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Review

World politics after the bombing of Yugoslavia



The US prepares to confront China

■ 10 years after 1989 ■ International alliances against imperialism
■ NATO's goals in Yugoslavia ■ Myth of the 'new economy'

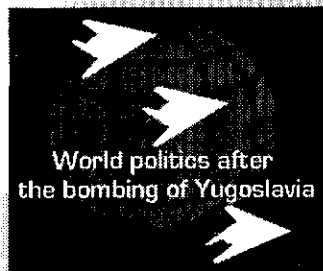
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Ten years after 1989

Ten years after 1989, the consequences of the re-introduction of capitalism into eastern Europe are clear and acknowledged even by some of the international agencies which sponsored the process.

The World Bank reports in its 1999 *World Development Indicators*: 'In 1989 about 14 million people in the transition economies were living under a poverty line of \$4 a day. By the mid-1990s that number was about 147 million, one person in three. The distribution of income in the communist period was relatively egalitarian, primarily because of a relatively flat wage distribution, but also because of the virtual absence of income from property and the redistribution of income through social transfers... Today, some eight years later, income distribution has worsened sharply, particularly in the former Soviet Union... the stress is showing in the declining or stagnating life expectancy and sharply worsening adult mortality. Today, for example, the probability that a 15-year-old Ukrainian male will survive until his sixtieth birthday is a mere 65 per cent, down from 72 per cent in 1980. The Europe and Central Asia region is the only part of the developing world with rising adult mortality rates. Even Sub-Saharan Africa, with its AIDS epidemic, is seeing a reduction in adult mortality.'

The proportion of the population living in poverty increased between 1987-88 and 1993-95 from 2.1 per cent to 14 per cent in Poland, from 1.3 per cent to 39 per cent in Romania, from 0.1 per cent to 29 per cent in the Baltic states, from 0.2 per cent to 66 per cent in Moldova, from 2.2 per cent to 44 per cent in Russia, from 1 per cent to 63 per cent in Ukraine, and from 6.5 per cent to 53 per cent in Central Asia (*World Development Indicators*, 1999).

This situation has not improved. Another study, the United Nations 1999 *Human Development Report* stresses that even where there has been some resumption of economic growth, as in Poland, the historically unprecedented rise in inequality which has accompanied the introduction of capitalism, has ensured that any benefits accrue to a tiny minority of the population – the new capitalist class: 'The transition from centrally planned to market economies was accompanied by large changes in the distribution of national wealth and income. Data on income inequality indicate that these changes were the fastest ever recorded.'

The most comprehensive survey is by the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP), *Transition 1999 – Europe and CIS Human Development Report*. This states: 'The "transition" in most of the countries in the former Soviet bloc in central and eastern Europe and the CIS is a euphemistic term for what in reality has been a Great Depression. The extent of the collapse in output and the skyrocketing nature of inflation have been historically unprecedented. The consequences for human security have been calamitous. By conservative estimates, over 100 million people have been thrown into poverty, and considerably more hover precariously just above subsistence.'

The report states that the introduction of capitalism into the region has 'literally been lethal for a great many people' with nearly 9.7 million men who would still be alive today had capitalism not been introduced.

It notes that 'Before the 1990s, countries of central and eastern Europe, and the Commonwealth of Independent

States, were notable for providing their populations with a high degree of basic security. People's right to full, lifetime employment was guaranteed. Although cash incomes were low, they were stable and secure. Many basic consumption goods were subsidised and regularly supplied. People had food security and were adequately clothed and housed. They had free and guaranteed access to education and health. They were assured pensions when they retired and regularly benefited from many other forms of social protection.' But, since 1989: 'The whole previous comprehensive system of social protection has been allowed to crumble.'

Moreover, on the latest available comparable figures most countries are still poorer than they were ten years ago: 'By 1997, only Slovenia had a higher national income than it had in 1989, while Poland had finally recovered to that level.' For the former Soviet Union, national income under capitalism is barely half what it was under a planned economy.

The report itemises what it calls 'the human costs of transition':

- The biggest is the decline in life expectancy which has 'meant that several million people have not survived the 1990s who would have done so if the life expectancy levels achieved in the 1980s had been maintained.'
- The second is the spread of diseases like TB which had been virtually eliminated prior to 1989.



● Poverty increased from 4 per cent of the population of eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in 1988 to 32 per cent in 1994, with '60 per cent of children suffering from some form of malnutrition' in Poland, the number of pregnant women suffering from anaemia in Russia tripling between 1989 and 1994, and '20-50 per cent of children' in Moldova suffering from rickets in 1996.

● An immense regression of the position of women in society: 'During the Soviet era, quotas for women helped to incorporate them into positions of economic and political decision-making and authority' Since 1989: 'Women have found themselves progressively pushed out of public life. Simultaneously their access to paid employment has declined and their total work burden both within the household and outside it has increased. The increased work burden for women has been directly related to cutbacks in social services and the withdrawal of the state from the provision of social protection.' At the same time: 'Not only has women's economic security been on the decline, but also their personal security has been under increasing threat. Violence against women has been on the rise.'

● Massive cuts in spending on education – down 50 per cent in Bulgaria, for example. Women have suffered disproportionately: 'Expenditures on nursery and other pre-school facilities have been slashed; in countries of the former Soviet Union more than 30,000 are reported to have been closed between 1991 and 1995' – which has 'increased the burden of household work on women and diminished their opportunities for employment.'

● Unemployment has risen from negligible levels to more than 10 per cent across the region.

The report concludes: 'There has been a tragic breakdown in human security with respect to access to social services and social protection. There is no longer any secure entitlement to a decent education, a healthy life or adequate nutrition. With rising mortality rates and new and potentially devastating epidemics on the horizon, life itself is increasingly at risk.'

A 1999 report by the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) looked specifically at the position of women. It concluded that since 1989 14 million jobs held by women have disappeared, state-supported childcare services have collapsed, women's life expectancy has decreased in 16 out of the 27 countries studied and the proportion of women in parliaments has fallen from a third to 10 per cent.

Even in east Germany, with the highest living standards of the former east European states unemployment is around 20 per cent, double that in the west and an opinion poll published by *Der Spiegel* in October 1999, found that easterners think their old regime was better on seven out of nine counts including healthcare, education, housing provision, industrial training, law and order, gender equality, and social security. Unification is now seen as colonisation, with westerners occupying 75 per cent of top civil service jobs, 90 per cent of professorships in universities and 99 per cent of top jobs in industry and the armed forces in the east. (*Financial Times*, 4 November)

These figures demonstrate a simple fact: for the majority of the population capitalism is worse than the planned economies which it replaced.

Taking a wider perspective, the advance of capitalism into eastern Europe and the dissolution of the Soviet Union, have given the greatest impetus to imperialism, and US imperialism in particular, since the period before the first world war. As a

result, imperialist exploitation of the majority of the population of the world has been enormously intensified – with, according to the World Bank, living standards in sub-Saharan Africa, for example, lower today than in 1970.

This strengthening of imperialism has inevitably led to an immense increase in human inequality within and between states – the gap between the income of the 20 per cent of the world's people in the richest countries increased from 30 times that of the 20 per cent in the poorest states in 1960, to 74 times as much in 1997.

Moreover, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the only military counter-weight to the US, has allowed this rising exploitation to be enforced by naked military violence – from the Gulf war, through the racist intervention in Somalia to the bombing of Yugoslavia. Direct colonialism has also re-emerged – with the creation of NATO 'protectorates' in Bosnia and Kosovo – and all NATO states now committed to reconfiguring their armed forces for *offensive* military action.

While the main blows have fallen upon the peoples of the third world, the former Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, the new international relationship of forces, has given Capital the opportunity to attack the welfare states created in western Europe after the second world war – amid a shift of the entire political spectrum to the right, including the biggest votes for racist and fascist parties since the 1930s.

Nor will it end there. The world is now more threatened by the use of nuclear weapons than at any time since Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Washington is working furiously to regain the ability to use its nuclear arsenal with impunity by developing anti-ballistic missile systems – as it embarks upon a vast new arms race in Asia designed to confront and break open the Chinese economy.

This dynamic unleashed by 1989 was predictable and predicted. The populations of eastern Europe and to a lesser extent the former Soviet Union were so deeply alienated and demoralised by the crimes of the bureaucracy that many of them thought capitalism would be better. They were wrong. Public ownership of industry, planning and control of foreign trade, in reality, protected those economies and the living standards of their populations from the far more powerful advanced capitalist states. Public ownership and planning allowed their industrialisation and the provision of high levels of social welfare, security and education than would have existed under capitalism.

As Trotsky argued until the end of his life: 'The fall of the bureaucratic dictatorship, if it were not replaced by a new socialist power, would thus mean a return to capitalist relations with a catastrophic decline of industry and culture.' This

Estimated poverty in transition countries, 1987-88 and 1993-95

	Poverty headcount index (%)	
	1987-88	1993-95
Poland	2.1	14
Romania	1.3	39
Baltics	0.1	29
Moldova	0.2	66
Russian Federation	2.2	44
Ukraine	1.0	63
Central Asia	6.5	53
All transition economies	13.6	40

Source: World Bank 1999 Development Indicators

was because: 'The Soviet system with its nationalised industry and monopoly of foreign trade, in spite of all its contradictions and difficulties, is a productive system for the economic and cultural independence of the country...What is involved [in the restoration of capitalism]...is not the introduction of some disembodied democracy but returning Russia to the capitalist road. But what would Russian capitalism look like in its second edition?... A capitalist Russia could not occupy even the third rate position to which Czarist Russia was predestined by the course of the war. Russian capitalism today would be a dependent, semi-colonial capitalism without any prospects.'

Socialist Action shared this view in 1989 and argued: 'Far from more liberal and progressive world order emerging from the process leading to the overthrow of the bureaucracy from the right in Eastern Europe, capitalism is throwing back the progress of humanity on a world scale more than at any point since World War II. (1989 - a turning point in world history, May 1990).

Immediately following Yeltsin's assumption of power in Russia in August 1991, we wrote: 'Economic catastrophe is sweeping Eastern Europe and the USSR with the attempt to re-introduce capitalism. It is bringing the rise of racism, reactionary nationalism, and moves to capitalist dictatorship. Stalinism in eastern Europe, by repelling the working class from socialism, has brought these countries to the brink of disaster. The assault on the working class, and the violent moves of these societies to the right, are also discrediting those in the West who believed that the events after 1989 in eastern Europe - the introduction of capitalist governments - represented a way forward. Instead they confront the working class with the threat of the greatest defeats in its history and the unfolding of a period of unparalleled reaction in Europe - and internationally.' (1917, 1941, 1991 - *the Russian revolution fights for its life*, September 1991).

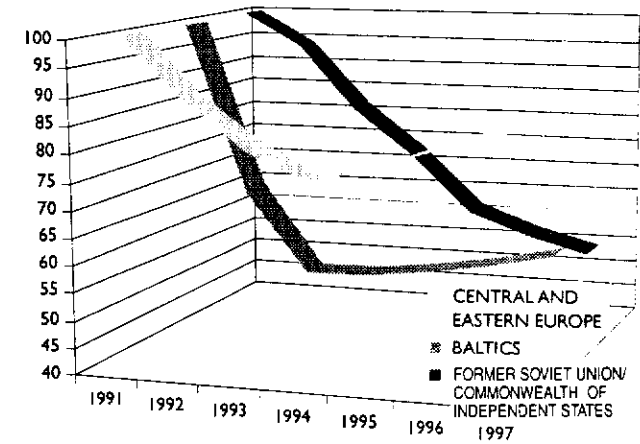
This view was rejected, at that time, not only by social democracy and Eurocommunism, but also by many who claimed adherence to Marxism. They argued that the economic base of the Soviet Union, and eastern Europe, was either no different to capitalism, and therefore not worth defending, or that the USSR was actually *worse* than capitalism.

The former school of thought was represented in Britain by Socialist Workers' Party leader Tony Cliff's theory of state capitalism. Consistent with this, *Socialist Worker* declared on 31 August 1991: "Communism has collapsed" our newspapers and TV declare. It is a fact that should have every socialist rejoicing.'

The view that the USSR was *worse* than capitalism was adopted by *Workers' Liberty*, who announced that the introduction of capitalism into eastern Europe 1989-91 was such a great advance that they called upon Yeltsin to crush opposition to it by banning the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

A variant of these views was put forward by Ernest Mandel, the Fourth International and some of the editorial board of *New Left Review*. The Fourth International, held *theoretically* the view that the Eastern European economic systems were superior to capitalism, but in practice supported the events leading to the restoration of capitalism - embellishing them with the new concept of a classless 'democratic revolution'. *New Left Review* editorial board member, Tariq Ali, dedicated his book on the Soviet Union, *Revolution from above*, to Boris Yeltsin 'whose political courage has made him an important symbol throughout the country.'

Cumulative change in real GDP 1991-1997
(Index 1990=100)



Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *The World Economy at the Beginning of 1998*

The historical balance-sheet of these theories is now clear. The dynamic of the events in 1989 was not a challenge to the bureaucracy from the left, but the restoration of capitalism from the right. That led to everything Trotsky analysed it would - economic catastrophe, social reaction and a colossal new impetus to imperialism. Those who supported that dynamic placed themselves on the side of forces which have reduced hundreds of millions of people to desperate poverty and brought the world closer to the use of nuclear weapons by imperialism than at any time since 1945. Most such forces have continued their political degeneration. A few, such as the SWP and *New Left Review*, have drawn back from some of its practical consequences - by opposing the bombing of Yugoslavia, for example. Having done so they should also reconsider the theories which failed the test of the greatest political events since the second world war.

This is not simply a question of theoretical consistency. It has immense practical significance. US imperialism is now turning its attention towards the re-conquest of China - whose economic dynamism is based not on capitalism, but upon the rejection of the policies applied by the IMF in eastern Europe. As a result, in just 20 years the Chinese planned economy has quadrupled in size, with commensurate rising living standards.

Consider what the re-introduction of capitalism would mean for China's population of 1.3 billion people. Despite its absolute size, in terms of income per head China is a developing country, ranking 145th in the world, behind such states as Papua New Guinea, Morocco, El Salvador, Paraguay, Costa Rica or Botswana. In Russia, capitalism brought a fall in GDP per head of 43 per cent in just five years. Starting with living standards little more than a fifth of those in the Soviet Union in 1990, an equivalent fall in China would make the difference between life and death for literally millions of people.

The re-introduction of capitalism into eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union was the greatest defeat of the international working class since fascism. By strengthening imperialism, it inaugurated a colossal regression in human civilisation and culture. The next period of advance of the international working class movement, and humanity, will be built upon, and is arising out of, the struggle against the consequences for the world of those events.

After the bombing of Yugoslavia

The US prepares to confront China

The NATO bombing of Yugoslavia set a precedent for unilateral military action by the United States and its allies outside of any framework of international law — making clear that such wars would not be subject to vetoes by China or Russia within the United Nations Security Council. This was not an 'accident' necessitated by the urgency for humanitarian intervention, as NATO claimed. The bombing was meticulously planned many months in advance. The destruction of the post-World War Two international political order was rather a central goal of the bombing and the way in which it was launched.

This was confirmed by the explicit codification of the new doctrine of unilateral US-led military action into NATO's new strategic concept adopted on 23 April, at the height of the bombing. This provides for offensive NATO military action, with or without the endorsement of the United Nations, anywhere in western Europe, eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union. The new doctrine envisages the accelerated development of NATO rapid deployment forces capable of projecting military force far outside of NATO's borders. This transformation of NATO — from an avowedly 'defensive' alliance to an explicitly offensive military posture — accompanied the integration of its first members from eastern Europe, the conclusion of a parallel series of military treaties in Asia.

These moves deeply threaten any state in the world which finds itself in conflict with the economic, political or strategic interests of the United States.

