. The response by a section of the Serbian Party to the Kosova events began to challenge this settlement - not least because it was a useful diversion from the serious economic difficulties confronting Serbia. Moreover, the most Stalinised and repressive wing was joined by many of the former critics of the Tito regime around the journal *Praxis*. This capitulation by ex-Marxists such as former *Praxis* editors Mihailo Markovic and Ljubomir Tadic was part of a wholesale capitulation to nationalism by the Serbian intelligentsia. (4) On the whole the working class of Serbia remained aloof, if not hostile, to the rise of nationalism - at least until the late

1980s. The power base of Milosevic was primarily the Belgrade party machinery, the Belgrade press, which was rapidly brought under Milosevic's control, the Serbian intelligentsia and the army - backed up with appeals to Serbs living in Kosova, Croatia, Vojvodina and Bosnia. These were frequently to be found in the most rural - and therefore most backward - regions. Moreover, Milosevic formed an alliance with the previously dormant Serbian Orthodox Church whose influence was, of course, particularly strong amongst the Serbs of the most backward rural regions.

The Serbian nationalists initially based their campaign on supposed atrocities committed against Serbs living in Kosova. The press ran a massive anti-Albanian campaign. It was in response to the Kosova rebellion that the first charges of 'ethnic cleansing' and rape were made - supposedly carried out by Albanians against Serbs. (Branka Magas⁽⁵⁾ clearly shows there is no substance to these allegations: the level of rape was no worse in Kosova than anywhere else in Yugoslavia and the vast majority of cases were of Albanian women by Albanian men.). The ensuing battle inside the Serbian CP resulted in the eventual victory of the most nationalist forces around Milosevic. The nationalist campaign began to attack the Federal basis of Yugoslavia as some plot by "the Croat" Tito and "the Slovene" Kardelj against the Serbian people - in alliance with the Vatican, Cominform, imperialism etc. In particular the 1974 Constitution came under fierce attack. The solution put forward was a centralised Yugoslav state under Serbian domination. Under Milosevic, for the first time ever, celebrations were held to celebrate the founding of the *first* Yugoslavia. Milosevic referred to Yugoslavia as a 70 year old state - indications of the extent to which the Serbian leadership had broken from the policies of Tito. It was only after the rapid defeat of the Federal army in its attempted invasion of Slovenia in

1991 that Milosevic changed his policy. Having failed to prevent Slovene independence he then embarked upon the policy of a "Greater Serbia", the logic of which inevitably led to war in Croatia and Bosnia.

After Milosevic came to power in 1987 he set about changing the old balance of forces. By the following year he had replaced the leadership of the Vojvodina party. By 1989 the Montenegrin leadership had also been replaced - not least because it was unable to deal with the growing working class militancy in response to the economic crisis - and the Serbian constitution unilaterally changed, abolishing the autonomy of the 2 provinces. This was, of course, equally a violation of the Federal Yugoslav constitution. However, Kosova and Vojvodina still retained their places on the Federal institutions, giving Milosevic 4 guaranteed votes.

The rise of Serbian nationalism led initially to a rise of Republicanism in the other Republics who clearly felt threatened - not least because part of Milosevic's programme was to continue the project already set in train in Kosova, encouraging the Serb populations outside Serbia to oppose the dominant Republican sentiments in the Republics where they lived. Moreover, Slovenia (partially), Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina had been disarmed by the confiscation of the weapons belonging to their Territorial defence units. Whilst in Croatia this Republicanism soon gave way to the rise of ethnic Croatian nationalism in Bosnia there remained a strong Bosnian identity.

A secret meeting of the (suspended) Albanian deputies to the Kosova assembly declared an independent Republic in 1990. Referenda or decisions by Republican Parliaments on independence followed in Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. However, all these moves towards independence took place within the frame-work of exercising their guaranteed constitutional right to self-determination and an attempt to

maintain a unified state. They were fundamentally defensive responses to rising Serbian nationalism. It was the unilateral overturning of the Federal Constitution by Milosevic, the attempt to mobilise the Serbian populations of Kosova and Croatia (and later Bosnia) against the Republican governments and to create a Serbian dominated, highly centralised state that led to the putting into practice of the declarations of independence. The final straw was the refusal by Milosevic to recognise the right of the Croat nominee Stipe Mesic to take his place as head of the collective presidency.

In the 1980s all the structures that had held Yugoslavia together were rapidly falling apart. The economy was in serious difficulties. The CPY was rapidly losing its authority. In every Republic and Autonomous Province, except for Serbia and Montenegro, there was a drastic decline in party membership, especially amongst the youth. (6) There were two very different solutions being put forward within the League of Communists: Slovenia and Croatia argued for a looser confederation, Serbia for a more centralised state. Given the absence of socialist democracy it was inevitable that disagreements would take the form of conflict between different Republican leaders. However, it was by no means inevitable that this would end in war. Various attempts were made by the Slovene and Croatian LC leaders to find solutions within a 'Yugoslav' framework. Even after multi-party elections had brought nationalist parties to power in the various Republics attempts were still made to find a solution. Izetbegovic of Bosnia and Gligorov of Macedonia tried to find a compromise between the confederal positions of Slovenia and Croatia and the rigid centralism of Serbia.

It is certainly not the case that the Slovene and Croatian party leaders, or their nationalist successors, were without blame for the crisis. They frequently only showed an interest in the problems of their

own Republics. They were certainly not only motivated by altruism. However, the decision to resolve the conflict by military means was that of Slobodan Milosevic and the leaders of the Yugoslav National Army (JNA).

Notes

1. *Most of modern day Montenegro remained independent of both the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. Montenegrins are divided about their origins and history. A majority see themselves as related to the Serbs and consequently have tended to follow Serbian leadership and identify with Greater Serbia projects. A minority insist on a separate Montenegrin identity. Montenegrins have been the nation most likely to join the Communist Party - approximately 1 in 4 is a member.*

2. *One of those involved with the formation of the LC-MY was the wife of Slobodan Milosevic. She also had her own party in the recent Serbian elections. However, this is not an indication of independent activity on her part but an attempt by Milosevic to cover all eventualities. It is rather reminiscent of when Ian Paisley stood his wife for election to Belfast City Council. If she lost it was a defeat for her, whereas if she won it was a victory for her husband.*

3. *Milan Kucan and the leadership of the Slovenian League of Communists did protest about the repression in Kosova in 1989. They were partially supported by the LC of Croatia. By then, however, it was too late. The Slovene and Croat working class organised wide-spread support for the Kosova miners' protest.*

4. *Indeed some Serbian intellectual such as the novelist Dobrica Cosic - until recently President of Milosevic's rump 'Yugoslavia' - had expressed nationalist sentiments even when he was a loyal Titoist. To appreciate the degeneration of Mihailo Markovic compare the infamous Memorandum of the Serbian Academy of Arts and Sciences of 1986, in which he demands greater repression of the Albanian population of Kosovo and his*

article published in *Inprecor* Feb 27, 1975 in which he analyzes how the bureaucracy attempts to whip up nationalist hysteria.

5. Destruction of Yugoslavia, p61-62. Indeed, despite all Milosevic's claims of massacres of Serbs the first Serb to die in political violence was Branivoje Milinovic, an 18 year old student killed by Milosevic's own police in Belgrade on 9th March 1991. He was not even one of the student protesters demonstrating against the Milosevic regime. He had simply gone into Belgrade to buy some cassettes and inadvertently found himself in the middle of a police riot.

6. See Cohen, *op cit*, p48.

PART 5

Milosevic Is Responsible For The Wars And Atrocities

The responsibility for the wars in Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia lies firmly with Milosevic and his Greater Serbia project. Not a single act of war has taken place on the territory of Serbia. There can be no doubt that the Serbian regime is guilty of acts of aggression against its neighbours. War was declared on Bosnia even before the referendum on independence had been held. We do not equate expansionist, Great Serbian nationalism - which we condemn - with the essentially defensive nationalism of the Croats which we defend, even if we do not share their nationalist ideology. To equate Serbian and Croatian nationalism is to equate the aggressor with the victim.(1)

This is not, of course, to deny the reactionary nature of the Tudjman regime or to imply support for its policies. Tudjman has frequently played into the hands of the Greater Serbia chauvinists. For example, the decision of the Croatian government to change its law on citizenship - *de facto* denying equality to Serbs - strengthened Milosevic's appeals to Serbian chauvinism and his preparations for war. His use of the *sahovnica*, the red and white chequered shield, as the main emblem of Croatia intensified Serb fears.(2) The abolition of the use of the Cyrillic script in favour of the sole use of the Latin script further antagonised Croatian Serbs. (3)

Tudjman's measures have to be seen in the light of the undoubted over-representation of Serbs in Croatian institutions. Serbs accounted for 40% of members of

the League of Communists in Croatia, eight out of twelve editors at Radio Zagreb and more than 60% of Police. (4) Tudjman's attempts to replace Serbs with Croats facilitated Milosevic in his attempt to whip up nationalist hysteria allowing him to intervene militarily in Croatia. Moreover, it is obvious that Milosevic and Tudjman agreed on the carve-up of Bosnia-Herzegovina some time ago.(5)

However, despite the crimes of Tudjman it is completely false to claim that he is equally responsible for the destruction of Yugoslavia or, even worse, primarily responsible (as does *Socialist Worker*).