The alignment of states and governments during NATO's 11 week bombing campaign clearly demonstrated that all of the imperialist states — in western Europe, Canada and Japan aim to share in the spoils of this new age of colonialism, and, in addition, the new capitalist states in eastern Europe would also like to get their snouts into the trough.

They were backed in this by leaderships of virtually every social democratic party in western Europe — posing themselves as the

champions of the emerging European Union imperialism, and clarifying their utter incapacity to stand up not only to European capital, but also to the United States.

Two states in particular now preoccupy US military planners — Russia and China. Russia is a permanent US concern because it

'preparations for confrontation with China now form the central axis of US strategic planning'

is the only state capable of destroying the United States. But, since 1991, its government — the Yeltsin administration — has been a puppet of Washington.

US goals towards Russia centre upon keeping the Yeltsin entourage or an acceptable successor in power, while continuing to grind down the country's economic and military capacity through the operation of the capitalist economic reform which commenced when Yeltsin took office. Since 1991, the Soviet Union has been dissolved, NATO has expanded to the borders of the former Soviet Union and occupied a large part of the Balkans. Now the US is seeking military cooperation with states of the former Soviet Union itself — building links with Ukraine, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Moldova with a view to pulling the Commonwealth of Independent States apart and securing control of the export routes for Caspian oil.

The delicate issue of tactics constraining

the US, is the need to pursue this course without provoking a reaction from the Russian population so violent that Yeltsin and his would-be successors are ejected from office. Such a development could set in motion a dynamic of convergence of key states of the former Soviet Union to withstand the destruction of their societies at the behest of the West and the mafocracies it has spawned. In such an event, which remains possible given the human catastrophe which capitalism and the West have produced in Russia, the US is already creating other means of pressure — notably the ability to foment wars along the southern borders of Russia and the option provided by NATO expansion, of deploying nuclear weapons right up to the former Soviet borders.

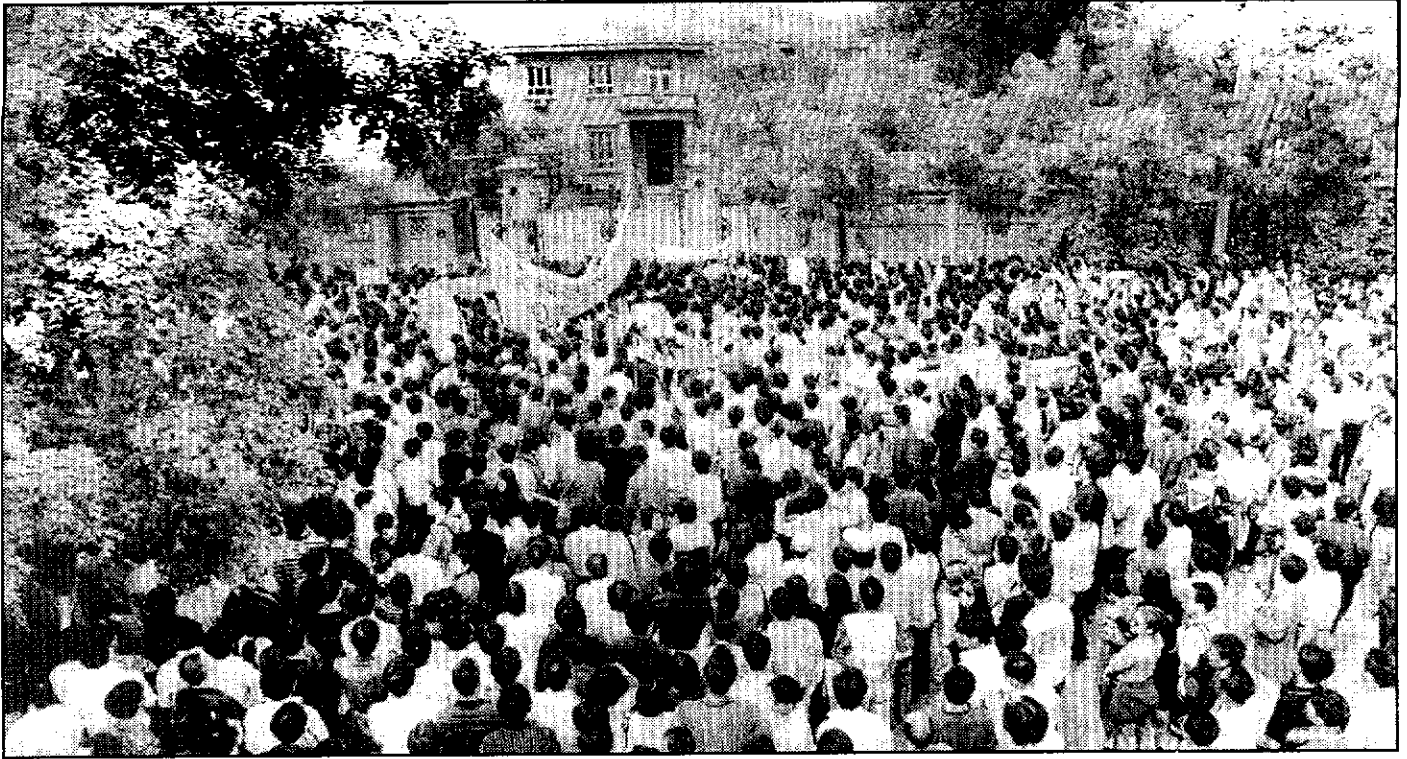
Having achieved as much as is currently possible in Russia, however, the central confrontation for which the United States is now preparing is with China. Why?

China is not a capitalist state. Yet for more than twenty years it has been the most successful large economy in the world in terms of economic growth and rising living standards.

On its present rate of growth, the Chinese economy may reach the same size as the United States as early as 2010-20. Although this will

be in a country far poorer than the US, in terms of income per head, American military planners are obsessively aware of the fact that there is a direct relationship between the size of any economy and its military potential. US preparations for confrontation with China — which now form the central axis of US strategic planning — are based on total determination to do everything possible to forestall China becoming an economic, military and political force capable of standing up to the United States in the way in which the Soviet Union was able to do at the height of its power.

At its strongest, the Soviet economy was never more than roughly half the size of the US economy. Yet the USSR, on that economic basis, acquired the capacity to destroy the US many times over — even though, contrary to CIA propaganda, its offensive military potential never approached that of the US. While income per head in China in 2010 will be



Demonstrators outside the British Embassy in Beijing after NATO bombed the Chinese embassy in Belgrade

much lower than that of the Soviet Union at the peak of its power, let alone the US, the absolute size of its economy, if unchecked, will eventually enable it to acquire a similar military level to that enjoyed previously by the Soviet Union – more than enough to deter any attack.

Having spent 40 years and trillions of dollars in the so-called Cold War – which included real wars, civil wars and military coups in which millions of people were slaughtered by the US or its proxies in Korea, Vietnam, Latin America, Africa and the Middle East – the US has no intention of allowing another military super-power capable of constraining it to emerge in the world.

Indeed its entire military doctrine, adopted following the dissolution of the USSR, is directed to that end.

The military capacity of the Soviet Union was the most important constraint on the level of military force deployed by the United States in the post world war two period – and that in turn had critical political results. It helped a third of the population of the world break out of capitalism altogether. It also made possible the fall of colonialism as the European imperialist powers were forced to retreat for fear that national liberation movements would radicalise in the direction of the socialist revolutions which followed the second world in the Balkans, Asia and ultimately Cuba.

Without the threat to the existence of the US posed by a nuclear armed USSR, there can be little doubt that Washington would have used nuclear weapons in Korea in 1950-53 and later in Vietnam. It could not do so and, as a result, Korea became the first war which the US failed to win – ending in stale-

mate – while Vietnam became the first war in history which the US actually lost. The re-

'The US' new strategic doctrine is directed not simply at socialist threats but at any potential capitalist competitor'

sults of the latter were traumatic – making it politically impossible for the US to use direct military intervention to prop up the Shah of Iran, or its ally the Somoza dictatorship in Nicaragua or, following the 1975 fall of the Caetano dictatorship in Portugal, to prevent the Cuban assistance to the MPLA in Angola which defeated the South African army and triggered the process which culminated in the collapse of the Apartheid regime.

Although none of the post-second world war socialist revolutions and national liberation struggles were instigated by the Soviet bureaucracy, and many, like the Chinese and Yugoslav revolutions were explicitly opposed by it, Soviet military assistance, whether in the form of arms supplies or indirectly in deterring a higher level of US violence, was critical to their success. That is why the central goal of US foreign policy, between the immediate aftermath of the second world war and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 was to contain, roll back and eliminate the Soviet Union. That is why trillions of dollars were spent on the Cold War, millions of lives sacrificed in Korea and Vietnam, proxy wars fought around the globe and US military bases established along the entire perimeter of the Soviet Union. In particular, following its defeat in Vietnam, the US drew the conclusion that the only way to avoid

future such catastrophes would be to intensify its pressure upon the Soviet Union – above all through the new spiral in the arms race under Reagan – with a view to weakening or if possible eliminating it. It succeeded in this.

But the victory in the Cold War posed the US with the necessity of re-defining its strategic objectives. The resources necessary to fund the final twist to the arms race which cracked the Soviet economy, bought Gorbachev to power and ultimately bought down the USSR, had been beyond the means of the United States alone. The US was only able to finally defeat the Soviet Union because it was able to mobilise the resources of the *international* capitalist economy to fund Reagan's new arms race. Even so, the strain was immense and contributed to the transformation of the US from the world's biggest creditor state to its biggest debtor by the end of the 1980s.

Moreover, by the end of the Cold War, even though the most powerful non-capitalist state in the world had been dissolved, the fundamental bases of US global hegemony were also being eroded.

Bases of US power

US dominance of the capitalist world after the second world war had been based upon three pillars. First, it was by far the most dynamic capitalist economy in the world – two of its main rivals, Germany and Japan, were in ruins and the third, Britain, was totally dependent on US financial support. Second, the US effectively controlled the linch-pins of the emerging world capitalist economic system – symbolised by the role of the dollar. Third, only the US had the military capacity to fight a war with the

world politics after the bombing of Yugoslavia

Soviet Union – making German and Japanese imperialisms totally militarily dependent on the United States.

Each of these pillars came under threat. One, by the end of the Cold War, while the US remained by far the *largest* economy in the world – with more than double the GDP of Japan and more than four times that of Germany – its *relative* dominance had declined dramatically vis a vis Germany and what was then the European Community through the 1950s and 1960s and then Japan and South East Asia through the 1970s and 1980s.

Second, the launch of the Euro in 1999 marked the first potential threat to the supremacy of the dollar in the world economy.

Third, on the military and political level, the cement of the threat of the Soviet Union and socialist revolution, which had bound Japan and Germany to the US throughout the Cold War, was enormously weakened by the restoration of capitalism into eastern Europe in 1989, the capitalist reunification of Germany in 1990 and dissolution of the USSR in 1991.

In this context, the framework within which the debate on the redefinition of US strategic objectives took place was absolutely explicit: *how to retain US world dominance in the post-Cold War world*. This was spelled out with brutal clarity, showing just how laughable is the idea peddled by some western journalists of the supposed 'threat' of a US retreat to isolationism: 'In a broad new policy statement the Defense Department asserts that the US political and military mission is the post cold war era will be to ensure that no rival superpower is allowed to emerge in Western Europe, Asia or the territory of the former Soviet Union. The draft takes the position that 'no collection of nations can aspire to regional dominance because that would put them on the path to global rivalry with the American super-power'. The classified document makes the case for a world dominated by one super-power. The new draft sketches a world in which there is one dominant military power whose leaders "must maintain the mechanisms for deterring potential competitors from even aspiring to a larger regional or global role.' (*International Herald Tribune*, 9 March 1993)

Having established itself as the world's sole superpower the US was, and is, determined to retain that position by all means necessary.

Thus the United States' new strategic doctrine took account not simply of socialist threats to its world dominance – particularly in the event of an anti-US regime coming to power in Russia – but also of the need to forestall any potential capitalist competitor to the US. For example, emerging in the form of a German led European Union or a Japanese led East Asian regional alliance deciding to acquire nuclear weapons.

These threats exist precisely because the

balance of forces between the imperialist powers which emerged from the second world war has changed. This is indeed why it is impossible to abolish inter-imperialist conflict. As Lenin put it, writing during the first world war:

'The only conceivable basis under capitalism for the division of spheres of influence, interests, colonies, etc, is a calculation of the strength of those participating, their general economic, financial, military strength, etc. And the strength of these participants in the division does not change to an equal degree, for the even development of different under-



resist its relative decline. In this it has, to date, had considerable success. In particular, its has been able to use its position as the economic, political and military linchpin of the international capitalist system to draw upon not only its own resources, but also those of its capitalist rivals. From

the point of view of US imperialism this is precisely the function of the global financial liberalisation of the last two decades – to allow it to draw upon surplus value generated elsewhere in the world to fund investment in the United States.

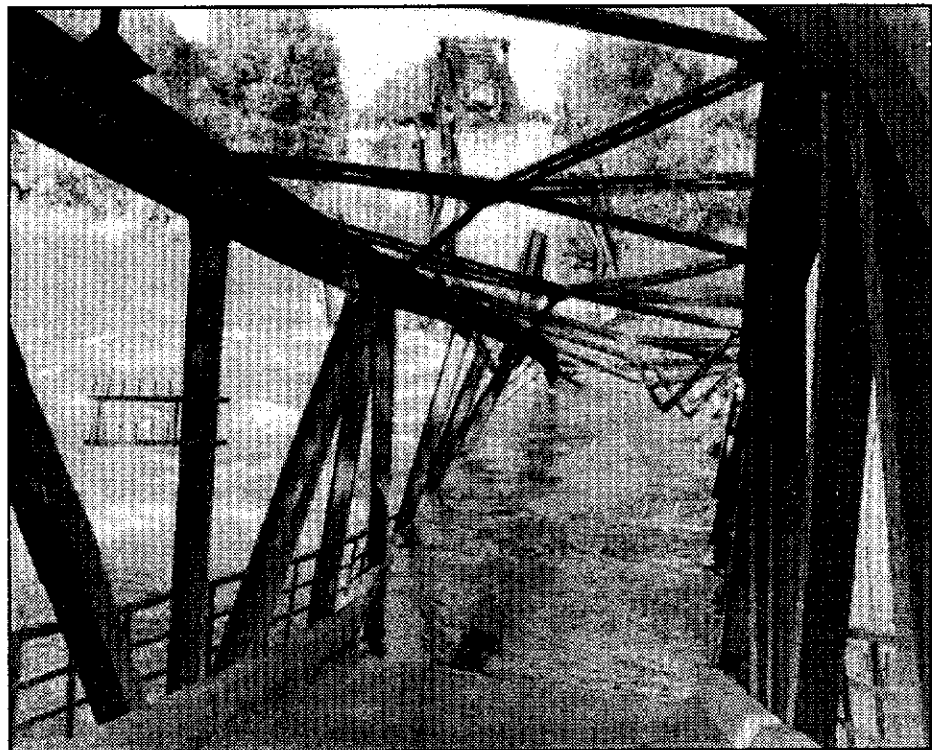
As a result, from the locomotive of the world capitalist economy in the 1950s and 1960s, the US has been transformed into a parasite upon it – whereby its economic growth takes place at the expense of its capitalist rivals. Thus, first western Europe from the mid-1970s, then Japan from the end of the 1980s, have fallen behind the US in terms of their rates of economic growth. For the weakest capitalist states the results have been catastrophic – with Africa and the Middle East from the beginning of the 1970s, Latin America from the 1980s, and eastern Europe from the beginning of the 1990s, being thrown backwards.