It has been the Serbian army and Seselj's Cetniks that have carried out systematic murder of people because of their ethnic origins. It has been the Serbian army and *Cetniks* that have driven people out of their towns and villages, the so-called policy of 'ethnic cleansing'. It has been the Serbian army and the *Cetniks* that have set up concentration camps. It has been the Serbian army and the *Cetniks* that have used mass rape as a weapon of war. The rape of Bosnian women has been a systematic policy decided on by the Serbian military and political hierarchy. The victims (and the rapists) have not been chosen at random. Women (and often children) have been raped by men known to them. Serb soldiers have been forced - at gun-point - to rape their neighbours, friends, relatives etc. Those who have refused have been executed. The aim has not simply been to degrade and humiliate women - particularly Moslem women - but to make it impossible for there to be

any reconciliation between the different communities. (6)

Whilst it is almost certainly true that murders, expulsions and rapes have been carried out by soldiers and militias of all sides these have - until recently - primarily been carried out by individuals or small groups. However reprehensible these acts may be they do not compare to the deliberate policy of murder, rape and torture embarked upon by Milosevic, Seselj and Karadzic in order to carry out the 'ethnic cleansing' which is necessary to implement their policy of uniting all the Serbs in a single state. Their main targets have overwhelmingly been the non-Serb civilian populations and all cultural manifestations of their existence.

The Croat HVO is now carrying out similar acts in northern Bosnia and evidence is emerging of collusion between Serb and Croat forces to facilitate attacks upon Muslims and others opposed to the carve-up of Bosnia. The ability of the HVO to attempt to emulate Karadzic is, however, a direct consequence of the totally cynical policies pursued by the imperialist powers.

War in Croatia

Some historical background on the Krajina

In the 17th century, after a defeated attack by the Austro-Hungarian Habsburg empire on the Ottoman army, tens of thousands of Serbs fled from the spiritual home of the Serbian Orthodox church in Pec, Kosova. They re-established the Orthodox Patriarchy at Sremski Karlovci in Vojvodina where they were granted religious freedom and limited self-government by the Austro-Hungarian empire. In return the Serbs agreed to defend the Habsburg Military Frontier (*Vojna Krajina*) which stretched from the Dalmatian coast of

modern day Croatia to the western edge of Romania.

Whatever Croatian nationalists may claim there were already Serbs living in these *Krajina* regions. Most had simply migrated there. Some had even been settled by the Ottoman empire. However, the Serbs who came as soldiers to defend the *Vojna Krajina* had a very different relationship to the Habsburg empire than the rest of the population of Croatia. The *Vojna Krajina* Serbs were always under the direct control of the dominant partner in the Habsburg empire, Austria. Croatia (or at least those parts under Habsburg domination) was nominally under Hungarian rule, though with a certain degree of independence.

During the reign of Maria-Theresa in the 18th century the *Krajina* Serbs lost much of their powers of self-rule. The *Vojna Krajina* was organised into military districts. The Serbs were organised into regiments under Austrian control, based on the city of Karlovac which was constructed solely for military purposes. Thus large parts of Croatia were administered from Vienna, frequently against the wishes of the Croatian and Hungarian nobility, - to say nothing of the wishes of the people of Croatia - via Serb settlers based in small garrison towns and the surrounding countryside. Approximately 26 per cent of the Serbs of Croatia live along the former *Vojna Krajina*. Although they form a majority in most of these regions there is a sizeable Croat population.

One of those towns on the *Vojna Krajina* is Knin, formerly the place of enthrone-ment of medieval Croat kings. Today it is the capital of the 'Autonomous Republic of Krajina' (ARK), the home of the most hard-line Serb nationalists in Croatia. It is also the main centre of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS). Interestingly, during the 2nd World War the Knin region was virtually the only Serb area of Croatia in which the Serbian nationalist *Cetniks* were the dominant current. In virtually every other area the Serbs of Croatia sup-

ported Tito's Partizans. In July 1989 the Serbs of Knin organised demonstrations in support of Milosevic's repression of the Albanian majority population of Kosovo. These demonstrations of open Greater Serbian nationalism brought the Serbs of Knin into conflict with the then Communist government in Croatia (in which, as we have noted above, there was a disproportionately large number of Serbs).

Knin is a small town of about ten thousand inhabitants. The Knin region (*Kninska Krajina*) is primarily rural. Its previous military role is continued in the extraordinary affinity of the *Krajina* Serbs with weapons. (7) However, Knin also has an important role in the economy of Croatia. It is the central communications point between Zagreb and the tourist resorts of Dalmatia. The loss of Knin would be, therefore, a serious blow to the Croatian economy.

Despite all Milosevic's attempts to portray the war in Croatia as one of defence by a Serb population threatened with annihilation there is no truth whatsoever in his allegations. Indeed, as noted, the Serbs of the *Krajina* first came into conflict with the Serb dominated Communist party. Milan Babic and other leaders of the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) whipped up hysteria against the supposedly *Ustase* regime of Franjo Tudjman. (8) Their allegations were faithfully repeated by the Belgrade press. They were not only already well-armed but received further weapons directly from the JNA. The terms of the referendum which the SDS organised to support its secession from Croatia were left vague. Voters were only asked whether they supported autonomy for the Serbs, which does not necessarily imply secession. Croats living in the *Krajina* were not, of course, allowed to vote whilst Serbs living outside Croatia were able to do so. The war in Croatia had nothing to do with defending the rights of the Serb population but was aimed at preventing the Croatian people from exercising their right to self-determination. (9)

War of the Countryside Against the Cities

In fact the vast majority of Croatia's Serbs do not even live in the *Krajina*. Yet Milosevic and Babic continued to claim that they spoke in the name of all Serbs. The wishes of the 200,000 Serbs living in Zagreb were ignored. It was the rural Serbs who dominated. Thus the war in Croatia not only became a war of Croats against the Serbs of the *Krajina*, backed by Serbia and the JNA. It also became a war of the countryside against the cities. It is the backward, reactionary nature of the rural populations that explains why war in both Croatia and Bosnia has been so savage and why there has been destruction of cultural and historical symbols on a scale far surpassing that of the Nazi occupation (10). The rural populations tended to be less ethnically mixed than the cities. Hence the driving out of whole populations from villages. Thus war was not only waged by the JNA against Croats. Hungarians and Czechs were also forced to flee their villages. By contrast, in the cities many Serbs in Croatia fought against the JNA. In Dubrovnik the whole of the Serb community remained to defend their city. In Vukovar a third of the defenders were Serbs, Hungarians or Ruthenes. Similarly in Bosnia 'ethnic cleansing' has been at its worst in the countryside. In the cities the mixed populations continue to fight alongside one another. It is simplistic, therefore, to see the wars in Croatia and Bosnia as purely nationalist in character.

Why Bosnia Is of Crucial Importance

Bosnia-Herzegovina has been, throughout history, and in all its different forms, a multi-national, multi-ethnic, multi-religious entity. In some ways it is a micro-

cosm of Yugoslavia. The attachment to Yugoslavia was probably stronger in Bosnia-Herzegovina than in any of the other Republics - not least since the proclamation of the second Yugoslavia was made at a meeting of the AVNOJ on 29th-30th November 1943 in the town of Jacje, (recently destroyed by Serb *Cetniks*) near Sarajevo.(11) It was in Sarajevo in 1992 that the biggest demonstration against the war in Croatia took place - uniting Bosnians of all national and ethnic groups. This demonstration was fired on by Serb nationalist forces.

Bosnia-Herzegovina has 3 main national/ethnic groups: Croats (17.3%); Serbs (31.3%) and Muslims (43.7%) [figures from 1991 census]. In addition 5.5% of the population defined themselves as 'Yugoslavs' (Montenegrins, Jews and other nationalities present in very small numbers are 2.1%). The numbers defining themselves as Yugoslav are higher than for the former Yugoslav Federation as a whole (2.9%) or any of the other Republics. Only in the formerly autonomous - and even more ethnically heterogeneous - province of Vojvodina did a greater number of people see themselves as Yugoslavs (8.4%)

However the numbers of Bosnians defining themselves as Yugoslav had declined in comparison with the 1981 census (10.1%) - an indication of the growing threat of war. In particular there was an increase in the numbers of those defining themselves as Muslims - people who had previously defined themselves as Yugoslavs.

The Bosnian Muslims

The Bosnian Muslims are Slavs who converted to Islam when Bosnia was conquered by the Ottoman empire. Nevertheless they retained many of their old religious beliefs. They have been afforded the status of a nationality since the foundation of the 2nd Yugoslavia. Many Bosnian Muslims rejected their religious beliefs at

least two generations ago. In the cities, where the majority of Muslims live, they do not, by and large, observe Islamic laws. Young Muslims of both sexes frequently live together - or with partners from a different nationality - outside of marriage. Islamic dietary laws forbidding consumption of pork, alcohol etc are mostly ignored. Bosnian Moslem women wear the same clothing as Serbian, Croatian - or, for that matter, other European - women.