The most powerful capitalist states have inevitably tried to resist this process. That is the significance, on the economic plane, of the launch of the Euro and the continuing obstacles being placed in the way of the attempts by American capital, particularly since the financial crash in the summer of 1997, to penetrate East Asia and Japan. While the third world states have less power to resist, such

'NATO, not the EU, has been established as the leadership of the capitalist colonisation of Eastern Europe'

takings, trusts, branches of industry, or countries is impossible under capitalism. Half a century ago Germany was a miserable insignificant country, if her capitalist strength is compared with the Britain of the time; Japan compared with Russia in the same way. Is it 'conceivable' that in ten or twenty years' time the relative strength of the imperialist powers will have remained unchanged? It is out of the question.' (Collected Works, volume X, p295)

The United States ruling class has no intention of allowing its position to be displaced by the rise of its capitalist rivals. It has deployed all of the weapons at its disposal – economic, financial, political and military to



diverse phenomena as the attempt of Iraq to halt the fall in oil prices by invading Kuwait in 1990, the imposition of exchange controls by Malaysia in response to the East Asian financial crash and the rise to power of the left bourgeois populist regime of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, are all manifestations of the pressure to resist the economic exactions of the United States.

The strategy of the United States in these circumstances is to use not only all of the economic levers at its disposal, but also to exploit its dominance on the one field where its pre-eminence over all of its rivals remains entirely unchallenged – the military – to further its economic and strategic interests.

Thus the Gulf war was used to demonstrate that only the US can defend the access to the oil reserves of the Middle East upon which both the European and Japanese economies are totally dependent.

Similarly, the US intervened into the crisis in Yugoslavia where Germany was intent upon creating a new sphere of influence. In Bosnia, it blocked every attempt at a peaceful resolution, to demonstrate that only Washington had the military capacity to defeat the Bosnian Serbs, with the result that under the Dayton Agreement Bosnia is now effectively a NATO colony.

In relation to Kosovo, by encouraging the KLA with the promise of eventual NATO intervention, and engineering the Rambouillet talks to present Yugoslavia with demands which no sovereign state could accept, the US created the conditions for the NATO military intervention which once again made clear the complete military dependence of the European Union upon the United States.

Tony Blair has sought to utilise this situation to try resolve the contradictions of British imperialism's relations with the EU and the US, by bidding for the position of privileged US ally, championing US strategic dominance in Europe, within the framework of European Monetary Union.

Finally, in this regard, the geo-strategic position of Japan adjacent to both a non-capitalist China and a Russia where capitalism is far from assured of stabilising itself, makes it utterly militarily dependent on the US.

Asserting military might

Thus the overall balance sheet of the struggle of the US to re-assert its dominance over its potential imperialist competitors following its victory in the Cold

War is as follows. While on the economic field the struggle continues, the United States has succeeded in using its military pre-eminence to re-assert its hegemony over both Japan and the European Union. The outcome of the bombing of Yugoslavia is that the US controlled NATO, not the European Union, has been established as the leadership of the capitalist colonisation of eastern Europe and the drive to penetrate the former Soviet Union. In Asia, Japan has concluded a new security treaty with the United States providing for increased Japanese participation in and fund-

military capacity will deepen and this strategic subordination of the European Union and Japan to the United States will set the limits within which their economic conflicts unfold. As Perry Anderson put it in another context, but correctly: 'one of the basic axioms of historical materialism [is that] the secular struggle between classes is ultimately resolved at the political – not at the economic or cultural – level of society.' (Lineages of the Absolutist State).

With the economic pillars of US global dominance eroding and its dependence on its military power consequently accentuated, the US is constrained, increasingly, to seek to pose conflicts on the military

level. The two key strategic problems for the US in this regard are how to manage, what it hopes will be, Russia's irreversible decline, on the one hand, and how to block the rise of China, on the other.

The Pentagon's strategic planners are

under no illusions that capitalism has stabilised itself in Russia. They believe, correctly, that a Communist or other anti-western regime, could come to power. Indeed, such forces were represented, for a short period following the August 1998 financial collapse, in Yevgeny Primakov's government. This was actively working towards a strategic alliance of Russia, China and India as a proposed counter-weight to US global hegemony, while domestically launching the actions against the Kremlin centred mafiacracy which have culminated in the recent revelations. That was why Primakov was removed by Yeltsin at the height of the bombing campaign against Yugoslavia.

The NATO intervention in Yugoslavia, was correctly interpreted by the Russian military as a dry run, and threat, of the kind of operations NATO would like to be able to project into the former Soviet Union. The eastward expansion of NATO, and military pacts with some of the former Soviet states, are precisely designed not only to safeguard western expansion but also to contain Russia. As the Pentagon document quoted above put it: 'In the event of a resurgent threat from Russia, "we should plan to defend against any such threat" further forward on the territories of eastern Europe.' (IHT, 9 March 1993)

But, the US is also aware that the Russia economy has been so devastated by the capitalist economic reform carried out under US-guidance since January 1992, that while the country retains its ability to destroy the US with nuclear weapons, its ability to conduct any kind of aggressive foreign policy has been enormously weakened. Thus, Primakov's po-

CIA takes blame for targeting wrong site Revealed: Nato bombed Chinese deliberately

THE INTELLIGENCE WAR BY HEAVY CENSORSHIP IN WASHINGTON



Chinese living in Yugoslavia wave their country's flag in front of the bombed Belgrade embassy

AS NATO and US officials were forced into a second day of apologies, the US identified the CIA intelligence as the source of the mistake that led to the bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade, the costliest single error of the operation in terms of alienation strategy in no unusual late-night statement, the US Secretary of Defense, William Cohen, and director of the CIA, George Tenet, said the mistake occurred at the planning stage and was corrected through subsequent checks. For unexplained reasons, the CIA was identified as a weapons supplier and procurement contractor. Those involved in targeting mistakenly believed the Federal Directorate of Supply and Procure-

ment was triggered by a false report passed to the pilot from the West base that positively identified the embassy as military in use. The error was not discovered by the CIA until it was too late. The CIA had been told by the Chinese that the embassy was a military installation. The CIA had been told by the Chinese that the embassy was a military installation. The CIA had been told by the Chinese that the embassy was a military installation.

According to the new version of what happened on the night of May 7, the embassy was originally on a list of targets to be destroyed. But according to sources interviewed by The Observer, the embassy was not on the list. The air controller said:

'The US has already launched an arms race against China'

ess helped to inflate the present bubble on US stock markets, is starting to slow.

In essence, Asia is trying to use its capital to finance investment in its own economies rather than the US. At the same time, economic revival in Asia is pushing up international commodity prices – with oil up by 100 per cent in a year. This is generating inflationary pressures in the US. With the flow of funds from Asia into the US slowing, the dollar coming under downward pressure and long term interest rates rising, US economic growth has started to turn down accompanied by the threat of a serious collapse on Wall Street. The Dow Jones index saw its biggest weekly decline in a decade in the second week of October 1999.

In these circumstances, with a new period of economic enfeeblement looming for the US, the drive to reassert itself by utilising its

sition on the bombing of Yugoslavia was perfectly realistic. He condemned it – as did 95 per cent of the Russian population – but he had little ability to do very much more than give diplomatic assistance to Yugoslavia. Thus, the US strategy towards Russia remains to try to weaken it as much as possible, prevent any recreation of the USSR, utilise economic and military pressure – such as its ability via Turkey to kindle serious military conflicts in the Caucasus and Central Asia – in order to try to also prevent the more immediate threat of an alliance between China and Russia.

China's rise

China has risen to the top of the US strategic agenda because, one, it is not a capitalist state and, two, it has had been the most successful major economy, with the most rapidly rising living standards, in the world since 1978. Some western economists, most of the media and many on the left, argue that China is carrying out a transition to a capitalist economy – albeit more rationally and successfully than the disasters which followed the re-introduction of capitalism into eastern Europe and the USSR.

The Pentagon labours under no such illusions. They understand that the industrial core of China's economy remains publicly owned, that the largest growth sector of the economy has been the development of *collective* property forms owned by town and village governments, that land remains publicly owned and leased to farmers and that the economy is planned. There has been no large scale privatisation of industry in China.

In reality, the success of the Chinese economic reform is precisely based upon the introduction of market mechanisms within the overall framework of a planned economy, which has allowed the reorientation of the economy to prioritise the consumer goods and agricultural sectors, allowing a rapid increase in living standards, to create a virtuous circle of rapid economic growth which in turn has resulted in a vast expansion of the infrastructure and, given its rate of growth and sheer size, made China so attractive for foreign investment that the local and national governments can play western states and companies off against each other to negotiate the most favourable possible terms for their domestic economic development.

This strategy has allowed China to correct some of the main failings of the Soviet and Chinese central planning, notably to develop the consumer goods sector of the economy, without abandoning the planned industrial core of the economy.

As a result, at its present rate of economic growth, which at 7-8 per cent a year is lower than its peak of 12-13 per cent, China will overtake the US as the largest economy in the world within 10-20 years and on this basis can acquire a military capacity equivalent to that of the former USSR.

For US imperialism China has to be stopped before it acquires the ability to defend itself – which would only be possible with nuclear weapons. At present, although a nuclear power, China only has a handful of nuclear armed missiles capable of reaching American targets. That is why the US intends to move rapidly.

This has nothing to do with the foreign policy orientation of China – which from the end of the Vietnam war until relatively recently sought to systematically accommodate the US. Indeed, the *de facto* alliance of China with the US against the Soviet Union was decisive in derailing the left in east Asia and allowing the US to focus its resources on cracking the USSR in the 1980s. The shift in Chinese foreign policy over the last decade – moving to equidistance with the Soviet Union, then seeking to ally with Russia against the threat of the US, opposing NATO's eastward expansion, the recent bombing of Iraq and the war on Yugoslavia, has been in response to the fact that it is now more threatened by the US.

US strategy towards China is proceeding on three fronts simultaneously. First, its preferred option, because the least risky and expensive would be to assist in an internal political disintegration of the country akin to

'Hopes for a social democratic European challenge to the US will be disappointed'

that produced by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union. The difficulty is that there is no sign of such a current coming to power and the Chinese have undoubtedly learnt from the experience of the Soviet Union and have no intention of willingly going down the same path to national collapse.

Second, the US has already launched an arms race against China with the conclusion of new security agreements for enhanced Japanese participation in any US-led military conflict in East Asia, similar agreements with the Philippines, the supply of advanced military aircraft and other weapons to Taiwan, plans for a theatre missile defence system in the region and for a national anti-ballistic missiles defence shield for the United States itself – in defiance of the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missiles Treaty with the Soviet Union. The purpose of this arms race is to put political pressure on China, to force it to divert resources from economic growth to military spending thereby hoping to provoke political instability. But also to the third option, that of a military conflict involving China and the US – which would almost inevitably involve the use of nuclear weapons – a credible threat.

The means to provoke such a conflict already exist – by engineering a declaration of independence from China by Taiwan, the area occupied under US protection after 1949 by the remnant of the Chiang Kai Shek re-

gime overthrown in 1949. China has repeatedly threatened to resort to force in such circumstances, and the US is committed to military intervention on the side of Taiwan. This option depends on China being unable to retaliate effectively against the US. That in turn depends on (a) China not having had time to develop its own nuclear potential and (b) China not being in a military alliance with Russia against the US.

Events this year have confirmed this dynamic. In the spring, despite big concessions offered by China, the Clinton administration scuppered talks on Chinese accession to the World Trade Organisation. During the bombing of Yugoslavia it announced that its new Ambassador in Beijing would be Admiral Joseph Preuer, Naval commander in the Pacific from 1996 to March 1999. The bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade is now widely believed to have been deliberate. Far from seeking to calm the resulting tensions with China, Washington followed up the bombing with the claim that China had stolen virtually all of the United States' nuclear weapons designs.

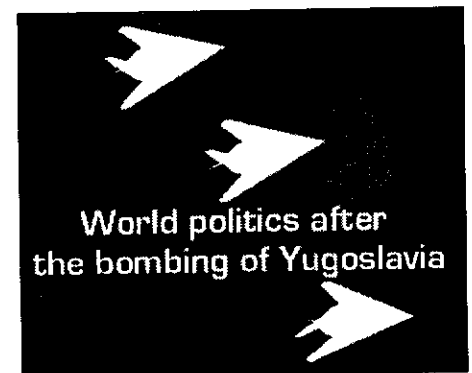
Following a sharp escalation of tensions with Taiwan, after the latter took a step towards declaring independence by announcing that in future relations with China would be conducted 'state to state', the US increased its arms sales to Taiwan. This was followed in the second week of August with the threat military intervention in the event of a conflict between Taiwan and China

delivered in the most direct possible way. The Commander of one of the two American aircraft carrier battle groups in the region, Rear Admiral Timothy Keating, said: 'China will know if they attempt any kind of operation, whether its Taiwan or anything, that they are going to have the US navy to deal with.'

Shortly afterwards the agreement for joint US research with Japan to develop a regional anti-missile defence shield was announced.

China's response to these threats was typified by an article which appeared on 19 August, in *Global Times*, a weekly magazine associated with the official *People's Daily* newspaper. The article was entitled 'USA, do not mix it' said: 'China's neutron bombs are more than enough to handle aircraft carriers.'

Beijing is vigorously pursuing cooperation with Russia to counter the escalation of US military pressure in the region and to op-





pose the development of anti-missile defence systems – whose significance, if they prove technologically feasible, would be that they would allow the US to use nuclear weapons against other states without the fear of retaliation – which is why they have previously been outlawed as a colossal escalation of the arms race.

US tactics elsewhere in the world are directly related to this rising tension with China. As there is considerable reason to doubt the practical ability of the US to carry out its military doctrine of being able to fight two regional wars simultaneously, it needs to confront any potential problems it will face elsewhere in order to free the maximum possible resources for pressure upon China.

This was part of its objectives in bombing Yugoslavia – to dragoon its allies into acceptance that the post-second world war political order had to be dismantled to allow wars to be launched without the acquiescence of Russia or China, and to demonstrate that no power on earth had the capacity to prevent the US from doing this.

Although, as a result of the international opposition which the bombing provoked, the US has not yet succeeded in disposing of Yugoslavia, and will continue to use economic and military means to try to install a pro-Nato government in Belgrade, the intervention in the Balkans was explicitly conceived as opening the way for similar NATO operations in eastern Europe and into the former USSR. This is for both economic purposes of securing access to oil reserves in the former Soviet states, and in order to put military pressure on Russia – warning against any attempt to recreate the former USSR and against any moves towards an alliance with China against the US.

This latter objective has *not* been achieved.

On the contrary, because the very existence of Russia is now threatened, the pressures for an alliance with China as a counterweight to the US are enormous. For China, this is decisive because Russia is its only possible source of advanced weapons, and, at the same time, protects its northern flank against attack. For the Russian military and working class, it makes sense in terms of bolstering its own strategic position and because there is an obvious complementary economic relationship in terms of the exchange of Russian weapons and energy for Chinese consumer goods. An alliance with China is backed by the left in Russia, the army, the military-industrial complex and even some sectors of the oil and gas industry.

The second big obstacle to US planning for strategic confrontation with China is the consequence for Asia. Here China has two big weapons of which the South East Asian capitalist governments are all too aware. First is the sheer economic weight of China in the region. Had China devalued its currency at the time of the financial crash from summer 1997, it would have been difficult, if not impossible, for the economic crisis in the region to have been turned around so rapidly. China paid a very big price for that decision – in terms of increased competition for the South East Asian economies which had carried out devaluations of up to 50 per cent – which has slowed the Chinese economy, put enormous competitive pressures on key sectors of its economy, resulted in rapid deflation and pressure on living standards. It traded political kudos with the US and Japan, by propping up the East Asian economy, for downward pressure on its own economic growth. The rapid intensification of US hostility since, has shown that price was not worth paying. Now China has put the possi-

bility of a devaluation of its currency on the agenda. If it does so the economic shock waves will reverberate throughout east Asia.

Second, China also has enormous potential political influence in the region. In the event of a looming confrontation with the United States, the Chinese leadership would have the option of promoting political instability within East Asia by helping to rebuild Communist Parties and left wing opposition in the region.

So, with the exception of Taiwan, the east Asian regimes have their own agenda – which does not include a massive con-

frontation with China because it would slow down their economies and simultaneously increase the threat of Chinese backed revival of their domestic class struggles.

Third, there is clearly now a strategic debate taking place in India, the second most populous country on earth. Although the BJP government originally stated that its first nuclear test was directed first and foremost against China, India responded to the bombing of Yugoslavia by pointing out that countries now needed nuclear weapons to protect themselves if the US could flout international law to launch wars with impunity. Its project of acquiring nuclear weapons and a seat at the UN Security Council was clearly undermined by the bombing of Yugoslavia. During the Kashmir conflict earlier in the year between Pakistan and India, China did not back Pakistan. Indeed, the US finally ordered Pakistan to pull out its soldiers because it feared the consequences for its relations with India of explicitly backing its traditional client state Pakistan on that occasion.

These are the circumstances in which the Australian role in leading the UN intervention force in East Timor must be understood. Needless to say it has nothing to do with humanitarianism – Australia recognised the occupation of East Timor by the US-backed Suharto dictatorship in Indonesia when it was directed against a leftist national liberation movement. Today, with the Indonesian regime in deep crisis, the Australian Prime Minister explicitly explained the new Australian role as acting as Washington's deputy: 'It is already being called the Howard doctrine and would mean a radical shift in Australia's relations with its Asian neighbours. John Howard, the Australian PM said, in an interview this weekend that Australia should adopt a far more

aggressive approach to regional peacekeeping and act as America's "deputy" global policeman in Asia.' (*Independent on Sunday*, 26 September 1999) Howard, himself, put it like this: 'We have been seen by counties, not only in the region but around the world, as being able to do something that probably no other country could do; because of the special characteristics we have; because we occupy that special place — we are a European, western civilisation, with strong links with North America, but here we are in Asia.' (quoted in *International Herald Tribune*, 27 September 1999). However, notwithstanding Howard's racist rhetoric, with a population of just 20 million, Australia can, in reality, be little more than a useful staging post in the event of a serious clash between China and the US.

In sum, an economically weakened US imperialism is seeking to utilise its military pre-eminence to counteract its economic decline. It retains its absolute dominance and no other imperialist power is remotely approaching the position where it could challenge the US for world supremacy in the way Washington displaced London between 1914 and 1945. Such a displacement in the centre of capitalist world dominance would indeed require convulsions, and blood-letting on at least the scale of that last period of change in capitalist world leadership.

At present, the absolute size of its economy and its overwhelming military preponderance, allow the US to continue to subordinate its imperialist rivals. Only within this framework does their economic competition unfold. Those on the left who hope for a social democratic European challenge to the US will be cruelly disappointed. At the same time, its relative economic decline requires the US to continually re-assert its strategic leadership as the only force capable of defending the common interests of the imperialist powers by the means of provoking military conflicts.

Within that framework, the chief strategic concern of the US is now the rise of China and the possibility of it defending itself through an alliance with Russia against the US. The US is actively attempting to forestall such an alliance by strengthening and expanding the NATO threat to Russia in Europe, war and direct colonisation of the Balkans, detaching parts of the Caucasus (particularly via its relay Turkey), extending the scope of its military alliances in Asia and launching a new spiral of the arms race as part of an overall course towards confrontation with China. This rising conflict, and Washington's moves to clear the ground for it, are going to become the central axis of world politics.

The left wing of the international workers' movement should prepare accordingly by constructing a united front of every possible force to oppose the next wave of US imperialist aggression.

By Geoffrey Owen

The Yugoslav war and eastern Europe

The attack on Yugoslavia sent political shock waves across the central European countries of Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic which found themselves effectively at war with Yugoslavia only days after joining NATO.

The right-wing governments of Poland and Hungary supported the NATO aggression wholeheartedly, as did the Czech Republic's president Vaclav Havel. The social democratic Czech government — the only left of centre government in the region — was more equivocal and divided; indeed the Czech republic was also exceptional in that former right-wing prime minister Vaclav Klaus spoke out strongly against the attacks. The Slovakian, Romanian and Bulgarian governments, under pro-western right-wing coalitions, also backed the initiative and reiterated their aim of full NATO membership as quickly as possible. The governments of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia also supported the NATO airstrikes.

The exception to this general support on the governmental level was Belarus, where President Lukashenko was outspoken in his condemnation of the attacks. Widespread popular opposition to the airstrikes, and to their own governments' support for them, was mounted throughout the region, primarily led by the left and usually by communist or former communist parties, but also by nationalist parties, and by Russian minorities in the Baltic states. The general trend was for a shift in public opinion against the bombing and against NATO membership during the course of the war. The following indicates some of the main features of opposition to NATO in eastern Europe:

Bulgaria

Opposition was led by Bulgarian Socialist Party (former communist party). Ten thousand people attended the first rally against war on 26 March, with over 50 per cent of the population anti-NATO. On 20 April thousands demonstrated in Sofia against NATO request to use Bulgarian air-space. There were huge demonstrations on 5 May when the Bulgarian parliament voted to approve NATO's limited use of country's air-space.

Czech Republic

Opposition was led by the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia. On 12 April over 50 per cent of delegates to the Congress of the ruling Social Democratic Party oppose NATO's aggression, and on 23 April a group of Social Democratic MPs travelled to Belgrade on a solidarity mission. Opinion polls on 26 April showed only 34 per cent of respondents in support of air-strikes.

Hungary

The first demonstration against the war was on 28 March outside the US embassy, organised by the Workers Party (part of the former ruling party). A broad-based Movement for Peace in the Balkans was established with left Socialists, Left Alternative, and independents. All parliamentary parties supported the bombing, but there was a slight shift against the war by the Socialist Party on 20 April when it opposed participation of Hungarian ground troops and insisted that no troops go into Yugoslavia through Hungary.

Poland

Bombing was opposed by the Peasant Party (former communist front), the Polish Socialist Party (origins in left of Solidarity), and some right-wing Catholics. Polls showed 48 per cent in favour of the pro-NATO attack; 36 per cent opposed; 16 per cent undecided. Deputies from the Democratic Left Alliance (former communist-led coalition) and the Polish Socialist Party visited Belgrade to meet parliamentary deputies.

Romania

The first anti-war demonstration led by ethnic Serbs, leftists and nationalists took place on 30 March. The Romanian parliament called for resumption of negotiations: supported by Social Democratic Party (former communists) although Iliescu calls it 'one-sided'. Only the Socialist Party, Greater Romania Party and small nationalist parties unequivocally opposed the war. On 31 March, opinion polls showed 70.9 per cent pro-neutrality; 11 per cent pro-NATO and 6.1 per cent pro-Serb. By 22 April, popular support for joining NATO had fallen from 67 per cent in December 1998 to 52 per cent since bombings began.

Slovakia

Vladimir Meclar's Movement for a Democratic Slovakia (MDS) expressed solidarity with the Yugoslavs and opposed NATO 'barbarism'. MDS campaign for an end to NATO overflight. The Slovak National Party (SNP) and the Communist Party also oppose the bombing and participate in mass demonstrations. Opinion polls on 21 April showed 65 per cent against the bombings.

By Kate Hudson



Nato's goals in Yugoslavia

NATO's goals towards Yugoslavia are well established. Through the 1950s, '60s and '70s, Yugoslavia had enjoyed rapid economic growth, industrialisation and relative political stability on the basis of three pillars. First, its planned economy gave it the possibility of a relatively independent path of economic development, not subordinated to more powerful outside imperialist powers. Second, its federal constitution, together with economic planning, united the great majority of its different peoples on the basis of almost unprecedented constitutional respect for the national rights and redistribution of economic resources from the richest to the poorest parts of the country. Third, its international position, as a non-capitalist state outside the Warsaw Pact at the height of the Cold War, allowed it to balance between east and west, being courted by both, and enjoying access to western financial credits.

This relative stability was smashed by two things. The re-introduction of capitalism into eastern Europe and dissolution of the Warsaw Pact, which made special relations with Yugoslavia superfluous for the west. Secondly, in these circumstances, having become dependent upon financial support from the IMF, by the mid-1980s the latter, with the support of the Yugoslav federal government, imposed economic reforms designed to open the way to the privatisation of the economy. This brought the economy to the point of collapse.

This provoked two different reactions within Yugoslavia – both directed against the federal government. In the two richest republics, Slovenia and Croatia, these policies had brought to the fore political forces which proposed pulling out of Yugoslavia, in order to stop subsidising the poorest parts of the federation. These forces co-ordinated their activities with German imperialism.

In Serbia, where massive strikes erupted against the IMF-inspired lay-offs and effective wage cuts, the reaction combined opposition to the economic reform program with demands to increase the weight of Serbia within the federal constitution in order to change federal policy. This was logical, as although Serbs made up 35-40 per cent of Yugoslavia's population, under Tito's constitution designed to allay fears of domination by the Serbs, they effectively only had one seat out of eight in the Yugoslav federal presidency, with its two autonomous regions, Vojvodina and Kosovo each controlling their

own federal presidential seat. So this reaction took the form of moves, carried out under Slobodan Milosevic, to reduce the autonomy of these two regions and regain Serbian control of all three of its seats in the federal presidency. This combined with agitation by the large Serb minority in Kosovo to reduce the province's autonomy which took the form of a Serb nationalist movement, endorsed and ultimately led by Milosevic. The Albanian majority of Kosovo totally opposed these moves and thenceforth embarked upon a massive peaceful campaign against them.

Although Slovenian and Croatian nationalist leaders, echoed by the western media, tried to use these moves to whip up fears of a plan for a Greater Serbia, in reality they always made clear that the motivation for their campaigns for independence was economic. In Croatia's case, the spectre of a Greater Serbia was used to justify withdrawing national democratic rights from the Serb minority. Although national oppression of the Albanians in Kosovo was real, no-one seriously maintained that national oppression of Croats, Slovenes or Bosnian Muslims existed in Yugoslavia.

The Slovenian and Croatian independence moves were sponsored by, and co-ordinated with, Germany and Austria which aimed to break up Yugoslavia and integrate its two most prosperous northern republics into a new German sphere of influence in the Balkans. This was precisely the approach taken in the Balkans and eastern Europe by Hitler and the same dynamic of fragmentation followed 1989 in eastern Europe and the former So-

viet Union.

Although Croatia, with its 11 per cent Serbian population did not comply with the European Union's criteria for respect of minority rights, Germany pressured the EU into recognition of its independence, and thereby precipitated the break-up which led to war, first in Croatia and then in Bosnia.

This was inevitable. If the Croats and Bosnian Muslims were to secede from Yugoslavia, then the large Serb minorities within Croatia and Bosnia – who had experienced real, not media manufactured, genocide under the independent Ustashe Croat regime during the second world war – would wish, in the absence of the protection of an overarching federal state, to exercise their own rights to self-determination under Yugoslavia's constitution. Within Tito's Yugoslavia, the weight of the Serbs within the federal presidency had been minimised, and borders drawn which left millions of Serbs outside Serbia, as a guarantee against the largest national group dominating the federal republic. But if the guarantee of equal rights constituted by a common federal state which recognised national rights, not only for republics but also for national groups, was withdrawn, naturally Serb minorities would seek a re-drawing of republican borders or, at the very least, autonomy within newly independent republics. The nationalist regime of Franjo Tudjman fanned Serb fears by reviving the symbols of the wartime fascist Croatian republic, deleting Serb rights from its constitution, purging the civil service and police of Serbs and rejecting all proposals for autonomy for the Serbian parts of Croatia.

Hence, the EU's effective de-recognition of Yugoslavia, and refusal to support the right to self-determination of the Serbs in Croatia and Bosnia, together with Croatian and Bosnian refusal to accept Serb votes, led inevitably to civil war with the Serb minorities stranded within Croatia and Bosnia.

Within what remained of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, these Serb minorities within Croatia and Bosnia enjoyed overwhelming support.

This is the origin of the demonisation of the Serbs by the NATO states. They constituted the chief obstacle to the capitalist break-up of Yugoslavia, for the simple reason that it threatened not only their living standards, but also their national existence. If Yugoslavia was to be broken up, they had to be defeated – and if they were to be attacked this had to be justified to western public opinion by their supposed crimes. This was facilitated by the fact that at the outset the Serbs, as the largest group, and the Yugoslav army as the

Yugoslavia's history

1918 Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes founded following the first world war. The new state also includes Albanian, Hungarian, Bosniak, German, Italian, Roma, Turkish, Jewish and other minorities. Prior to the unification, Serbia had been an independent state on the side of the victorious allies; Croatia had been part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire — one of the defeated powers.

1921 The Vidovdan Constitution establishes a unitary state under the Serbian royal house and the enlargement of the other Serbian state institutions. Beginning of Croat attempts to secure decentralisation or federalism.

1929 The decade sees an escalation of political violence around demands for Croatian autonomy. King Alexander dissolves parliament and suspends constitution, introducing a royal dictatorship. Country formally renamed the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (literally South Slavia).

1934 King Alexander assassinated by Croatian fascists and Macedonian extremists. Regency established which moves closer towards Germany — now establishing economic and political hegemony in the region.

1941 Axis forces invade Yugoslavia. Ustasa forces (Croatian fascists) establish the Independent State of Croatia under Nazi patronage and launch a genocidal campaign against the Serb minority in Croatia. Hundreds of thousands of Serbs and Jews murdered in Croatian concentration camps.

The Yugoslav Communist Party, under the leadership of Tito, build a partisan army waging a liberation struggle against the occupying Axis forces and against the collaborating Yugoslav royalist forces under Mihailovic.

1945 Defeat of Axis forces. Communists win elections and Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is declared.

1946 New soviet-type constitution establishes federation of six republics: Serbia, Slovenia, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Bosnia-Herzegovina.

1948 Yugoslav-Soviet split emerges as Tito refuses to subordinate Yugoslavia to Soviet foreign policy requirements. Yugoslavia expelled from Cominform.

largest armed force, could be projected as the aggressors against 'little Slovenia', Croatia, Bosnia. In reality behind these states stood forces immensely more powerful than any section of Yugoslavia — German and US imperialism. Under the influence of their own media, most of the western left completely failed to see this reality and fell in behind the anti-Serb crusade.

The United States initially opposed German moves to break up the federation — as did France and Britain who had no desire to see the Balkans transformed into a German sphere of influence. The original goal of the United States had been to introduce capitalism into Yugoslavia *as a whole*, and in one go as elsewhere in eastern Europe, via the pro-American federal government of Ante Markovic. When it became clear that this was not going to happen, they accepted the German strategy of the capitalist recolonisation of the country a piece at a time via the sponsoring of its break-up — Balkanisation. But in order to thwart Germany, they developed their own client groups, the Bosnian Muslim leadership and later the KLA. They blocked every effort at a peaceful resolution of the Bosnian civil war, until the point where it had brought France and Britain, which had 'peace-keeping' forces on the ground, to accept NATO bombing of the Serbs, brokered a military alliance of the Bosnian Muslims and Croatia and re-armed and trained the Croatian and Bosnian Muslim armies to impose the largest possible defeat on the Bosnian Serbs.

The Yugoslav government tried to find a way through this situation. In relation to Slovenia, a relatively ethnically homogeneous republic, it rapidly recognised that the only way in which secession could be stopped would be by a war in which Slovene civilian casualties would be massive. It consequently prevailed upon the federal army to withdraw.