Whilst we can debate whether or not "Muslims" should be defined as a nationality the reality is that they have been treated as such ever since the formation of ex-Yugoslavia. (Only the most extreme Croatian nationalists have ever challenged this - they argue the Muslims are Croats). However, the issue has become of importance because Serbian (and to a lesser extent) Croatian nationalist - as well as sections of the left in Britain - have raised the spectre of an Islamic state in Bosnia. The reality is that, for the moment, the Bosnian Muslims have been the least attracted to Islamic fundamentalism of any Moslem community anywhere in the world. Even the Imam of Sarajevo - the highest ranking Islamic official in Bosnia - stated that the Bosnian Muslims desperately needed arms and that he would accept them from Islamic fundamentalist sources - but only as a last resort and with the greatest of reluctance.

Alija Izetbegovic, president of Bosnia has, on occasions, made statements favourable to the creation of an Islamic state. However, his government - the legal government of Bosnia-Herzegovina, now simply portrayed as 'one of the warring factions' by both the bourgeois and much of the left press - includes Serbs and Croats.(12) The "Platform of the Presidency of Bosnia-Herzegovina in the Conditions of War", issued at Sarajevo on 26th June 1992, makes clear commitments to maintaining Bosnia-Herzegovina as a sovereign state founded on equality of all its citizens. It makes no claims to the establishment of an Islamic state. More-

over, it calls for the formation of multi-national defence forces to resist external aggression.

The only known 'Islamic' defence unit operates entirely outside the framework of the Bosnian army.

Of course we can - and should criticise Izetbegovic for his occasional 'Islamic' statements. We should criticise him for his support for market forces - something he has in common with all the ex-bureaucrats throughout ex-Yugoslavia.

But it is totally false to conclude that the Izetbegovic government is simply another gang of nationalist war-mongers - no different from the Serb *Cetniks* or Croatian HVO - and cannot, therefore, be given any support, however critical.

Defend Bosnia - Arm The Resistance

The outcome of the war in Bosnia will affect the development of the Balkans. A victory of those who wish to carve up Bosnia amongst different national and ethnic groups will strengthen reactionary nationalism in all its manifestations. The surest way to guarantee a rise in support for Islamic fundamentalism - currently small - is the destruction of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Conversely, a victory for the Bosnian resistance - composed primarily of Muslims but also including Croats and Serbs - will strengthen all those forces throughout ex-Yugoslavia who oppose ethnically pure states. In particular, because it is in the major cities where multi-national defence forces are strongest (Sarajevo - where 50,000 Serbs and 30,000 Croats remain - and, particularly, Tuzla) then the possibility of independent working class action will be strengthened by the victory of the resistance.

That is why we are for the right of Bosnia to exist as a multi-national state. We are for the defence of Bosnia both against the armed attacks of the Serb *Cetniks* (backed up by the Yugoslav army) and of the Croa-

tian HVO and against imperialist plans to carve it up. The Vance-Owen plan - by dividing up Bosnia into so-called 'autonomous regions' based on the domination of one nationality - legitimated the 'ethnic cleansing' of Karadzic and encouraged his Croatian counter-part, Mate Boban, along the same road. The current plan for 'safe havens' has, in essence, the same effect.

Whilst Milosevic has made some criticisms of the referendum amongst Bosnian Serbs - thereby rapidly re-ingratiating himself with imperialism - the 96% vote against the Vance-Owen plan shows the strength of reactionary Serbian nationalism. He has been able to ride out the challenge from the ultra-right wing *Cetnik* leader Vojislav Seselj with his power base amongst the Serbs of occupied Kosova, but only by entering an alliance with the equally despicable Arkan. Defeat for a multi-ethnic Bosnia will encourage Serb nationalists to make further attacks - on Macedonia and Kosova.

The position of "Arm the Bosnian resistance" is totally correct - not only because arms are an absolute necessity for the Bosnian resistance to survive, but because we recognise that there are still multi-ethnic forces that reject the logic of 'ethnic cleansing' and wish to preserve a state in which all the Bosnian people can live together. (*Socialist Organiser* are wrong when they raise the slogan "Arm the Muslims" because they ignore those Serbs and Croats who fight alongside Bosnian Muslims to preserve the unity of Bosnia). Approximately 10% of the Bosnian resistance are non-Muslims. Their families are increasingly being used by Serb and Croat forces as hostages to try to coerce them into deserting.

We are correct to oppose UN intervention. Not simply for all the usual arguments about the UN being a tool of imperialism but also because we are in favour of self-determination. Self-determination cannot be imposed from outside: it can only be achieved by the armed Bosnian

people themselves. Armed interventions by outside forces eventually only aid reaction.

Moreover, implicit in the calls from some in the Labour movement (such as Ken Livingstone) for UN intervention is the notion that the Bosnian people are incapable of defending themselves and resolving their problems themselves. At best this is condescending: at worst it legitimates the wide-spread, essentially racist notions about "barbaric" Slavs who always have, and always will, attempt to murder one another.

We have to take a similar attitude to 'humanitarian' aid.⁽¹³⁾ We are, of course, in favour of it but we argue that the best way to distribute aid is through the Bosnian resistance - who will need to be armed to be able to do so. There is nothing "humanitarian" about keeping people alive for one day if the likelihood is that they will be shot the next. It is yet another cynical exercise in attempting to appear to be doing something to quieten public discontent.

In fact the real role of the UNPROFOR troops has been to give tacit backing to Milosevic and Karadzic - whether by helping to hand over Srebrenica (the most publicised example, but also other towns in eastern Bosnia such as Cerska and Zepa) to Serbian control, or by refusing to help wounded Bosnians. Over 20 Bosnians died, for example, during the evacuation of Srebrenica as a result of being "forgotten by" or "falling from" UN vehicles. Indeed Serb forces are able to move new weapons and units into position in front of UNPROFOR observers.⁽¹⁴⁾ Although the Bosnian army has had considerable success against the HVO and liberated some territory Serb forces are stepping up attacks on Sarajevo and Tuzla.

The Role of Imperialism

The break-up of Yugoslavia has presented the various imperialist powers with enormous difficulties. There have been, and continue to be, important differences between the various states - particularly between the EC and the US - but also divisions within states (e.g. Thatcher's opposition to Major's policies). Moreover, whilst there is certainly nothing approaching an organised movement around the war in Bosnia there is clearly large-scale public concern about the atrocities witnessed every night on the television and a feeling that something should be done about it. Whilst this sentiment often has a very reactionary dynamic - particularly in favour of armed intervention - it nevertheless has had some effect on pushing governments into appearing to be doing something. The different responses of the EC and the US/Thatcher are based partly upon the different audiences they are appealing to and partly on the different conceptions of what is most in the interests of imperialism.

However, in the final analysis there are no real differences between the EC and US governments. (Thatcher is a slightly different case - not least because she doesn't have to take any responsibility for actually doing anything. Her rhetoric would probably be rather different if she were still in office). There are obviously massive risks in military intervention. This would be no quick victory like the Gulf war. There would be a real possibility of large numbers of US or European soldiers being killed. In the US the "Vietnam Syndrome" still exerts considerable influence and reduces the tactical options for Clinton. That is probably why Clinton - apart from Thatcher - has been most vocal in supporting an end to the arms embargo. The European powers are more concerned about the potential spreading of conflicts throughout the Balkans and,

therefore, prefer direct military intervention that they can control to the risks inherent in allowing oppressed people to defend themselves.

Thus, despite the differences all the imperialist powers have no real intentions of doing anything to end Serbian (and Croat) aggression in Bosnia. They have made no attempt to enforce the limited measures such as the no-fly zones, they have been forced to announce to assuage public opinion. The Vance-Owen plan was abandoned virtually overnight in favour of "safe havens" - making even greater concessions to Karadzic and Boban. Now the imperialists have resigned themselves to the division of Bosnia into three 'ethnic states' in which the 45% moslem population would have only 20% of the territory and leaving the door open to the fusion of the Serb and Croat 'states' into Serbia and Croatia. Everything the imperialists have done has been totally cynical.

Imperialist policy amounts to attempting to silence public concern whilst creating the most stable conditions in the region for future imperialist profits. Above all that requires a strong Serbia. Despite all the anti-Milosevic rhetoric the various imperialists have all helped maintain Milosevic in power.

Imperialism as a whole initially wanted to maintain a unified Yugoslav state. It opposed any moves that threatened to lead to the break-up of Yugoslavia - not least because the opposition movements in Croatia and, above all Slovenia, had a genuine popular character. (15) Thus imperialism refused to recognise the declarations of independence of the various Republics. It was only **after** the Slovene Territorial Defence forces had defeated the Federal army and whilst Serbian forces were waging war in Croatia that the EC finally agreed to recognise Slovene and Croat independence. It was only **after** the war had begun in Bosnia that imperialism recognised Bosnian independence. Macedonia has only just received recog-

nition whilst Kosova remains unrecognised as an independent state.