In Croatia, it upheld the right to autonomy of the Serbian minority and the federal army was deployed to defend the Serb enclaves against the new Croatian military, until the point where EU and US sanctions pressured Milosevic to agree to the deployment of UN forces in the disputed areas. This resulted in a total clash between Belgrade and the Serbian leadership in Croatia who, presciently, had no confidence in the UN's commitment to protect them.

In Bosnia, Belgrade initially supported the Bosnian Serbs who succeeded in carving out a large autonomous area within Bosnia. But, under the pressure of EU and US economic sanctions, which devastated the Yugoslav economy, and ultimately the American threat to bomb Belgrade, the Yugoslav government broke off relations with the Bosnian Serb leadership and imposed sanctions against them. US intervention to arm and train the Croats and the Bosnian Muslims and then bomb the Bosnian Serbs as the signal for a coordinated offensive against the Serbs in both Croatia and Bosnia, then set the terms for the Dayton Agreement. This was signed for the Bosnian

Serbs, who were excluded from the negotiations, by Milosevic, and sealed the fate of Bosnia as a joint EU/US Nato colony — within which the Bosnian Serbs enjoy the status of pariahs. Their elected leaders are regularly removed by the new colonial master — the EU/US appointed High Representative — and their television transmitters seized because NATO does not like their politics. In September 1999 Richard Holbrooke, the US rep at the UN, even called for the anti-NATO Serb political parties in Bosnia to be 'disestablished by international order' (*International Herald Tribune*, 15 September 1999).

Within Croatia, a blitzkrieg was organised with US support, which resulted in the largest ethnic cleansing of the conflict. Hundreds of thousands of Serbs were forced to flee. The military commander of this operation, Agim Ceku, went on, with NATO support, to become the military commander of the KLA in Kosovo and has now been appointed by the UN governor of Kosovo to lead the so-called Kosovo Protection Corps — an appointment which does much to clarify how much credence should be given to Kfor statements supposedly reassuring the Kosovo Serbs that their rights will be respected. Dayton definitively established United States leadership of the imperialist intervention into the Balkans. This had been accompanied by a shift in the emphasis of the propaganda war against the Serbs. In Germany and Austria, the Serbs had been, and still are, projected as defenders of communist 'dictatorship' against western democrats like the Croatian regime (sic). The US considers this approach ineffective. In the eyes of hundreds of millions of people in the world there are worse horrors than those of the western created caricatures of communism. Under US leadership, involving PR firms, the emphasis was shifted to transform the Serbs from die-hard communists (who came to power in a revolution against Hitler) into fascists. PR agencies invented analogies based on no evidence likening Serb crimes to the Nazi holocaust. This proved most effective in disorientating the left in the NATO states. Yet, it is in Croatia today that football supporters wave banners like 'Serbs to Jasenovac' (the wartime concentration camp).

Far from Milosevic being the champion of a Greater Serbia portrayed by western propaganda, he faced serious opposition within Serbia from political forces — including some of those now demonstrating against the government — which argued that he was selling out first the Croatian, and then the Bosnian Serbs, in order to ease the massive western pressure on Yugoslavia. Indeed, these divisions over how to defend the national rights of the Serbs, violated by the capitalist break-up of Yugoslavia is at the root of the west's failure to construct a unified capitalist opposition within Serbia. Milosevic represents the bureaucracy of the Yugoslav state which was created in the socialist revolution which was entwined with the resistance struggle

against Hitler in the second world war. Milosevic came to ascendancy on the back of vast Serbian popular nationalist mobilisations in what he called an anti-bureaucratic revolution aimed at increasing the weight of Serbia within the Yugoslav Federation – not breaking it up. He has again and again tried to reach an accommodation with the west – but none has been forthcoming because in the post-1989 world order NATO does not want peaceful coexistence with a non-capitalist Serbia. It demands the full privatisation of the economy and a government subservient to NATO.

Neither is the Milosevic regime the dictatorship of Tony Blair's mythology. In reality, it is as or more (in relation to Croatia, let alone the NATO colony of Bosnia) democratic than the new capitalist states which have been carved out of the rest of the former Yugoslavia. Opposition parties in Serbia frequently control their own private television or radio stations, as well as newspapers – generally financed by the western intelligence services. Demonstrations are more frequent than in any other European state. The local and national government is the result of elections.

Indeed, as one pro-NATO, but exceptionally thorough, author put it reviewing Serbian politics in the 1990s: 'Serbia under Milosevic was not a dictatorship in the totalitarian sense of the word. Opposition political parties, and civic organisations, continued to operate throughout this period, and the independent media continued to publish and broadcast' (*Serbia under Milosevic*, politics in the 1990s, Robert Thomas). He goes on to claim, bizarrely that: 'These freedoms "granted" to the opposition groupings and media were, however, symptomatic of the strength of the ruling party and the authoritarian nature of its rule rather than its tolerance and belief in democratic practice.' (ibid)

This so-called 'authoritarianism' is, however, defined basically as the non-capitalist nature of the country's economy: 'A democratic and pluralist polity, however, amounts to more than a functioning parliamentary system and an active political culture. Such a political system must be underpinned by the dispersal of power through the social and economic spheres.' (ibid) Translating this from academic jargon, it means that without private ownership of the economy, mere democracy is unacceptable.

Thus the real NATO objection to Serbia is that the pro-NATO opposition parties have utterly failed to win majority public support in democratic elections. The author already quoted argues feebly that this is, in effect, due to the lack of political sophistication on the part of the Serbian workers: 'Milosevic's support remained strongest among the rural population and industrial workers of Serbia whose political loyalties were determined more by the attraction of the 'symbols of power' than by the merits of policy in the civic marketplace of ideas.' In reality, it reflects their good sense and the

inability of the capitalist parties to overcome their divisions over the negative consequences of the capitalist intervention into Yugoslavia for the social and national rights of the Serbs.

In fact, when non-socialist parties have cut into the support for Milosevic's socialist parties, the most successful have been those who have criticised him for too many, not too few, concessions to NATO and the west. Thus the most successful non-socialist party is the most anti-western party of all – Vojislav Seselj's Serbian Radical Party.

In Serbia's first democratic presidential election on 9 December 1990, Milosevic won 65.3 per cent of the vote, compared to 16.4 per cent at that time for monarchist and Serb nationalist, Vuk Draskovic. In the parliamentary elections, the former communist Serbian Socialist Party took 46.4 per cent, compared to 15.8 per cent for Draskovic's Serbian Renewal Party and just 7.4 per cent for the Democratic Party of Zoran Djindjic – the NATO sponsored leader of the post-Kosovo demonstrations against Milosevic.

In December 1997 presidential elections, the last prior to the NATO bombing campaign, the Serbian Socialist Party candidate, Milutinovic, won 43.7 per cent in the first round, compared to 32.2 per cent for Seselj and just 15.4 per cent for Draskovic. In the second round, the socialist beat Seselj by 58.6 per cent to 38.1 per cent.

In the preceding parliamentary elections, on 21 September 1997, the 'left coalition' around Milosevic's Serbian Socialist Party had won 110 seats, Seselj's Radical Party 82 seats, Draskovic's Serbian Renewal Movement 45 seats. This left the socialists short of a parliamentary majority and they formed a coalition first with the radicals and then, as NATO's goal of war became apparent, also with Draskovic. It is a peculiar kind of dictatorship which only holds 40 per cent of the seats in parliament. The eventual bowing of the regime to opposition demonstrations against attempts to disallow some of the local elections which had been won by pro-western opposition parties further reinforces that point. The socialists remained in power in Serbia, and the country remains outside of NATO's orbit, because after nearly a decade of draconian economic sanctions and NATO-backed wars on its borders, pro-NATO political parties continued to fail to win significant popular support. Socialist election slogans included 'Serbia is not for sale.'

Unable to overthrow the regime from within, NATO therefore continued its drive to use force and terror to impose its will upon the peoples of Yugoslavia.

The next stage of the NATO offensive was into Kosovo. Here, the peaceful opposition led by Ibrahim Rugova did not meet the needs of US diplomacy precisely because its largely non-violent nature provided no pretext for outside intervention. So the US and Germany started to promote, and covertly arm, the KLA which embarked upon a classic terrorist campaign of random shootings of Serbs and Al-

1950-1953

Steps taken towards decentralization of the economy and worker self-management.

1963

New constitution renames country the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, strengthens independence of the judiciary and introduces limited electoral choice.

1969-1971

Experiment in reform communism and nationalism by the Croat leadership – the so-called Croatian Spring. Tito purges Croatian leadership.

1971

Introduction of a system of collective leadership where senior federal posts rotate between the republics in order to secure equal representation for the main ethnic groups.

1974

Tito introduces new constitution to end fears of Serb domination, especially after the suppression of the Croatian Spring. Each of the six republics can have its own education system, judiciary, police force and central bank. The Serbian provinces of Vojvodina and Kosovo have the same rights and receive seats on the federal presidency which has eight seats. Thus Serbia has only one seat on the eight member collective presidency.

1980

Tito dies and the chairmanship of the collective presidency now rotates each year.

1981

Ethnic Albanians demand republican status for Kosovo and a state of emergency is declared.

1984

US targets Yugoslav economy as part of its attempt to undermine communist governments and promote the integration of eastern Europe into a market economy. IMF-sponsored programmes of macro-economic reform accelerate disintegration of economy throughout the 1980s.

1989

Pro-western Yugoslav federal president Ante Markovic introduces a policy of economic shock therapy which exacerbates the economic crisis. Serbia tries to gain greater control within Yugoslavia by removing the autonomous status of Kosovo and Vojvodina, thus gaining control of their seats on the presidency, which with their pro-communist allies in Montenegro would give them half of the eight seats in their struggle against the pro-western, pro-economic liberalization federal leadership.

1990

Multi-party elections take place resulting in separatist coalitions replacing the communist leaderships in Croatia, Slovenia and Bosnia. Serbia and Montenegro elect socialist/communist leaders and opt to stay in the federal republic and oppose economic liberalization.

1991

Slovenia and Croatia, the two wealthiest republics, who through the federal budget had been subsidizing the poorer regions of Yugoslavia, decide to leave Yugoslavia. They are followed by Macedonia. Germany recognises Croatian and Slovenian independence. The Serb-occupied areas of Croatia vote to secede from Croatia and stay in Yugoslavia and fight to maintain this position, supported by the Yugoslav army.

1992

The EC recognises Croatia and Slovenia. Bosnia-Herzegovina declares its independence and is recognised by the US and the EC. Bosnian Serbs oppose independence from Yugoslavia and declare Serbian Republic of Bosnia-Herzegovina (Republika Srpska). Serbia and Montenegro constitute the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Ceasefire between Croatia and the Yugoslav authorities; the Krajina (Serbian area of Croatia) becomes a demilitarized zone patrolled by 10,000 UN peacekeepers. Republic of Serbian Krajina is established.

1993-1994

War between the three component populations of Bosnia. President Milosevic of Yugoslavia pressurises Bosnian Serbs to accept peace terms as Yugoslavia has had sanctions imposed upon it, although not formally supporting the Bosnian Serbs.

1995

Croatian forces attack the Republic of Serbian Krajina. The Krajina Serbs are defeated, and some 300,000 Serb refugees flee to Yugoslavia. The Dayton Accords are signed, resulting in a Bosnia effectively without sovereignty, divided under NATO occupation and under western colonial administration.

1999

NATO breaks international law and commences third wave of war against Yugoslavia by launching air attacks on the sovereign Federal Republic without the approval of the UN, supposedly to protect the interests of the ethnic Albanians of Kosovo. The war results in a stand-off, but NATO — recently expanded to include Hungary, Poland and the Czech Republic — redefines its parameters to include 'out of area operations' in the whole of Europe and the former Soviet Union. The US can now bypass the UN structures where Russian and Chinese vetoes can hamper US global aims.

banian 'collaborators'. This intensified from 1998. An international outcry was then orchestrated against Yugoslav military operations against the KLA, and the civilian casualties in their wake, depicted as the latest round of Serb genocide. The US ensured that every attempt at a negotiated settlement broke down by the simple expedient of assuring the KLA that they would ultimately be aided by outside military intervention.

The Rambouillet negotiations set the scene for this. The US authors of the Rambouillet document obviously understood that its terms would not be acceptable to any sovereign state. It called for a NATO occupation of Kosovo, a Yugoslav military withdrawal and free NATO access to the whole of Yugoslavia, including priority use of all ports, airports and roads. The Yugoslav refusal to accept this ultimatum, not ethnic cleansing — which the German courts, for example, acknowledged was not taking place in Kosovo before the bombing — was then the pretext for NATO military intervention. NATO's demand was

government in waiting of Kosovo even though all polls show that their support amongst the Albanians continues to lag far behind that of Rugova. A western survey of public opinion in Kosovo published by the *International Herald Tribune* on 18 October 1999 found that life under Kfor and the KLA has produced the following: 'The political party formed by [KLA leader] Hashim Thaci... would be crushed in provincial elections at all levels... An opinion poll commissioned by a western organisation found Mr Rugova favored over Mr Thaci by a 4:1 margin... A recent and less vigorous survey of 2,500 voters by an independent media organisation found that Mr Rugova would receive 92 per cent of the vote in a two way race with Mr Thaci. And the rebels' support in former KLA strongholds, such as the Drenica area in central Kosovo, Mr Thaci's home base, has withered to single digits! Nonetheless, it is the KLA which Kfor has placed in power.

The colonial administration's recovery plan for Kosovo includes the privatisation of its

'all the measures are taken to convert the national diversity of the Balkans into a regular melee of petty states. None of them was to develop beyond a certain limit, each separately was entangled in diplomative and dynastic bonds and counter-posed to all the rest, and finally, the whole lot were condemned to helplessness in relation to the Great Powers of Europe.'

Trotsky 1912

simple: full acceptance of the Rambouillet text by Yugoslavia. This would have given the US-led military alliance control not only of Kosovo, but also the ability to intervene directly within the rest of Yugoslavia.

Despite 78 days of bombing NATO failed to achieve these objectives. Indeed, this failure significantly weakened the pro-NATO opposition within Serbia. Notwithstanding the massive discontent of the population after years of war and savage economic sanctions, and now facing a winter with their infrastructure devastated by NATO bombs and missiles, the Serbian people show little sign of giving in and rallying around the CIA backed politicians trying to overthrow the regime. The army remains the most trusted institution in the country and its popularity has increased. This is hardly surprising, as following the experience of Croatia, Bosnia and Kosovo, 52 per cent of Serbia's population fear being driven from their homes — ethnically cleansed as the *Guardian* would put it if they were anything but Serbs.

These sentiments are reinforced by the events which have followed NATO's entry into Kosovo. The ethnic cleansing of the Serbs and Roma amid daily murders, lootings and arson attacks by the KLA, the transformation of the KLA into the Kosovo Protection corps by the UN, and bolstering of the KLA as the

economy and slashing employment in the public services from 120,000 to 52,000 (*Financial Times*, 28 September).

Its entry into Kosovo does not mean NATO will back off. The Serbian people are being told that their privations will increase until they bow to NATO's will. This is the significance of the various statements at the time of the international conference on aid for the Balkans in Sarajevo in the summer of 1999. Carl Bildt, former imperial High Representative in Bosnia, explained that no reconstruction plan will work until Serbia can be included. By this he did not mean that Serbia should be aided in reconstructing its economy. He meant that NATO will not have finished its work until the Serbian government is overthrown and replaced by NATO puppets. If the economic sanctions do not achieve this, then future military action remains on the agenda.

That is why the international left and anti-imperialist movements must campaign for the sanctions against Yugoslavia to be lifted, for economic aid to reconstruct the country and prepare for the likelihood of a new phase of NATO military intervention — quite possibly around a western engineered attempt to break Montenegro (and access to the sea) away from Yugoslavia.