Contrary to what some (notably Keith Veness in *Labour Briefing*) have argued, it was not imperialist intervention in Yugoslavia that led to its break-up. On the contrary, it was the popular movements - faced with the complete intransigence of the Serbian regime - that were pushed on the road to independence *against* the wishes of imperialism - including, at the time, German imperialism. (16) Recognition of (some of) the independent states was a belated realisation that the only way imperialism could hope to gain anything from the break-up of Yugoslavia was to accept reality. German imperialism was the most far-sighted in this regard and was prepared to unilaterally recognise Slovenia and Croatia. The rest of the EC was forced to follow suit in order to avoid losing out on potential markets.

Of course the imperialists are now trying to gain support in Slovenia and, most notably, Croatia. German imperialism is hoping to become the dominant power. However, whilst it is true that they have provided large amounts of arms to Croatia since independence they did not do so whilst war was still raging. The arms Tudjman has received have been primarily for use in Bosnia.

The sanctions against the Serbian (and Montenegrin) regimes have had little effect on reducing the ability of Milosevic to wage war. (17) It has been the working class that has had to pay the price, in terms of massive unemployment and rocketing inflation. Serbia was able to seize control of all the weapons of the former Federal army and has a well developed arms industry which is capable of continuing to produce military hardware. On the contrary, the arms embargo has overwhelmingly affected the ability of the Bosnian resistance to defend itself. Whilst, in theory, imperialism could end the embargo - and help make profits for the arms manufacturers - this would potentially alienate the Serbian regime and would probably

pose the threat of breaking up the current alliance with Yeltsin.

Despite the rhetoric about war crimes and Serbian aggression imperialism has been clearly willing to come to an accommodation with Milosevic. The Vance-Owen plan and its "safe havens" successor fundamentally conceded the notion of ethnically pure states and handed over large areas of Bosnia to Serb and Croatian control. Moreover, these plans - in conjunction with the arms embargo - encouraged the most right-wing Croat forces to emulate the Serb militias. German weapons have proved useful for driving out unarmed, or poorly armed, Muslims from areas awarded to Croatia or for expanding potential Croat held territory. Whilst, as mentioned above, there is no doubt that Milosevic and Tudjman (and their local henchmen Karadzic and Boban) had come to some agreement on the division of Bosnia-Herzegovina this would have been much more difficult to implement if the Bosnian resistance had been armed and if imperialism had not been willing to accept the dismemberment of Bosnia.

The cynical complicity in the carve-up of Bosnia will, no doubt, have future repercussions. The only question is whether further wars will break out first in Macedonia or Kosova.

Notes

1. This only refers to the question of Serbian aggression against the right of Croatia to secede. In Bosnia-Herzegovina Croatian nationalism has an absolutely reactionary role. It is interesting that most of the left has little problem with Slovene nationalism or Slovene secession whilst Croat nationalism is seen as indefensible in any circumstances.

2. The use of the *sahovnica* is frequently cited as an example of how Tudjman is attempting to rebuild the NDH. Whilst the shield was used by the Ustase it's appearance as a symbol within Croatian heraldry predates the Ustase by several centuries.

3. This was a particularly stupid move, even for Tudjman, since many Serbs in Croatia could hardly read Cyrillic script. Even in Knin 95 percent of Serbs used the Latin script.

4. Compared to 12% of the population.

5. It is likely that Tudjman in fact was the initiator of this proposal. He believed that if agreement on carving up Bosnia could be reached then this would save Croatia from war. As usual he blundered fatally.

6. Women who have become pregnant as a result of being raped have been advised by the Pope not to even contemplate an abortion. In Croatia posters proclaim 'Even a Foetus is a Little Croat'. In addition women have been virtually driven out of public life in all the former constituent parts of Yugoslavia. In every single Republic there has been a dramatic decline in the number of women MPs.

7. See M. Glenny, *The Fall of Yugoslavia*, p6.

8. It is interesting that Zagreb has the largest Jewish community in ex-Yugoslavia despite the supposed Ustase regime. The Jews of Croatia supported Croatian independence. Moreover, it is only in the last few months that this community has started to complain about the increase in Ustase symbols and influence. Whilst this is cause for concern it hardly squares with the lurid versions of Ustase atrocities peddled by Milosevic.

9. For useful accounts of the war in Croatia see M. Glenny, *op cit*, and M. Thompson, *A Paper House*. Whilst both tend towards the view that all the nationalist leaders are equally to blame both authors give invaluable accounts of the processes taking place which resulted in war.

10. We do not wish to imply that peasants are always inherently reactionary. The majority of the Partizan army were peasants. However they had a revolutionary leadership and therefore acted in a revolutionary way.

11. The first meeting of AVNOJ also took place in Bosnia, in Bihac.

12. Compare the attitude to the totally unelected government of Emir Jaber of Kuwait.

13. We refer here to aid from governments. Initiatives such as International Workers Aid for Bosnia are clearly very different.

14. See the Independent, 17 January 1993.

15. Moreover, leading figures in the Bush administration Deputy Secretary of State Lawrence Eagleburger and National Security Advisor Brent Scowcroft had long-standing connections with the Serbian regime. Eagleburger, who was US ambassador to Belgrade in the 1970s was a social friend of one of the heads of the Serb national Beobanka - Slobodan Milosevic. Eagleburger was president and Scowcroft vice-president of Henry Kissinger Associates, which had large contracts with Yugo America and other Yugoslav companies.

16. If recognition of a state is imperialist intervention surely it follows that refusal to recognise an independent state is also imperialist intervention.

17. Indeed, they have strengthened Milosevic's position inside Serbia, whilst boosting more right-wing forces among Serbs outside Serbia. Thus while Milosevic won the recent Serbian elections fairly comfortably he lost the elections in the Krajina to his erstwhile ally Milan Babić.

PART 6

Our Position on the National Question and Socialist Federation

We are in favour of self-determination. That includes the right of states to secede. Concretely that means we support the right of all the Republics of ex-Yugoslavia to secede. We demand that Kosovo is recognised as an independent state. Our attitude to self-determination is not determined by the positions of imperialism. We reject the idea that socialists should have opposed Croatian independence because German imperialism was sympathetic to the idea. Croatia has a right to national self-determination irrespective of the attitudes of the various imperialist forces.

We reject the notion that the state must satisfy 'democratic' criteria before the democratic right of the people to national self-determination can be 'granted'. The mistreatment of the Serb minority by Tudjman should be strongly criticised and opposed, but Tudjman's crimes do not negate the right of Croatia to independence.

Self-determination can only be exercised on the basis of the existing Republics. Of course the boundaries are not sacrosanct. Part of our criticism of Tito is that the boundaries were drawn without involving the masses in decision making. However changes can only be made on the basis of negotiations and agreement between the different nationalities. The alternative is forcible attempts to change them in favour of one nation at the ex-

pense of another. Our position is based on the concrete reality of the national and ethnic composition of the peoples of former Yugoslavia.

Nations, Nationalities & National Minorities In Ex-Yugoslavia

The SFRY recognised 6 'nations': Serbs, Croats, Muslims, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Croats and Slovenes. In addition there were 10 'nationalities': Albanians, Hungarians, Bulgarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Turks, Romanians, Italians, Ruthenians (1) and Roma (2). There were also numerous 'national minorities' including: Austrians, Greeks, Jews, Germans, Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Vlahs (3) and those who classed themselves as Yugoslavs.(4) Thus a minimum of 25 different national or ethnic groups were to be found in the SFRY. Moreover, the distribution of the different national groups throughout former Yugoslavia does not make the division into ethnically pure states a simple option - even if it were to be thought desirable! Not only could members of the 6 'nations' be found in all 8 of the former federal units, so could much smaller groups such as Hungarians, Bulgarians and Ruthenes. It would, therefore, be utterly absurd for all the 25 national groupings to attempt to create their own states. Whatever the weaknesses of the Titoist project its attempt to build a federal state based on multi-ethnic Repub-

tics was the only possible solution. Its weakness lay not in any supposed inability of different nationalities to live in the same state but on the total absence of any real socialist democracy that could have allowed problems to be resolved in a non-nationalist way. It is on the basis of the actual make-up of the Yugoslav state that we have to analyse the right of national minorities to secede - in particular the Serbs of Croatia and Bosnia or the Croats of Bosnia.

The 'Autonomous Republic of *Krajina*', as we have argued above, represent a minority of Serbs in Croatia. Indeed, if support from the majority of national minorities were the sole criteria for self-determination then there is much stronger arguments in favour of the Serbs and Croats of Bosnia being entitled to secede. However, as we have also argued above, the establishment of the ARK had nothing to do with defending national rights. It was an act of war aimed at preventing Croatian self-determination. In the same way the creation of the Croat *Herceg-Bosna* and the 'Serb Republic' in Bosnia-Herzegovina have nothing to do with defending national rights. They are designed to break up Bosnia. (5) Ultimately both the Serbs of *Krajina* and Bosnia and the Croats of Bosnia are attempting to build ethnically pure states.

We are opposed to the notion of "ethnically pure" states. That is why defence of Bosnia is so important. For the same reason we are opposed to measures that privilege one national group over others such as the change in definition of citizenship of Croatia. Croatia used to be the Republic of 'the Croat people and the Serbian people of Croatia'. Today it is the state of 'the Croatian people and members of other peoples and nationalities'. Whilst in theory this represents an advance the practice has been to encourage Croatian nationalism and attacks upon non-Croats. Those Croats who have protested against this have been denounced as 'bad Croats'. Thus we not only defend the right to self-

determination - alongside this we demand the right of national and ethnic minorities to participate fully, on an equal basis, in political and social life.

Whilst we are in favour of self-determination this does not mean that we prefer to see large numbers of small states. On the contrary, the only way in which the peoples of the Balkans can really exercise self-determination is by uniting. There can be no real self-determination under imperialist domination. Of course that does not mean, therefore, that we adopt an ultra-left attitude to the national question and refuse to support the right of Slovenia, Croatia etc to independence on the pretext that they are more susceptible to imperialist intervention and domination. However, we do have to explain that the right to self-determination that the Slovene, Croat etc people have won will be threatened - not strengthened - the closer their leaders move to accommodation with imperialism. In particular we have to argue forcefully for the defence of the existing socialised property relations, opposition to privatisation and for the expansion of the nationalised sectors. All Trotsky's arguments about the need for a Balkan federation remain valid today.

'This peninsular, richly endowed by nature, is senselessly split up into little bits: people and goods moving about in it constantly come up against the prickly hedges of state frontiers, and this cutting of nations and states into many strips renders impossible the formation of a single Balkan market, which could provide the basis for a great development of Balkan industry and culture. On top of all this is the exhausting militarism that has come into being to keep the Balkans divided, and which has given rise to the danger of wars fatal to the peninsula's economic progress....'

The only way out of the national and state chaos and the bloody confusion of Balkan life is a union of all the peoples of the peninsular in a single economic and political entity, on the basis of na-

tional autonomy of the constituent parts. Only within the framework of a single Balkan state can the Serbs of Macedonia, the sanjak [i.e. a Serb (and Muslim) inhabited strip belonging to Turkey at the time Trotsky was writing], Serbia and Montenegro be united in a single national-cultural community, enjoying at the same time the advantages of a Balkan common market. Only the united Balkan peoples can give a real rebuff to the shameless pretensions of tsarism and European imperialism.

State unity of the Balkan peninsular can be achieved in two ways: either from above, by expanding one Balkan state, whichever proves the strongest, at the expense of the weaker ones - this is the road of wars of extermination and oppression of weak nations, a road that consolidates monarchism and militarism; or from below, through the peoples themselves coming together - this is the road of revolution, the road that means overthrowing the Balkan dynasties and unfurling the banner of a Balkan Federal Republic.

The Balkan dynasties, artificially installed by European diplomacy and lacking any sort of roots in history, are too insignificant..... The Balkan bourgeoisie, as in all countries that have come late to the road of capitalist development, is politically sterile, cowardly, talentless and rotten through and through with chauvinism. It is utterly beyond its power to take on the unification of the Balkans. The peasant masses are too scattered, ignorant and indifferent to politics for any political initiative to be looked for from them. Accordingly, the task of creating normal conditions of national and state existence in the Balkans falls with all its historical weight upon the shoulders of the Balkan proletariat'. (6)

These few paragraphs by Trotsky are remarkably prophetic. However, we also have to recognise reality. Since Trotsky's writings there have been two attempts at

creating a Yugoslavia. The 'Kingdom of Slovenes, Serbs and Croats' came into being at the end of the First World War (changing its name to Yugoslavia in 1929). It was precisely the expansion of 'one Balkan state' (i.e. Serbia) 'which proved strongest, at the expense of the weaker ones'. It was created not by the Balkan dynasties or bourgeoisie but by imperialism. Trotsky's second variant, 'from below' was put into practice (partially) by Tito. Both have foundered on the rock of Serbian nationalism.

It is highly unlikely that, in the near future, moves to any sort of federation including Serbia will find an echo in the other Republics. This is even more the case today when it looks more and more probable that Bosnia will be carved up between Serbia and Croatia. The road to a new federation will lie, initially through the creation of independent states. 'Yugoslavia' will, almost certainly never again exist. Any new federation will have to encompass the whole of the peoples of the Balkans. New internal boundaries will have to be drawn. That can only be done on the basis of the fullest socialist democracy. It can, of course, also only be done on the basis of defending socialised property relations.

Rebuilding The Workers' Movement

Certainly there can be no new federation whilst Milosevic - or worse, Seselj - holds power in Serbia. The Serbian working class is unable to resist at the moment - though it did organise large scale strikes in 1991. However, Milosevic was able to buy off this opposition by agreeing to the strikers demands. Most opposition to Milosevic comes from the right - particularly since the suppression of the youth revolt in 1991 and the retreat of the working class. However, Milosevic's reliance on ultra-nationalist demagoguery cannot indefinitely conceal the fact that his increas-

ing reliance on the market cannot resolve the economic problems of Serbia. (Privatisation in Serbia is more advanced than in Croatia or Slovenia, for example, despite their leaderships being seen by much of the left as openly pro-capitalist). (7) In Croatia too working class resistance has been cowed for the moment, as a result of the wars in Croatia and Bosnia.

In Kosova Serbian domination of social and political life is challenged sporadically but not in any co-ordinated way. The gains made by the Albanian population under the 1974 Constitution have all been reversed. For example, virtually all Albanian health workers have been sacked. As a result the Albanian population will not go into hospital in Kosova - for fear of emerging in a worse state than they entered. In Slovenia and Croatia there has been a renewal of independent trade union activity and an independent union exists in Serbia. The Union of Autonomous Trade Unions of Croatia openly opposes the war in Bosnia. These are hopeful signs. One of the tasks for socialists is to develop links with the opposition movements, peace movements etc. throughout ex-Yugoslavia and help to rebuild the workers' movement, starting with independent, democratic trades unions. This is one of the goals International Workers Aid for Bosnia has set itself.

When the hold of nationalism begins to weaken, when the working class begins to see that the nationalist regimes in power are incapable of resolving the underlying economic problems then we will begin to see the conditions emerging in which a new federation begins to be posed. The key to the situation is the overthrow of Milosevic by the Serbian working class, though we cannot predict in advance that the Croatian workers, for example, will not overthrow Tudjman first. But even if this were to happen the possibility of any Balkan federation would still depend on the overthrow of the Serbian regime.

The slogan of "A socialist federation of the Balkans" is, therefore, an important

part of revolutionary marxist propaganda but it cannot take on an agitational quality at present. Certainly it cannot be counterposed to the key demands of the right to self-determination, the rights of national and ethnic minorities, opposition to imperialist intervention (including sanctions) and - above all for the arming of the Bosnian resistance.

Open the borders of Britain!

The ability to carry out initiatives is limited and made much more difficult by the lack of any organised activity inside the Labour movement around ex-Yugoslavia. Labour MPs have either supported the front bench - whose position is essentially the same as the government's - or called for military intervention. The wider left is, at best confused, at worst downright reactionary. Sections of the left, including Arthur Scargill, support Serbia

The main area open for the left to do any systematic work is around the right of Bosnian refugees to come to Britain (or wherever else they choose to go) and to receive housing benefits etc. There are several thousand Bosnian refugees in Britain - of whom only a few hundred are here legally. The majority live on the margins of society and will increasingly be forced into sweat-shops, crime or begging in order to live. The plight of those Bosnians who do manage to get to Britain is illustrated by the recent suicide of a Bosnian woman, Lejla Ibrahimovic.

Socialists have to explain that the refusal to allow Bosnian refugees into Britain is part and parcel of the 'fortress Europe' policy inherent in the Maastricht Treaty. It is part and parcel of the Asylum Bill in Britain, the new asylum laws in Germany, the attacks on the Black communities in France etc. The Asylum Bill, for example, will not only restrict the right of entry to new refugees it can also be used retrospectively. Those refugees already

here remain at risk of deportation to the first 'safe' country they entered. (Since this was probably former Czechoslovakia it is highly unlikely that they will be welcomed in either of the 2 new states).

Notes

1. Ruthenians come originally from the Western Ukraine. In Yugoslavia they enjoyed a variety of language and cultural rights in contrast, for example to Poland, where they were oppressed.

2. Roma only enjoyed 'national' rights in Macedonia. In the other Republics they were granted rights as individuals but not as a 'nationality'. Nevertheless the position of Roma throughout ex-Yugoslavia was markedly better than in most other states of the world.

3. Originally from modern day Romania.

4. These 'national minorities' enjoyed a wide variety of cultural and linguistic rights - newspapers, TV or radio broadcasts in minority languages, the formation of cultural associations etc.

5. Indeed, the party of Bosnian Croat leader is a Bosnian branch of Tadjman's HDZ whilst the Serbian Democratic Party (SDS) of Karadzic is the Bosnian branch of the Knin based SDS.