By Joe Clarke



International alliances against NATO

When, on 24 March 1999, NATO launched its biggest bombing campaign in Europe since the second world, it expected a rapid and complete victory over Yugoslavia — a state of little more than 10 million people. Instead the people of Yugoslavia held out for 11 weeks of 24 hour bombing and the majority of the world's population opposed NATO's aggression. As a result, the United States had to retreat from some of its original objectives and hundreds of millions of people throughout the world were alerted to the threat they face from an imperialist alliance committed to offensive military action whenever it wishes over a vast area of the globe. **Paul Graham** looks at the lessons of the anti-war struggle.

It looked at the outset as if Yugoslavia provided ideal conditions for an awesome demonstration of United States' military might. Indeed, the first CNN television pictures, of precision guided bombs and missiles raining down on Belgrade were intended to convey precisely the impression that a modern, albeit small, industrialised country could rapidly be brought to its knees by the flexing of NATO's military muscle. Those responsible for Washington's global public relations machine obviously intended that the significance of this should not be lost on the inhabitants of Moscow, Beijing, Havana or anyone else contemplating defiance of the US.

But within days it was clear that things were not going to work out as planned. Yugoslavia showed no sign of giving in to the most powerful military alliance in history. Instead of blaming their government for the bombs falling on them, the Serbian people blamed NATO, and by their actions made clear that they considered resistance to a foreign occupation of Kosovo to be a just and unavoidable necessity. The same spirit was shown by the Yugoslav army in Kosovo. The post-war television pictures showed hundreds of tanks and heavy weapons retreating intact, together with

thousands of soldiers who appeared anything but demoralised. These scenes were totally different to those which followed the US-led war on Iraq.

The fact that the Yugoslavian people had held out over 78 days of bombing gave the world time to wake up to what was taking place. By the end of the war, even the tiny trickle of information about civilian casualties allowed into the mainstream media of the NATO states, had started to shift public opinion — which had been told this was to be the world's first humanitarian war.

In the NATO states, the demonstrations against the Gulf war had been larger — reflecting the fear of NATO casualties in a ground war. But the breadth of the international opposition to the bombing of Yugoslavia was far greater. For the first time the United States was openly claiming a right to

attack any sovereign state it saw fit. The implications of this doctrine, previously only applied to Washington's so-called backyard — in Central America and the Caribbean — threatened any country in the world which might find its interests in conflict with the US.

No Russian government could have got away with voting for the bombing of Yugoslavia in the UN Security Council in the way that Gorbachev had provided this legal pretext for the Gulf war. Nor was there any chance of anything other than a Chinese veto of the bombing — in contrast to their abstention on the Gulf war.

In China, the population responded to the destruction of its embassy in Belgrade with the biggest anti-war demonstrations in the world. In Russia, although President Yeltsin wanted to assist the United States, he was constrained by the near total opposition of the population and army to NATO's war. In Greece, the nearest NATO state to the conflict, whose proximity gave people local knowledge of the real state of affairs in Yugoslavia, 98 per cent of voters opposed the bombing. They expressed this not simply by massive protests, but by practical steps to block the movement of troops and equipment through their country — including protests by Greek military personnel.

The peoples of the new NATO members in eastern Europe — Poland, Hungary and the Czech Republic — were traumatised by their involvement in a war on their doorsteps within days of joining NATO.

In Italy and Germany, opposition to the bombing was such that the social democratic governments, while totally backing the bombing, had to be seen to be constantly seeking to open the way to a negotiated solution in-



NATO troops meet anti-war slogans on Lithohoro beach, Thessaloniki, Greece

volving Russia.

Throughout the third world, the new world order of unilateral war-making by NATO was universally threatening and opposition to the bombing was the norm rather than the exception.

This international alignment of forces profoundly affected the course of the war and demonstrated the international strategy necessary to oppose the future conflicts which the precedent of Yugoslavia has put on the agenda.

towns like Belgrade and Novi Sad started to puncture the tissue of lies circulated by the NATO influenced press. The pictures of incredibly brave people standing on bridges holding target symbols while the most sophisticated weapons in the world hung over their heads, just did not tally with the spin doctors' image of a nation of cowardly psychopaths.

These impressions were countered by the western media focus upon Albanian refugees streaming out of Kosovo. But as NATO ex-

NATO's military options

This meant they had three options. The first was to step up the bombing. But this would massively increase the numbers of civilian casualties outside Kosovo, in circumstances where, amid Russian attempts at mediation, public support for the bombing within the NATO states was starting to wane. An *Associated Press* poll in the United States, published on 17 May found that support for the air war had fallen from 68 per

cent to 59 per cent, and 60 per cent wanted immediate negotiations to end the war with the Yugoslav government. Moreover, there was no sign that it would produce the desired result of a capitulation by the Serbs. On the contrary, mounting civilian casualties were undermining all the work of vilification of the Serbs, giving them the moral high ground over NATO. The longer that went on the greater risk that at some point western public opinion would turn against it.

Second, they could launch a ground invasion into Kosovo. For NATO's political leadership this was preferable to anything that might be

seen as a defeat. But it posed a further range of problems. To invade Kosovo through the mountains from Albania would have involved a qualitatively higher order of risk compared to bombing defenceless cities from 15,000 feet. It might have meant large-scale NATO casualties from the intact Yugoslav army. Whatever the rhetoric, the Pentagon did not want to risk serious American casualties – not out of concern for the lives of rank and file soldiers, but because of the political backlash losses might provoke. A *Washington Post* poll published on 18 May found that only 15 per cent of Americans supported sending in ground troops after nearly two months of bombing.

The alternative routes for a land war, given Macedonian unwillingness to allow an invasion from its territory, would have meant cutting a path through Serbia itself, from Hungary, Croatia and/or Bosnia. Although that meant crossing easier terrain, it also risked



Yugoslav people protested as 'human shields' on Brankov bridge, Belgrade

The most fundamental lesson of the anti-war struggle, and the biggest problem for NATO, was the way in which a *de facto* international anti-NATO alliance emerged during the course of the conflict.

The first element of this was the people of Yugoslavia. They had been demonised and vilified by the western media for a decade. This campaign had a tremendous impact on the west European and America left, as well as on the so-called intelligentsia. The left in the semi-colonial countries and Russia were more sceptical. They have seen anyone who stands up to the West, whether it be Colonel Nasser, Fidel Castro, Saddam Hussain, the parliamentary opposition to Boris Yeltsin or Somalia's General Aideed, for example, routinely labelled modern-day Hitlers. The common view was that NATO *would say that* about anyone they intended to bomb.

But from the very beginning of the bombing, the courage of the ordinary people in

tended its range of targets, and civilian casualties consequently increased, international disquiet deepened. NATO had claimed from the outset that it had no quarrel with the civilian population of Serbia and that its bombs and missiles were focused on military targets. But whatever propaganda line was spun by Jamie Shea, NATO commanders were in a position to have a more accurate appraisal. They knew they were having minimal impact on the Yugoslav forces or their equipment deployed in Kosovo. Instead, they focused on trying to demoralise the population of Serbia by destroying the country's infrastructure.

Yet, after weeks of bombing, there was no sign that this was going to work. This faced NATO commanders, that is the Pentagon, with some difficult choices. To have started the war and then be seen to back off would have been a catastrophe for NATO, undermining US hegemony in Europe. They had to win and be seen to win.

significant casualties and, equally important, would have enormously escalated the international stakes – quite possibly creating a terminal crisis for Yeltsin in the Kremlin.

A land invasion could also have deepened the splits within NATO. Majority opposition to bombing in Greece and Italy would have intensified. In Germany, 78 per cent of voters opposed participation in a land war.

The third option was to isolate the Serbs by drawing Russia into NATO's camp and in that context step up the threat of a land invasion. This involved a retreat from NATO's original objectives of unilateral action to crush the Serbs – because it meant accepting a Russian role in the conflict, for which a price would have to be paid. The Yeltsin regime had to contend with near unanimous support for the Serbs on the part of the army, the population, the parliament – which called for sending arms to the Serbs – and most political parties.

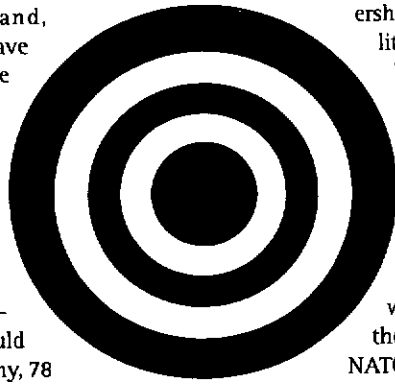
Underlying this was the fact that the Russian people felt deeply threatened. Typical TV coverage included discussions of whether the latest Russian anti-aircraft systems could deal with NATO jets. If the Russian and Chinese vetoes in the UN Security Council were to be irrelevant then Russia itself, or parts of the former Soviet Union, could be next in the line of fire.

From the point of view of the Russian military, the bombing confirmed the disintegration of its strategic position in Europe. Too blatant assistance to NATO in this context could have resulted in Yeltsin's removal from power. Moreover, with China very publicly demanding that the bombing stop before any settlement would be possible, an overt stab in the back by Yeltsin would have been difficult to conceal.

This, the Russian people's solidarity with the Serbs against NATO, was the second key link in the chain of international solidarity. It meant that Yeltsin required a gesture towards international legality before he could deliver NATO's ultimatum to the Serbs. That required giving the UN a role in any post-war Kosovo settlement.

As the alternatives were even worse, NATO opted for dealing with Russia. Yeltsin's envoy Victor Chernomyrdin duly delivered his message to Milosevic: to the effect that if a military occupation of Kosovo under the auspices of the UN were not accepted, then Russia would wash its hands of the situation opening the way for a land invasion by NATO.

Faced with Yeltsin's ultimatum, the destruction of much of their country, and some significant retreats from the original Rambouillet ultimatum, the Yugoslav lead-



ership clearly felt that they had little alternative but to agree.

They had not won – hardly surprising faced with a military alliance of the most powerful states on earth – but they had extracted significant concessions: the military force in Kosovo would be formally under the auspices of the UN not NATO, it would include a Russian contingent, it would not have access to the whole of Yugoslavia and Kosovo would, on paper at least, remain part of Yugoslavia.

The sticking point was NATO's demand that the Yugoslav army should start its withdrawal from Kosovo *before* the bombing stopped. This posed the kind of massacre which the US had perpetrated during the Gulf War against the Iraqi army and civilians as

'The international forces that came together to oppose NATO bombing materially affected the outcome'

they had retreated from Kuwait along the Basra road.

Here, a third element of the international solidarity with Yugoslavia came into play – manifested in China's refusal to contemplate any UN Security Council resolution ending the conflict until the bombing stopped. That robbed NATO of the opportunity of a gruesome attack on the withdrawing Yugoslav army.

Even in the final farce of NATO having to stand by in disbelief while Russian troops raced to occupy Pristina airport ahead of them, the international anti-war movement played a material role. The Greek government faced such violent opposition from its people to NATO's war that it delayed US troops' passage across Greece, for fear that it would otherwise have been decimated in the European elections. Even so the left wing anti-war parties won more than 20 per cent of the vote, 200 British trucks had been misdirected in April to a market where they were pelted with fruit, protesters had blocked rail lines carrying British troops, railway workers had threatened to strike if Greek trains continued to carry NATO personnel, and other workers had taken strike action including a two hour closure of the country's schools.

The delay in the deployment of US troops led Clinton to demand postponement of the entry of the other NATO forces into Kosovo – he wanted an *American* triumph. However, the spin doctors were speechless as it all went wrong and the Russian flag was the first to fly at Pristina airport.

While anti-bombing feeling ran highest in Greece, it was significant throughout the European Union. A *European Barometer* poll

(see figure 1) published on 1 June showed that more people opposed the NATO military action than supported it in Austria (43 per cent against 41 per cent), Italy (46 per cent to 37 per cent), and Spain (48 per cent to 34 per cent). Opinion was fairly evenly divided in Finland (44 per cent for bombing, 43 per cent against), Ireland (45 per cent for bombing, 41 per cent against) and, slightly less so, in Germany (52 per cent for bombing, 40 per cent against). The weakest, though still substantial opposition was in Denmark (20 per cent), France (27 per cent) and the UK (33 per cent). Majorities of voters supporting the use of ground troops were found in only three EU states – the UK, France and Denmark.

These *international* forces – the courageous stand of the Yugoslavian people against colossal odds, the solidarity of the Russian people, the opposition of the Chinese government, the Greek anti-war movement, the scale of opposition to bombing within the NATO states and far greater scale in the semi-

colonial countries – combined in the course of the war to materially affect its outcome. They imposed *limits* on NATO and American power – a land invasion was too risky, the bombing was limited by the way pub-

lic opinion had been mobilised behind the lie of a humanitarian war and the significant opposition even to this, China imposed limits on what could be given a fig leaf at the UN. The Russian people and army restricted Yeltsin's ability to betray and even new East European NATO entrants, particularly in the Czech Republic, feared public hostility to war in eastern Europe.

International recomposition

This international anti-war struggle was not amorphous. It was led by definite political forces and to some degree even internationally coordinated. The bombing of Yugoslavia provoked the biggest recomposition of the left wing of the international workers' movement since the period between 1989 and dissolution of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in 1991. Virtually all of the forces which had supported the movements which resulted in the re-introduction of capitalism into eastern Europe – social democracy, the right wing of the Greens, the right wing of the former Communist Parties, and various components of the so-called far left in particular the Fourth International, and in Britain groups like Workers' Liberty, moved further to the right (one exception was the British Socialist Workers' Party which had welcomed the victory of Yeltsin in Russia, but opposed the bombing of Yugoslavia).

Most of the forces which had recognised that whatever the crimes of Stalinism in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe, the restoration of capitalism would be worse, stood out against the bombing and began to forge

new links with each other internationally.

As in the period after the collapse of the Second International on eve of the First World War, or the Comintern following the victory of Hitler in 1933, only the living experience of vast class struggles and wars could clarify and start to unite the politically disparate currents which had emerged out of the left wings of the former Communist Parties in Western Europe after 1989.

After 1914, the political struggle within the Zimmerwald anti-war left, clarified by the rise of anti-war struggles culminating in the October 1917 revolution in Russia and upheavals throughout central Europe, had been the basis on which the Third International was finally brought together in 1919.

After the collapse of the Communist International marked by Hitler's rise to power in 1933, it was only experiences on the scale of the Spanish civil war and then Second World War which produced Communist leaderships in countries like China, Yugoslavia and Vietnam which broke with the political line of the Soviet bureaucracy to lead socialist revolutions in Yugoslavia, China and Vietnam. In Cuba, Fidel Castro led the overthrow of capitalism as part of a movement which, at the time, did not include the Moscow-influenced Communist Party.

Following 1989, the first such test was the Gulf war – which clarified where Gorbachev's concessions to the United States were leading the international workers' movement. The second was the offensive against the welfare state in western Europe, which brought together the parties which had emerged from the left wings of the former Communist Parties mainly in southern Europe with the left social democratic parties outside the Socialist International in northern Europe and Scandinavia to form the New European Left Forum. The consolidation of these parties electorally then posed the problem of how to relate to the larger social democratic parties to their right, particularly where their parliamentary votes could make or break social democratic governments. This issue split, for example, Communist Refoundation in Italy, whose majority quite rightly refused to back the Italian social democratic government's austerity program.

The bombing of Yugoslavia posed a colossal new test. It started to bring together the anti-imperialist socialists in western and eastern Europe for the first time since 1989, in parallel with the international recomposition to the world wide anti-imperialist left wing of the workers' movement – including the Cuban, South African and Indian Communist Parties and the Communist Party of the Russian Federation.

The war also consolidated a shift in the foreign policy of the Chinese Communist Party, reflecting the growing threat to China from US imperialism. The bureaucracy of the

Chinese workers' state remains committed to the strategy of socialism in one country which previously led it into its alliance with the United States against the Soviet Union. But in the face of rapidly escalating US threats against China, the axis of its foreign policy was changed to combat first and foremost the US military threat. This provides no guarantee for the future, but enormously increased the weight of the international anti-war movement, for which the need to construct a united front with China against US imperialism is now a crucial political task, and test.