6. L.D. Trotsky, *The Balkan Wars (1912-13)*, p39-40.

7. See M. Glenny, *op cit*, p63.

“We can’t tell you how important these three lorries are for us”

JENNY MEES, member of the Belgian section of the Fourth International, recently returned from Tuzla as part of the International Workers Aid for Bosnia convoy. In the beseiged town she interviewed SELIM BESLAGIC, mayor of Tuzla.

Jenny Mees: What do you think about the current situation in Bosnia?

Selim Beslagic: The world refuses to face the truth, the world refuses to call to account the aggressors and war criminals, the world avoids saying that Radovan Karadzic (leader of the Bosnian Serbs) and Mate Boban (leader of the Bosnian Croats) are fascists who want to nail the Bosnian people to the stake.

No, public opinion puts the aggressor and the victim on the same level. The Bosnian people, and especially the Bosnian Muslims, are threatened with death. They are the victims, not *one of the three warring factions* which are referred to nowadays. In Bosnia all the people want to, and can, live in peace.

Tuzla is the proof of this. We have no other choice: our population has lived together for centuries and is very mixed. Because of the war life has become so hard that I fear even here extremism can gain ground.

The nationalist parties want to claim that the war, starvation and deprivation are the results of our policies and that our ideas are therefore wrong. But we know that we are acting correctly and the multi-ethnic composition of the population demands

such policies. The world must know the truth about Tuzla and help us.

J.M. What is the biggest problem for the region?

S.B.: Hunger. People are hungry and, if the situation does not improve, the weak and the poor are going to die through a combination of hunger and cold.

Because of the blockade, no convoys are getting through. You started out with fifteen lorries and only three reached our city. No other civilian convoy has been able to get through.

We have no diesel and therefore no transport, which also makes the situation very difficult.

J.M. Our convoy led a campaign to open up the so-called Northern Route (the Posavina corridor). Do you think that this route is possible?

S.B. Yes, it is a logical route! But there are other possibilities, through Banja Luka or Belgrade for example.

But everything comes down to a question of political will and the relationship of military forces. The best way of saving our people now is, however, to open up our airport in Tuzla.

J.M. We tried to force a way through the Northern Route. That cost us a lot of

time, energy and money. Perhaps it was a mistake or stupid to do that?

S.B. No, it was brave! We are pleased that you gave this issue its pressing political importance, that you have exposed the facts about this route.

The Bosnian people are equally brave and if we ever decided to force a way through this passage it would not be a question of stupidity but of exceptional bravery.

J.M. Tuzla now has 70,000 refugees, particularly Muslims coming from central and eastern Bosnia. Does that not create tensions now that the ethnic composition of Tuzla has been changed?

S.B.: The problem of the refugees is not on such a scale that it has changed the original ethnic composition of our region. But, of course, there is a massive shortage of housing and food for these people. A large part of the refugees are housed with families.

Only the refugees get aid from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees but for some months only 20 to 30 percent of their needs have been met. Our own population gets no aid from anyone.

The city administration has two bakeries and, in the past, we also had several kitchens. For the moment, however, they are all closed because we no longer have the basic necessities.

Our conception is that all the refugees must be able to return to their own region. We do not accept that frontiers can be drawn by force, we don't accept a peace which deprives people of their home!

J.M.: What do you think of the way in which the peace negotiations are pro-

gressing? You are, yourself, an important participant...

S.B. Well, no war has ever been stopped because of a slip of paper. What matters is the military relationship of forces. No lasting peace is possible if it is unjust.

We don't accept having to negotiate with war criminals, we don't want to find ourselves on an equal footing with war criminals because we are legally elected. We want peace, we are in favour of negotiations, but we don't want to sign a peace which will mean the death of our Bosnian population.

J.M. You mentioned the airport at Tuzla which is usable but cannot be opened. International Workers Aid led an action in several countries on 11 November to demand its opening. What are your views on this?

S.B. I am very pleased. Everyone here has been waiting for more than a year for the opening of our airport.

I hope that you can put political pressure on your MPs and governments, and that this question can reverberate throughout your media and so become a burning political issue. I also want to say this.

You arrived here with three lorries. It's not much and will in no way relieve our distress here. But the quantity isn't important. What counts is moral support. We cannot tell you enough how important these three lorries are for us.

For everything you have done I thank you from the bottom of my heart. I wish you a good journey home and hope it will be easier than getting here. Goodbye until better times.

Bosnia - Why a Muslim state is no solution

By Geoff Ryan

The British left has come up with all the wrong answers to the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Even those who understand there is a war of aggression by Serbia and Croatia against Bosnia have taken all sorts of mistaken positions on the question of national self-determination, the role of the United Nations, sanctions against Serbia, independence from the Izetbegovic government.

In this issue Bosnia was Yugoslavia in miniature. Within its borders lived the two largest nationalities, Serbs and Croats, and a large Slav Muslim population. It had a sizeable minority who defined themselves as 'Yugoslavs'. There was a high level of inter-marriage. In the towns Catholic and Orthodox churches were sited next to Muslim mosques and Jewish synagogues.

Bosnian 'nationalism' is a very contradictory. It only makes sense in so far as it rejects Great Serb, Great Croat or Muslim nationalism and counter-poses a multi-national Bosnia, in which all national rights are guaranteed and respected. Which is precisely why multi-national Bosnia is under attack by Serb and Croat forces, with the support of the EC and UN.

The Izetbegovic government has indicated it is willing to accept the concept of a 'Muslim' state. This is a big retreat from the multi-national, multi-religious Bosnia envisaged in the 'Platform of the Presidency' published in Sarajevo, 26th June 1992. Izetbegovic has also talked about the need to create a 'Muslim' army. This weakens the fight for Bosnian independence.

A 'Muslim' state would not stop the war. A new war, between Muslims who want a purely 'Muslim' state and those in favour of a multi-national and secular state, would break out. It would be a war of the countryside against the ethnically mixed cities; of barbarism against civilisation; religious intolerance against secularism. It would create further 'ethnic cleansing'.

If a 'Muslim' state was created where would the multi-national journalists of Oslobodjene go? What would happen to the multi-national population of Tuzla who refused to accept the nationalist division of their city? What would happen to the tens of thousands of Serbs and Croats who continue to defend Sarajevo? All those Serbs and Croats who have fought to defend Bosnia would find themselves unable to live in Serbia or Croatia or in a 'Muslim' State. That would be a defeat for internationalism and would legitimate further nationalist aggression.

Only the working class - Croat, Muslim and Serb - can prevent the destruction of Bosnia. This does not mean Muslims must wait until Croat or Serb workers reject reactionary Great Croat or Great Serb solutions. They clearly have the right self-defence. However, while the Bosnian army has the right to drive out Croat or Serb troops from Bosnian towns and villages they also have to guarantee the rights of the Croat and Serb populations.

Islamic fundamentalists have carried out massacres of Croat civilians and driven them out of towns. In Vares the fundamentalists raised a pro-Iranian flag. Although the fundamentalist forces operate, by and large, outside the control of the

Bosnian army, Croats or Serbs forced from their homes are unlikely to make such distinctions. The temporary military victories of fundamentalist forces are massively outweighed by their negative political consequences.

The Croats and Serbs prepared to fight against the policies and actions of Boban and Karadzic are still a very small minority. The majority still support the carve up of Bosnia. However, if Bosnia is to survive they have to be convinced of the need for a multi-national Bosnia. This can only be done if their national rights are respected.

There is growing disenchantment with the war. The recent rebellion of Serb soldiers in Banja Luka against Karadzic is a reflection of growing disillusionment.

This will not automatically lead to progressive developments. The Croatian and Serbian fascists will also try to channel discontent into even more virulent nationalism. The actions of the fundamentalists and demands for a 'Muslim' state weaken the ability to win over disillusioned Croats and Serbs to support for an independent Bosnia.

The task for socialists - inside and outside Bosnia - is to support the **multi-national** resistance. We have to try to rebuild links between workers throughout the former Yugoslavia. That can only be based on support for the right of Bosnia to self-determination and respect for the rights of national minorities. We oppose attempts to create 'ethnically pure' states and reject attacks by Muslim forces on Croat or Serb civilians.

Slogans such as 'Arm the Muslims' or 'Support the Muslims' reinforce the false image of the war in Bosnia as between nationally based 'warring factions'. They ignore the multi-national nature of the Bosnian resistance. They suggest the war can be won by the Muslims alone. They make dangerous concessions to the thoroughly reactionary concept of a 'Muslim' state. Above all they hold back the rebuilding of the workers' movement throughout ex-Yugoslavia, without which there can be no lasting solution to the national question.

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International Workers' Aid: Six Months Of Solidarity.

By Mick Woods

International Workers Aid was formally founded at a meeting held in Manchester at the end of October, 1993. Campaigns from Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Slovenia, Italy, France, Spain, Ireland as well as from Britain were in attendance. These national campaigns, already in existence for more than 6 months had an impressive history of achievements; building an organisation of solidarity throughout Europe, establishing links and winning the active support of Trade Unions in ex-Yugoslavia, succeeding in getting its first convoy to Tuzla and developing a bond with the workers of that region. The Manchester meeting established IWA on a genuine democratic foundation.

International Workers Aid began life as Red Aid for Bosnia in the spring of 1993 in Britain. On the weekend of June 5/6th it held a poorly attended demonstration and a not much better attended conference which agreed to;

- a) change its name to Workers Aid for Bosnia
- b) adopt a 10 point programme of action &
- c) send an aid convoy to Tuzla

The choice of Tuzla as a destination was not an accidental one. Tuzla remains a multi-ethnic town which embodies the spirit of both the old Yugoslavia and the Bosnian tradition. Tuzla is also a workers town. An industrial region with active trade unions with their own history of

international solidarity. Miners in Tuzla supported the British Miners during the great strike in 1984/5. Driving to Tuzla was going to be a political statement about the unity of European workers. The campaign also calls for an end to ethnic cleansing, for the right of Bosnia to exist and the lifting of the arms embargo,

The organisations initiating W.A.B. were The Campaign Against Fascism in Europe, Workers Revolutionary Party/Workers Press, *Socialist Outlook*, and the Bosnia Herzegovina Fund of Britain. The rapid growth of support and sponsorship following the conference reflected the energy of the campaign and the spontaneous public support for such an initiative. Soon the names of national trade unions, MPs, Councillors, trade union workplaces, immigrant & refugee organisations and women's organisations were swelling the list. Collections of money and aid began in workplaces, mosques, local communities and on the streets.

The campaign succeeded because it combined the politics of the 10 point programme, with the practical cutting edge of the aid convoy. Workers who had sat and watched the horrors of the war of aggression in Bosnia now felt they could get involved and do something.

The convoy left Dundee on August 9th. It had two trucks and its first donation of aid from the Timex strikers who understood the need for international solidarity in the face of an employer trying to shift their jobs to a low wage economy. They also gave us a box of tee shirts which were delivered to the Trade Unions in Tuzla.

As the convoy wound through Scotland, England and Wales caution and conservatism were thrown to the wind as donations of food, clothing, medicines and cash turned a convoy of two trucks into the convoy of ten trucks which left Dover on September 6th. On the way we visited, spoke at, were received in, collected on the streets of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Newcastle, Leeds, Liverpool, Kirkby, Leigh, Manchester, Salford, Oldham, Bradford, Huddersfield, Sheffield, Nottingham, Leicester, Birmingham, Swansea, Cardiff, London, Crawley and Brighton. We visited pit camps run by women from mining communities, slept in community centres, spoke at rallies, attended trade union meetings, were fed by immigrant organisations and made friends wherever we went. We were assisted by volunteers who staffed our office in London, motor mechanics in several towns who repaired our trucks and 100,000 colourful leaflets which passed on the message of the campaign.

While we were burning up the roads of Britain, international support was being organised in Europe, trucks were filled in Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Italy and Hungary. When the convoy hit the continent we had a full schedule of activities to attend from Lille in North Eastern France to Brno in Moravia and from Hamburg to Geneva. Major breakthroughs occurred in the 2 weeks of the European leg of the convoy. Contact was made with unions from France and Germany to Slovenia. We won the support of the CFTD and CGT trade union federations in France, our German leg collected over 8000DM and met up with two Swedish trucks in Berlin.

Having said all this the organisation was far from clockwork... few of the participants had previously either driven a truck, used a tachograph, driven a truck through customs, driven a truck on the right-hand side of the road, some had British visitors passports which were worthless in Slovenia, and few could speak any lan-

guage apart from English. In many ways it is a miracle that any of the trucks reached former-Yugoslavia given most of them were previously breadvans, post office trucks, and removal vans; most were old and all were obviously overloaded. We also faced, in parts, a schedule designed to be done in a BMW, not a truck with a maximum speed of 75kph.

Worse of all was that on our arrival in Jesenice it became clear that we had little idea of how to get to Tuzla. In an ideal world one could just drive to Zagreb, straight down the Belgrade road, right over the bridge at Zupanja and you would be 2 hours leisurely drive from Tuzla. The world being less than ideal means that the Belgrade highway has been cut by the Serbs at what is now called UN Protection Area West, the Bridge at Zupanja was blown-up by the HVO and you have to cross two frontlines and the major Serb supply corridor at Brcko.

So we investigated other routes...these didn't seem too jolly either. We also applied to the UN for assistance and got the bureaucratic run-around. We bombarded them with faxes from the European Labour movement to no avail. Eventually we got so fed up with the UN we blockaded the UNPROFOR HQ in Zagreb for 14 hours joining a demonstration of relatives of dead and missing Croats from the Vukovar area. In the course of this blockade we got a lot of support from ordinary Croatian people, a lot of media coverage and had a very interesting confrontation with the UNPROFOR which included having sand put in the engine of one of our trucks and being threatened with armoured cars. As interesting as all this was it got us no nearer to getting a route to Tuzla.

It was at this point that a Mrs Sek, a junior minister in the Croatian foreign ministry, suggested we take the route previously mentioned. More in hope than expectation we set out on this route only to quickly be interned at a charmless little town called Bjelovar by some fairly

charmless police who were less than convinced of the wisdom of Mrs Sek (a feeling some of us were to share in the weeks to come). After two days at Bjelovar we continued on to Zupanja where we were stopped by a much more charming police chief who also thought Mrs Sek had a good sense of humour and who wouldn't let us cross to Orasje (a small HVO-held enclave in Northern Bosnia) where we had been promised co-operation. Having been stopped we spent a week in Zupanja: a week where we tried, unsuccessfully, to pressurise the Croatian government into letting us across. This culminated in a two-day sit-down on the border road by the ferry which links Zupanja to Orasje. This was however getting us nowhere, a fact confirmed by a few of us who got across to Orasje to meet the town council, who made it pretty clear they were still friendly but orders from Mostar and the fact that the war was warming-up in those parts meant there was no way we could get through.

The Hungarian truck unloaded its goods in a village full of refugees called Gornai and the rest of us started to discuss the next move. Two positions were put; the WRP and others argued that we should unload or store our goods and return to our home countries to organise a larger convoy; Fourth International supporters, a SAC (Swedish independent union) member and some independents argued that given the non-feasibility of the Northern Route we should investigate running from Split.

The first position was adopted by the majority of the convoy; this seemed to me irrational given the experience of the previous few weeks and was the first sign that the WRP had adopted a form of tunnel vision around the Northern Route to the exclusion of all else. The political differences were probably to some extent confused by the desire/need of some comrades to leave and return to their homes and jobs but this is not to underplay or

devalue the genuine differences that had emerged.

A minority felt that we still had a mandate to get through to Tuzla and set off to acquire UN Blue Cards, which was difficult, and moved down to Split to prepare our trucks for the trip over the mountains.

[Unfortunately, while our convoy was nearing Tuzla, the WRP who had returned to Britain to attend the Manchester meeting, refused to establish a genuinely democratic basis for the future British campaign, or to accept the majority decisions of the International meeting held the next day. They walked out of IWA when they lost a vote, in order to construct a separate campaign dominated by their small band of supporters.]

We crossed the Herceg-Bosna border on November 4th without proper paperwork. We unloaded a trailer in Herceg-Bosna (it would not have been able to be driven over the mountains) and proceeded to Tomislavgrad. We managed to get to Vitez the following day by jumping between military convoys and weren't stopped. Getting out of Vitez was a little more difficult and we spent 3 hours being searched and threatened. Two of us tried to lighten the atmosphere by cracking open a bottle of brandy with the HVO, they brought some food and we chatted in fractured German as best we could. Having passed Vitez we were in free Bosnia: at the first BiH checkpoint we were given another drink and passed cigarettes around.

We then drove onto Visoko where we spent the night at a Canadian UN base before driving up to Vares and Tuzla the next day. Workers Aid had arrived.

In Tuzla we were treated as celebrities. The population of Tuzla had been following the progress of the convoy for some months and, rumours being what they are, had expected a mite more than 3 trucks. We unloaded our aid into the hands of the miners union who organised its distribution to workers' canteens and as food parcels. We met the mayor Selim Beslegic, the unions, the army and many ordinary

people. We were guests on the local TV and radio stations and gave the message loud and clear that the workers of Europe had not forgotten the people of Tuzla. We saw the fantastic efforts and resilience of the Tuzla people and also the poverty, dislocation, starvation and economic disaster caused by the war. We were able to record these experiences on video and get interviews that would help our future campaign.

Unfortunately the snows fell early in Bosnia and we were obliged to abandon our trucks near Vares on the return trip because we had no snowchains. We hope to be able to recover them this spring and return them to Split. A subsequent convoy from Sweden was also forced to unload its aid in Zagreb due to adverse weather conditions and unsuitable vehicles for the route.

We learnt much about the mechanics of getting aid through and feel we can now do a professional job of assisting Tuzla. This was thoroughly discussed at an IWA meeting at Copenhagen, on December 11/12th, the first after the Manchester meeting, and the following points were agreed.