On the other hand, every social democratic

'The tragedy of the former Yugoslavia...has been induced at all stages by foreign interference, beginning with German encouragement of the break-up of this multi-ethnic country'
South African Communist Party

party in the European Union supported the bombing. This was doubly significant as most of them were in government. The Blair government in Britain was, as is known, the most belligerent supporter of the bombing in any imperialist state, seeking to utilise the war and the opportunity it gave to show its usefulness to the United States, to pose itself as the bridge between Washington and the European Union.

The Red/Green coalition in Germany presided over the first deployment of German forces in war since the fall of Hitler. The Jospin coalition in France played a key role in the bombing. The Italian coalition government led by the Party of the Democratic Left – formerly the standard-bearers of Eurocommunism – defied public opinion to allow Italy to be used as the main take-off point for NATO bombers. The PASOK government in Greece put NATO before the views of its population.

The war marked the final demise of the majority leadership of the German Greens as a force to the left of social democracy. Germany's Green foreign minister played a key role in blocking Green opposition to the bombing at its special conference in May. French Greens also supported bombing. In Britain, the much smaller Green Party opposed the bombing.

The bombing also confirmed the transition of the right wing of the former Communist Parties in eastern and western Europe to right wing social democracy – the former communist president of Poland backed NATO, as did the Italian Party of the Democratic Left government, as did the Hungarian Socialist Party leadership.

The leading forces of the anti-war movement in every imperialist state came

from the socialist left wing of the labour movement.

Within the social democratic parties, minorities opposed the war – with very large opposition in Germany from both the social democratic left, led by Oscar Lafontaine, and significant opposition in a number of other states including, France and Britain, where the part of the Labour Left which opposed bombing provided the parliamentary platform of the anti-war movement.

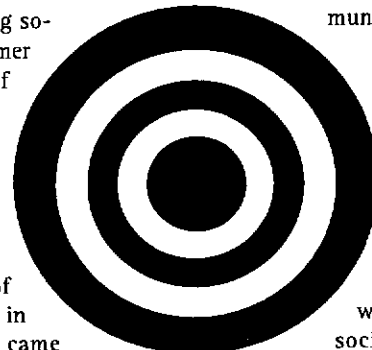
The New European Left – the German Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), Communist Refoundation in Italy, the United Left in Spain, the Greek Communist Party and Synaspismos, as well as left wing social democrats in Greece, the United Left in Spain, and so on – many of which originated in the left wing of the former Communist Parties, played a key role in the European anti-war movement. These parties are linked in the New Euro-

pean Left Forum which took an important initiative at the end of the war in inviting parties from eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to its first meeting after the war, in Madrid, to discuss the common anti-NATO struggle in Europe. The Greek left played a leading role internationally with numerous initiatives to draw together the anti-war struggle on a European level.

In Ireland, there were numerous anti-war protests, and on behalf of Sinn Fein, Gerry Adams totally opposed NATO bombing, highlighting the hypocrisy of a British government which lectured the Irish about peace, while bombing defenceless civilians in Yugoslavia.

While opposing the bombing, the Italian Party of Communists (which had split with Communist Refoundation to support a government carrying out welfare cuts) and the French Communist Party refused to make this an issue of confidence in the coalition governments in those states. Had they done so a tremendous blow would have been struck against NATO – with the possible fall of two governments which were absolutely decisive for the bombing campaign. Nothing could justify participation in governments which were bombing Yugoslavia. The French Communist Party also made denunciation of Milosevic a condition for anti-bombing mobilisations, as did the French Fourth Internationalists, the Revolutionary Communist League.

In eastern Europe, the anti-war struggle was mainly led by the left wing forces and parties which emerged from the crisis of the Communist Parties after 1989. In the Czech Republic this was led by the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia which went on to overtake the ruling social democrats at the polls af-



ter the war. In Hungary, left wing members of the social democratic pro-NATO Hungarian Socialist Party, like Tamas Krausz, launched a committee for peace in the Balkans. In Poland, the Polish Socialist Party, which originated in the left wing of Solidarity, played the leading role in the anti-war struggle and its parliamentary motion opposing the bombing was backed by the majority of the former Communist, pro-NATO, Democratic Left Alliance MPs.

Immediately after the bombing some of these forces came together at an international anti-war conference in London organised by the Committee for Peace in the Balkans. Participants included Lothar Bisky, the Chair of the German PDS, MPs and MEPs from the Greek anti-war parties, the Vice Chair of the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, the President of the Polish Socialist Party, the French Communist Party and the Swedish anti-war movement. Although they could not attend, the Chinese Embassy, Communist Refoundation and the Spanish United Left sent their best wishes to the conference. This was the most broad-based conference of the European anti-imperialist left organised in Britain for many years, and marked a decisive breakthrough in links between the left in Britain and Europe.

Internationally, Fidel Castro expressed total solidarity with the Serbs against NATO. The South African Communist Party opposed the bombing, stating: 'Behind the bombing lies a US strategy to push the military presence of NATO ever eastwards. The tragedy of the former Yugoslavia, that has been unfolding over the last decade, has been induced at all stages by foreign interference, beginning with German encouragement of the break-up of this multi-ethnic country.' The Indian Communists also came out in support of Yugoslavia against NATO.

In the United States, a leading role in the anti-war struggle was played by the International Action Centre and Noam Chomsky's ZNet. Former US attorney general Ramsay Clarke played a high profile role in this both during the war and in launching an international tribunal to investigate NATO war crimes following the bombing.

In addition various bourgeois forces also

opposed the bombing for their own reasons. Most importantly, bourgeois nationalist parties in some semi-colonial countries saw no reason to endorse a new international order which could be turned upon their own countries in future. In Britain some Tory politicians and commentators saw no reason to assist the establishment of a US/German hegemony in the Balkans – historically within British imperialism's sphere of influence. In the United States, some right wing Republicans saw the war as a chance to undermine

alliances against the bombing of Yugoslavia irrespective of their views on the history or current politics of the country. This in turn often provided first hand information which helped refute the western media's lies.

Clarifications

The part of the far left which had welcomed the transition from planned economies to capitalism in eastern Europe continued its degeneration in the course of the war. The largest internationally organised such current was the Fourth International. While formally opposing the bombing, the Fourth International played little role in the international anti-war movement because its primary axis before, during and after the bombing was opposition to the Milosevic regime and 'self-determination' for Kosovo – when the real issue was the plan by US imperialism to establish a new NATO colony in the province. The French language journal of the Fourth International, *Inprecor*, codified this orientation with the headline on its editorial: 'Neither NATO, nor Milosevic, self-determination for Kosovars.' This 'third camp', of opposition to the Yugoslav army and NATO, no more existed in the war than it had at the time of the Bay of Pigs US invasion of Cuba or the war in Vietnam. The Fourth International confirmed its trajectory towards the camp of liberal imperialism in the course of the war by calling for support for the International War Crimes Tribunal and its indictment of Milosevic ('Not that we reject the International War Crimes Tribunal nor its indictment of Milosevic' – *From the Balkans War to the world order: balance sheet of the war*, September 1999). Even bourgeois observers were capable of recognising that the



German Greens protesting Joschka Fischer's support for NATO bombing

Clinton. Exploiting these divisions in the imperialist camp was another critical task in maximising the strength of the anti-war movement. The British movement, for example, was quite right to invite Conservative and Scottish Nationalist MPs onto its platform, while making no political concessions to their other views.

An important role in the international war movement was also played by all but the most abjectly pro-NATO currents in the ex-patriot Serb communities. Although the most prominent organised forces in most of these communities are anti-Communist, and though subject to the intense demonisation by the media, they nonetheless mobilised in *de jure* or *de facto* patriotic alliances against the bombing of their country. Their high level of mobilisation was critical to the momentum of many of the anti-war movements. A further test of the anti-war struggles in each country was to link up with these Serbian

Tribunal is a pure instrument of NATO intervention in Yugoslavia. As NATO spokesperson, Jamie Shea, put it on 17 May: 'Without NATO countries there would be no International Court of Justice, nor would there be any International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia because NATO countries are in the forefront of those who have established these two tribunals, who fund these tribunals and who support on a daily basis their activities' (John Luaghland, *The Times*, 17 June 1999)

One of the most grotesque such currents was the British *Workers' Liberty*, whose main activity during the bombing was to participate in the KLA's small pro-NATO counter-demonstrations against the anti-war movement – on which the main flags were always that of NATO, alongside the union jack and the stars and stripes.

The left wing intelligentsia was also deeply polarised by the war. In the United States fig-

ures like Noam Chomsky played a crucial role in debunking the lies of the US government on the war and organised an international call by Jewish intellectuals to the German Green Party calling for opposition to the bombing. In Britain, *New Left Review* vigorously opposed the bombing, with Tariq Ali and Peter Gowan, among others, speaking on anti-war platforms.

No organised international movement existed or coordinated these forces. But, nonetheless, some international coordination did exist: between China, Russia and Yugoslavia; between the New European Left Parties which opposed the bombing in western and eastern Europe; between the different anti-war committees all over the world, notably via the internet; through delegations to Yugoslavia at the height of the bombing. The anti-war struggle in each country was built upon and reinforced by this *international* alignment of forces against NATO.

The most important lesson of the struggle against the bombing of Yugoslavia is that, while no individual country can withstand the full might of US imperialism and its allies, no single country should be allowed to stand alone. The war revealed, like Vietnam before it, that the United States is powerful but not omnipotent. Its achilles heel is that, because it aspires to hegemony over the entire planet, every progressive struggle in the world is a problem for the United States, with the result that it can rarely focus its full resources upon a single opponent.

The core of the strategy necessary to fight the new US-led colonialism is the necessity of bringing together the broadest possible international solidarity with those in the front line of the imperialist attack. Che Guevara encapsulated this when the Vietnamese people were in the front line of the struggle for human civilisation and progress against the US war machine — with his call for international solidarity 'Create two, three, many Vietnams.' Lenin made the same point in the last article he ever wrote, where he noted: 'In the last analysis the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China, etc, account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe.' (*Better fewer, but better*, Collected Works, Vol 33)

Due to the endurance of the people of Yugoslavia, the left wing of the international workers' movement took a giant step forward in its political clarification and its international alliances during the bombing of Yugoslavia. The most important single task at the end of the war is to build upon that international realignment, forge closer links and deepen discussions in order to create the most powerful possible starting point for the struggle against the next imperialist descent into barbarism.

Given that imperialism has not yet finished its project of Balkanising and pacifying Yugoslavia — solidarity with that country's people will be the first issue around which this recomposition moves further forward.

Declaration of the MPs and MEPs attending the 26 June conference

Consequences of NATO's war on Yugoslavia in London



We believe that NATO's war against Yugoslavia was illegal, unacceptable, immoral and a grave threat to world peace.

It was illegal to launch a unilateral military attack on a sovereign state. NATO ignored the United Nations and violated the Charter of the United Nations and other fundamental tenets of international law in launching its war on Yugoslavia. The conduct of the war was illegal because, by targeting civilian facilities like television and radio stations, electricity and water supplies, it violated the Geneva Conventions drawn up to protect civilian life. If NATO can trample on international law then the world will be governed not by law but by force — and all states will draw the appropriate conclusions.

It was immoral because the bombing provoked precisely the humanitarian catastrophe which, we were told, it was designed to prevent. This immorality was deepened by the destruction of the civilian infrastructure of Yugoslavia. And the immorality continues today with NATO's declarations that there will be no economic aid to reconstruct Yugoslavia unless a government comes to power of which NATO approves and, because NATO is now presiding over precisely the kind of ethnic cleansing, now of the Serbian population of Kosovo, which it has declared repeatedly to be a crime against humanity.

NATO's action threatens world peace because it sets a precedent of unilateral military action in flagrant disregard of the process and institutions of international law — the United Nations in particular. NATO's new 'strategic concept', adopted at its 50th anniversary summit in Washington on 23/24 April, provides for future such offensive actions throughout the entire Euro-Atlantic region — that is the whole of western Europe, eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. This smacks of a new age of colonialism.

It was not NATO, but the international anti-war movement, which represented the views of the majority of the population of the world during the course of this war. We believe that movement should continue to work together.

1. We believe that NATO, which claimed it had no quarrel with the civilian population of Yugoslavia now has a moral and legal responsibility to fund the reconstruction of the civilian infrastructure of the whole of Yugoslavia destroyed by NATO bombs — without any political preconditions. Otherwise to the crime of the war itself, and the thousands of injuries and deaths caused by it, will be added many more unnecessary deaths and illnesses of the young, the old, the weak and the sick.

2. We believe that all ethnic cleansing must cease. To this end the United Nations resolution providing for the demilitarisation of the KLA should be implemented immediately.

3. We believe that the anti-war movement should continue to work together to oppose further NATO 'out of area' wars in the Balkans and every other part of the 'Euro-Atlantic region'.

John Dragasakis MP, Synaspismos, Greece.

Stratis Korakas MP and MEP, EEDYE and Communist Party of Greece.

Dimitris Tsovolas MP, Social Democratic Party of Greece.

Emmanuel Bakopoulous MEP, Socialist Democratic Party of Greece.

Prof Lothar Bisky, Chairman, Party of Democratic Socialism, Germany.

Helmut Scholz, Head of International Policy, Party of Democratic Socialism.

Piotr Ikonowicz MP, President Polish Socialist Party.

Miloslav Ransdorf MP, Vice Chairman Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia.

Christer Lundgren, Swedish anti-war movement.

Tony Benn MP, Alice Mahon MP, Jeremy Corbyn MP.

A new kind of anti-war movement

The bombing of Yugoslavia polarised every section of British society. In the face of blanket media support for bombing, and with Tony Blair blocking any vote on the issue in parliament, tens of thousands of people took part in demonstrations, meetings, petitioning and other protests against NATO bombing. They were the most visible expression of the views of the near one third of the population which consistently opposed bombing. This movement, organised by the Committee for Peace in the Balkans, united MPs, trade unionists, the Serb community in Britain, CND activists, the section of the left which opposed bombing and a network of local groups all over the country.

The bombing of Yugoslavia was accompanied by the vigorous promotion of an ideology of 'liberal imperialism' by Tony Blair and Bill Clinton. Bombing Yugoslavia was posed as an exercise in humanitarianism. US imperialism's crimes in Korea, Vietnam, Central America and the Middle East were put aside, as it was rehabilitated and re-invented, as the supposed leader of the 'international community' disinterestedly upholding human rights and reluctantly driven to the use of force against foreign dictators. This ideological construction, of a new messianic world role for US-led imperialism at the end of the twentieth century, has as much reality as the notion that British imperialism in the nineteenth century carved up Africa, and slaughtered millions of its inhabitants, in order to promote Christian values. But it deeply influenced the liberal intelligentsia and divided the Labour Left, the trade union bureaucracy and the leadership of CND.

Its exponents, particularly the *Guardian* newspaper, were the most belligerent supporters not only of bombing, but of a land invasion. Indeed calling for ground troops – which would have meant a vastly greater blood-letting by NATO – was posed by 'left' supporters of NATO intervention as a humanitarian alternative to bombing.

This resurgence of liberal imperialism had been reinforced by the decade-long campaign of demonisation of the Serbs which had been used to cover-up the imperialist intervention and break up Yugoslavia. The resulting public ignorance allowed the myth of disinterested intervention to be maintained.

The daily diet of lies in the media about Serb genocide were used to relativise NATO's atrocities in the mainstream media. Each glimmer of truth which got through was countered by a still greater Serb atrocity claim.