- 1) That we should allocate 60,000DM to buying and supporting 3 four-wheel-drive trucks, a warehouse in Split plus volunteers to run aid into Tuzla from Spring onwards.
- 2) To organise a convoy to Split in late march/early April.
- 3) To concentrate our aid on food; especially on collecting and delivering flour, sugar and oil, these being the staple foods in Bosnia.
- 4) To organise a European tour of unions from ex-Yugoslavia; Nezavisimost an anti-war, anti-Milosevic union from Serbia, The SSSH (United Autonomous Trade Union of Croatia) which gave us so much

assistance in Zagreb, Zupanja and Split, and the Slovenian Metalworkers Union.

These projects give us achievable goals for the first part of 1994. The IWA campaign across Europe has already received impressive sponsorships and financial support. A new 'rolling convoy' began in early January, 1994, with lorries from Sweden and Denmark. In Britain the campaign has established groups in many cities, some of which are funding their own lorries, it has organised days of action calling on the UN to allow the opening of Tuzla airport and distributed large quantities of publicity material.

Obviously any plans we have are contingent on the development of the war and diplomacy in the region. However, the campaign will be on full speed ahead throughout the winter months. We will be developing our political campaigning around the reopening of Tuzla airport and against the arms embargo and against any military intervention by the Western powers.

Opening Tuzla Airport: a crucial step

By Dave Packer

Tuzla airport is the key to opening up the north of Bosnia to medical and food aid. It is the quickest way of stopping mass starvation this winter in a very densely populated area.

Some UN aid supplies have reached the city, but it is a drop in the ocean. Tuzla's original population of 200,000 (over 500,000 in the Tuzla region) has swollen to nearly a million with a massive influx of refugees escaping ethnic cleansing. Today this population is even more desperate for basic supplies than it was last winter.

Since the Greater Serbian force achieved their primary war aim in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the creation of the northern corridor linking Knin Krajina and Bosanska Krajina with Serbia itself, Tuzla has been cut off from the key northern route to Croatia and Zagreb.

This Serb-held corridor, crucial to its whole military strategy, is now a heavily militarised zone. At the same time the main alternative supply route, in the south-west from the coastal port of Split, has to all intents and purposes been cut by the Croat HVO and paramilitary forces.

Only occasional convoys can now negotiate this difficult and mountainous route. Despite some recent military successes, the territory held by Bosnian forces is all but cut off from the outside world.

So, Tuzla airport is a key point of entry into a large population centre.

Why has the UN persistently refused to open it to commercial flights or aid airlifts? They claim that the use of the airport is too risky because it is too vulnerable to Serbian artillery and long-range aircraft.

However unlike Sarajevo's airport, which is even vulnerable to sniper fire, Tuzla's is not overlooked by such weapons. In any case UN aircraft use Tuzla airport regularly for military and diplomatic purposes. Why then is the UN prevaricating when the airport's closure threatens so many lives?

The answer lies in the military and political objectives of the imperialist powers, who control UN policy. Their cynicism knows no bounds.

The main imperialist powers have no strategic interests in the area, unlike the Middle East, apart from the medium term aim of dragging the Balkans into the capitalist world market and restoring the rule of the capitalist law of value with the minimum of disruption.

But they are concerned with the delicate balance in the Eastern Mediterranean, particularly between Greece and Turkey and on the issue of Macedonia.

As a result we have not seen a large scale military intervention, but only one that can increase imperialism's political involvement in the region and help regulate and further their diplomatic aims.

They have not the slightest interest in the suffering of the Bosnian peoples, their democratic rights or national aspirations. The UN has, in practice, extended support to those it perceives as most rapidly bringing stability.

Increasingly the people imperialism does business with are Milosevic and Tuzman. The Vance-Owen plan and its successors have only legitimised Serbian aggression and ethnic cleansing. The arms embargo, far from stopping the creation

of what Douglas Hurd has cynically called 'a level killing field', has only re-enforced the initial military superiority of Serbia and to a lesser extent Croatia.

The purpose has become increasing transparent. The arms embargo and the reluctance to let aid go through are designed to force the surrender of Bosnia and create a small, poverty stricken and overpopulated Muslim 'bantustan'.

The continued closure and tight control of Tuzla airport is crucial for the UN's

policing of the arms embargo on Bosnia. If the UN were to open the airport under the control of the Bosnian government the arms embargo would be more difficult to enforce.

Socialists do not remain neutral in the face of ethnic cleansing: multi-ethnic Bosnia lives - no appeasement of aggressors and ethnic cleansers - open Tuzla airport!

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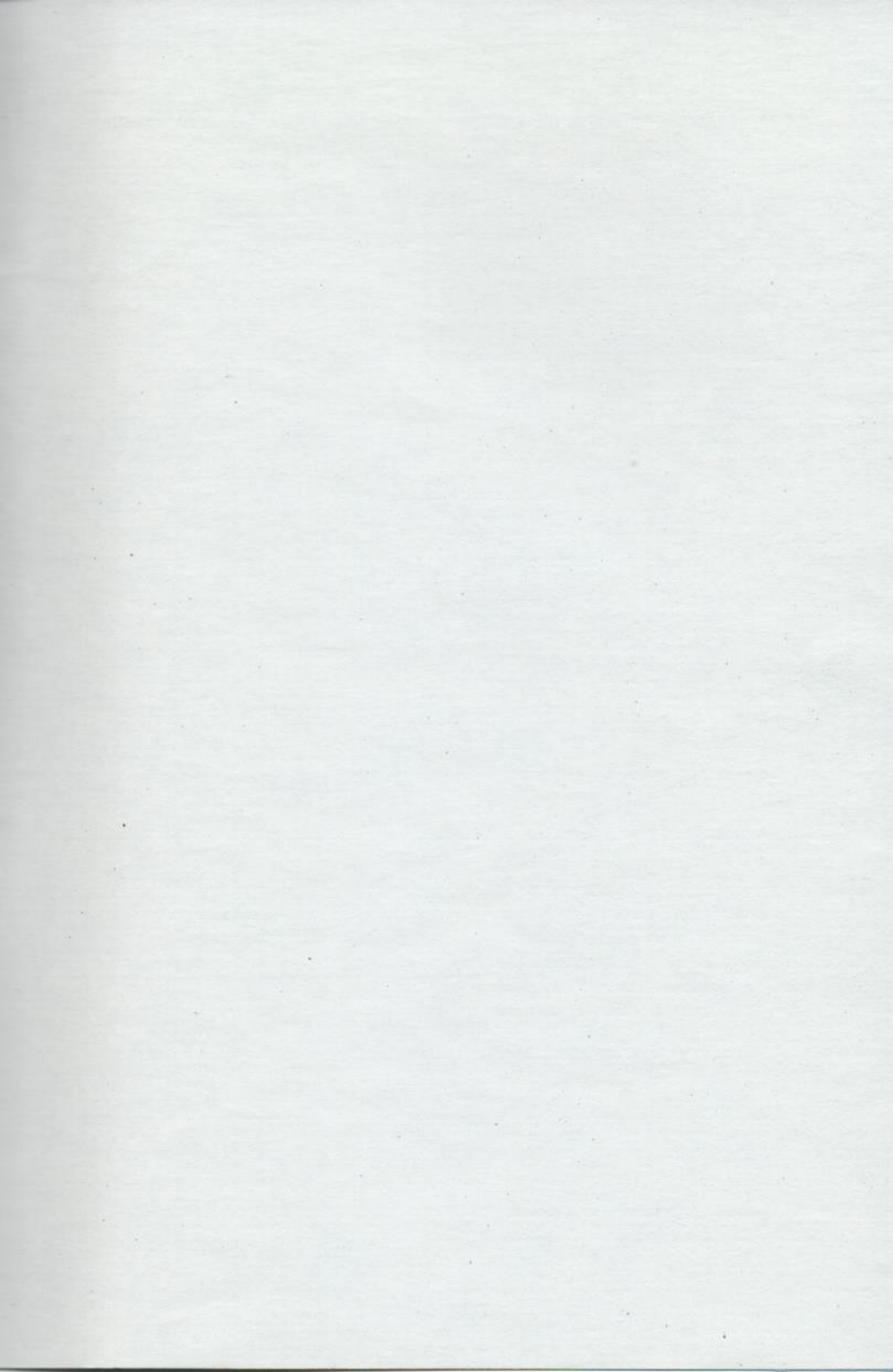
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Bosnia 1994: Armageddon In Europe

**Why socialists support multi-ethnic Bosnia
against Serbia's war • Edited By Geoff Ryan**

Against all the odds, the International Workers' Aid convoy travelled through the war in central Bosnia to bring aid from working class people all over Europe to the working people of Tuzla, a besieged mining area where Muslims, Serbs and Croats live together.

In this pamphlet:

GEOFF RYAN, author of *The Murder of Bosnia*, explains the background to the war, and the way forward socialists advance;

SELIM BESLAGIC, Mayor of Tuzla, explains the war's effects to JENNY MEES, a Belgian member of the convoy;

MICK WOODS, a member of the convoy to Tuzla tells the six-month history of International Workers' Aid ;

DAVE PACKER, a leader of the Fourth International and a member of the *Socialist Outlook* editorial board, explains the international campaign for the opening of Tuzla airport.

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