This approach was effective in weakening opposition to the bombing and obscuring the simple reality – that a tiny and impoverished country of little more than ten million people was being unilaterally attacked by an alliance of the richest and most powerful imperialist states in the world, utilising weapons de-

signed to destroy a country's infrastructure without sustaining a single casualty of its own. If NATO's propaganda were to be believed, opposition to bombing would have been equivalent to appeasement of Adolf Hitler – a slander articulated by Clare Short in the House of Commons.

An internationally coordinated operation was organised through the European TUC, and backed by the TUC in Britain, to block opposition to NATO bombing within the unions. The TUC general council endorsed the statement of the European TUC which both supported NATO bombing and demanded the withdrawal of Yugoslav forces from Kosovo as the precondition for any 'suspension' of bombing by NATO.

The Labour left was so divided that its parliamentary leadership – the Socialist Campaign Group – took no position on the bombing. *Tribune* newspaper editorialised in support of a land invasion. CND's national leadership responded slowly and weakly to NATO bombing.

In these circumstances, the principal tasks of those opposed to the war was to unmask the lies upon which it was based, to draw out the consequences of the precedent of unilateral NATO action set by the war, to get out the truth about the conduct of the war and thereby to mobilise the maximum possible opposition to it. On these bases, an effective and highly active anti-war movement was created by the Committee for Peace in the Balkans. It had two basic political components. First, the anti-imperialist current which opposed NATO intervention into the Balkans on principle as an exercise in US-led colonialism, and supported Yugoslavia against NATO. This current was a minority even within the organised anti-war movement. But it played a leading role and succeeded in uniting with the second, and far larger, component of the anti-war movement – those who accepted much of the NATO propaganda about the crimes of the Yugoslav regime, but nevertheless, considered that NATO bombing, particularly carried out without the sanction of the UN Security Council, would make a bad situation worse.

On these bases the Committee for Peace in the Balkans helped mobilise tens of thousands of people during the course of the war. Three national demonstrations were held – with 10,000 on 11 April, 25,000 on 8 May, and 20,000 on 5 June. Regional demonstrations took place in Glasgow, Cardiff, Birmingham, Manchester, Sheffield, Leeds, Oxford, Cambridge and elsewhere. Dozens of well attended public meetings were organised.

In addition, the Serb community in Brit-



ain maintained a 24-hour, round-the-clock protest outside Downing Street from the first day of bombing till the end of July, with weekend rallies attracting up to 3000 people.

The blanket media bias, vilification of journalists who showed the slightest independence and NATO's tactic of targeting Yugoslav broadcasters, were vigorously contested, by the Campaign for Media Accuracy and Free Speech on War. This was officially backed by the National Union of Journalists. Its launch rally drew 800 people, mainly media workers. It responded to the bombing of Serbian television with protests at BBC studios throughout the country – with more than 1,000 turning out in London on 24 April. John Pilger and other anti-war journalists, together with the MPs in the forefront of the anti-war movement, kept constant pressure on the media to acknowledge the existence of opposition to the bombing on the part of a third of the population. Media study units at a number of universities also assisted the anti-war movement by taking the war as a case study of how the media is abused to mislead public opinion. The *Morning Star* was the only daily newspaper to oppose the bombing and publicise the activities of the anti-war movement.

In parliament, although the government refused to allow a vote on the war, 20 or so MPs, led by Alice Mahon, Tony Benn and Tam Dalyell, provided a national platform for the anti-war movement.

As the weeks of bombing went on, cracks also started to appear in the pro-NATO front of the trade union bureaucracy. The national executive of Britain's biggest union, UNISON, rejecting pressure from national officials to toe the TUC line, adopted by a majority of 24 to 21 a call for 'a halt to all offensive military action, including air strikes which serve only to compound human suffering and deepen ethnic divisions'. At the national conferences of the Fire Brigades Union and National Association of Teachers in Further and Higher Education, opposition to NATO bombing was carried in motions backed by the unions' national leaderships. NATFHE affiliated to the Committee for Peace in the Balkans and its general secretary spoke at one of the anti-war demonstrations. A message of support was read to the final anti-war demonstration from Rodney Bickerstaffe, general secretary of UNISON.

Figures, like the playwright Harold Pinter and Maggie Steed helped to mobilise opposition to the bombing from within the arts world. Pinter's starting point was simple and correct – far from being a champion of humanitarianism, US imperialism is the main violator of human rights in the world today.



By and large the student movement did not mobilise against the war. The Labour Students' leadership of NUS voted to support bombing and to call for a land invasion of Kosovo by NATO. *Workers' Liberty*, which for historical reasons has some, albeit declining, influence in the student movement, opposed all of the actions against NATO bombing stating 'Socialists cannot one-sidedly denounce NATO and the US.' Anti-war students, notably the Socialist Workers' Party and the Student Broad Left, organised a series of debates between supporters and opponents of bombing. The pro-bombing lobby became more and more reluctant to take up these invitations.

This was also the first major war in which the internet demonstrated its efficacy in rapidly circulating information among anti-war activists internationally. This played a critical role in breaking stories like the real content of the Rambouillet ultimatum and pooling information about issues ranging from Serb civilian casualties to the activity of the anti-war movement – including the daily news releases of the Committee for Peace in the Balkans. It also assisted the building of international alliances against the war including contact with people in Serbia.

United against bombing

The approach taken by the Committee was to try to mobilise all opponents of NATO bombing irrespective of their views on the internal politics of Yugoslavia.

The first mobilisations against bombing were organised by the British Serbian Alliance for Peace (BSA) outside Downing Street. Britain has a large Serb community of at least

70,000 people. Irrespective of their views on the regime in Belgrade, they totally opposed their relatives, friends and compatriots being bombed by NATO. As a result, thousands of Serbs, many second generation, decided that they had to stand up and be counted among those protesting against NATO bombing. The BSA united these in a patriotic alliance. In addition to their own round-the-clock protest, they also successfully linked up with the broader anti-bombing movement. This was profoundly educational for other anti-war activists. Most of the Serbs in the local and national movement were not supporters of Milosevic which made their detailed refutations of NATO's lies, including those about the current regime, all the more convincing.

The Serbian community undoubtedly constituted the largest single part of the anti-war movement. They were very disciplined in not allowing differences over Yugoslav politics to divide either themselves or the wider movement. The Committee for Peace in the

Balkans overcame any potential splits on such issues by agreeing that the sole basis for participation in its activities was the slogan: 'Stop NATO bombing Yugoslavia.' At the same time, participants were asked to respect the diversity of the movement by allowing the Committee's slogans, literature and banners to lead all of its activities so as to convey that united message to the wider public. This approach was broadly respected. The ultra-left groups who opposed this approach largely boycotted the anti-war movement. In local committees, where groups *Socialist Outlook*, *Workers' Liberty* and *Workers' Power* tried to divide the movement around slogans like 'self-determination for Kosovo' or 'arm the KLA' – the mainstream core of the campaign, understanding the need for unity against the bombing, rejected these proposals.

In parliament, although the main opposition to the bombing came from the Labour left – together with Tam Dalyell – the Socialist Campaign Group of Labour MPs was divided. One wing of the Group, a little less than a third, argued that Milosevic regime was fascist and military action by NATO was justified.

On the anti-bombing side which was larger, none of the MPs supported the political regime in Yugoslavia, but all rejected NATO intervention, both because its goals had nothing to do with those it professed and because, by usurping the role of the United Nations, it tore up the entire post-World War Two framework of international law. Tony Benn argued correctly that the dissolution of the Soviet Union had inaugurated a revival of imperialist aggression with all of the lies

and hypocrisy traditionally used to justify this. Alice Mahon, a member of the NATO parliamentary assembly, related her experience in witnessing NATO's systematic colonisation of eastern Europe and the Balkans.

A third group, the 'middle ground', used examples like the Spanish civil war in the 1930s to argue that socialists could not oppose foreign intervention into a sovereign state on principle, but doubted whether NATO's motives had anything to do with humanitarianism. Both the left and the centre agreed that bombing made the situation worse.

The inability of the parliamentary Labour left to take common stand against the bombing, unlike its unity against the Gulf war nearly ten years earlier, demonstrated just how deeply the ideology of liberal imperialism had influenced the left and the effectiveness of the demonisation of the Serbs. It weakened the anti-war movement so that there were virtually no Labour Party, and only a handful of trade union, banners on the national demonstrations.

Even so, those MPs who did oppose the bombing had an impact out of all proportion to their numbers – speaking to meetings all over the country and providing a national platform in parliament for the anti-war movement. They also provided a link with the international anti-war movement, with Alice Mahon visiting Yugoslavia at the height of the bombing, and the Committee convening an international conference in London at the end of the war.

The largest number of MPs to sign anti-bombing motions in parliament was 16, in contrast to the 55 who voted against the Gulf war, indicating the greater gap between the scale of public opposition to the conflict, shown by opinion polls and organised opposition.

Opinion polls had shown 19 per cent of voters opposed the Gulf war prior to its onset, while 28 per cent opposed bombing Yugoslavia. But these ratios were reversed when it came to demonstrations. Hundreds of thousands marched against the Gulf war, compared to the tens of thousands who opposed NATO bombing Yugoslavia. This contrast reflected two differences between the conflicts. First, the public widely believed that the Gulf war, projected as a land war from the start, would involve significant NATO casualties – this galvanised a larger proportion of those who did oppose the action to do something about it. Second, bombing Yugoslavia was preceded by an unremitting propaganda barrage over many years against the Serbs. The

exodus of Albanian refugees during the bombing appeared to lend credence to this.

The relative weakness of the mobilisation of the peace movement against the bombing reflected these realities. During the Gulf war, CND participated in the anti-war campaign, produced its own publicity, and called a demonstration of 40,000 people as well as sponsoring the 100,000-plus demonstration on the eve of the war. Its membership overwhelmingly opposed the NATO action against Yugoslavia and CND activists played prominent roles in local anti-war groups. Nationally, CND sponsored and spoke at the Committee for Peace in the Balkans demonstrations, but devoted virtually no resources and produced no literature to oppose NATO bombing. It took 15 days to issue its first statement which merely noted: 'We have already seen that bombing does not stop a dictator such as Milosevic.' As we will see below, CND activists made their views clear on this at the conference which followed the war.

The most significant trade union activity during the war was on the part of the NUJ. Without taking a position on the bombing as such, its general secretary and a number of leading officials participated actively in the campaign against media bias. Together with the International Federation of Journalists, it strongly and publicly condemned the murder of Serb media workers by NATO and its targeting of media as 'military targets'.

In spite of the theoretical confusions of its theory of state capitalism – which made it unable to grasp fully why Yugoslavia was being attacked, the SWP played an active and constructive role in the Committee for Peace in the Balkans, helped to establish many of the local groups and opposed attempts to narrow the basis of the movement.

In terms of the intelligentsia, the *New*

Statesman opposed bombing from the 'anti-Milosevic-but-bombing-will-make-it-worse' perspective, but unlike during the Gulf war under editor Steve Platt, never agreed to speak on anti-bombing or even free speech platforms. *New Left Review* and *Labour Focus on Eastern Europe* opposed the war vigorously.

The anti-war movement was assisted by some significant divisions in the bourgeois camp over the NATO action. Reflecting historical opposition to the creation of a German sphere of influence in the Balkans, some Tory MPs and newspaper columnists prominently opposed the war and at least one Conservative MP spoke on the anti-war demonstrations. The Scottish Nationalist Party and Plaid Cymru also opposed the bombing – from the perspective that it would strengthen not weaken Milosevic. The Committee's approach to these forces was to welcome their participation, without making any concessions to their other views.

A vital lesson

All those who participated in the anti-war struggle were educated by the experience. It broke through the wall of isolation erected around Yugoslavia over the last decade. Contact with the Serb community allowed activists to grasp just how ludicrous most of NATO's claims about Serbia are. Delegations to Yugoslavia did not find the dictatorship portrayed by NATO propaganda.

Other lies have started to unravel. The real targets of the bombs and missiles have become clear. NATO's attitude to ethnic cleansing has been clarified – driving Serbs, Roma and others out of Kosovo, Croatia or Bosnia is perfectly acceptable and has been accepted, so that Serbia now has the biggest refugee population in Europe. The International War Crimes Tribunal has been exposed as a pure instrument of NATO policy, with Jamie

Shea responding to questions about possible indictments of NATO leaders for war crimes, to the effect that NATO pays the piper and therefore calls the tune.

NATO's declarations that economic sanctions will be maintained against Serbia until it replaces its elected government with politicians who toe the NATO line and the evident threat of renewed military intervention have convinced the anti-war movement that it should continue its activity despite the end of



bombing.

The Committee for Peace in the Balkans has launched a campaign to lift the sanctions and for economic aid to reconstruct the rubble of Yugoslavia. The Committee is seeking to promote a debate which alerts public opinion to the likely future conflicts for which Yugoslavia provided a precedent. It has made clear that it sees itself as simply one component of an international anti-war movement galvanised into existence by the bombing of Yugoslavia.

The debates which the war provoked in the labour and peace movements are also continuing to work through. Anti-war MPs also made clear, from the beginning of the autumn parliamentary sessions, that they will be continuing to seek answers to the questions raised by the war – including lifting sanctions and the threat of new NATO aggression in the Balkans. The Fire Brigades Union moved a motion to the Trade Union Congress in September which pointed out: 'Military action which does not receive the necessary support, as defined by the UN and as witnessed in Iraq and Kosovo, serves to undermine and weaken international laws and institutions thus making military might the arbiter of international conflict.' This was defeated by a 'foreign office amendment' from a civil service union, the IPMS which substituted a call for UN Security Council members not to use their veto in a way that stops the effective implementation and enforcement of UN resolutions.' But it indicated that the debate is going to develop in the unions.

Discussion of the war also erupted at CND's annual conference in September. The general sentiment was that there should have been more vigorous CND opposition to NATO bombing. An attempt to keep a motion on Yugoslavia off the agenda was defeated. Delegates went on to vote: 'NATO states should pay for the damage bombing has inflicted on the civilian infrastructure and environment of Yugoslavia' and called on the British government to support lifting economic sanctions against the whole of Yugoslavia, provide financial assistance for the reconstruction of the civilian infrastructure, clean up the environment and provide humanitarian aid on a non-discriminatory basis. This was carried with just two delegates against. The conference also called for 'Britain's immediate withdrawal from the NATO nuclear alliance and the latter's dissolution.'

The campaign against NATO bombing Yugoslavia was an inspiring and moving experience – marching with people whose families and friends faced NATO bombers every night. It was an elementary act of solidarity with a tiny country resisting the might of imperialism. And it was a dress rehearsal for the movement which must be constructed to oppose the next imperialist aggression – and for which the bombing of Yugoslavia established the precedent.

By Hilda Thomas

Shock waves in Asia



Nato's war on Yugoslavia sent shock waves through Asia. It is widely understood that the US has set a precedent for unilateral military action which could well be repeated in Asia. It was accompanied by fighting in Kashmir and followed by the military coup in Pakistan and UN deployment of troops in East Timor.

Simultaneously with its war on Yugoslavia, the US moved to promote an arms race against China in Asia and deepen its military alliances in the region, particularly with Japan. This summer the Japanese parliament dropped previous restrictions on military cooperation with the US which limited it to direct defence of Japan and agreed to joint development of an anti-ballistic missile system. This together with increased US arms sales to Taiwan and a new military pact with the Philippines is seen in China as moving towards the construction of a NATO-like alliance in Asia.

As Yu Hua, a researcher at the China Institute of Contemporary International Relations, in *Liberation Army Daily*, summed up the Chinese view of these moves: 'As everyone knows, the two main components of America's post-Cold war global strategy are the new Japan-U.S. defence co-operation guidelines and eastern expansion of NATO. In Europe, the United States is uniting Europe to hold back Russia, while in Asia it is joining with Japan to check China. (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 17 June 1999)

The three biggest states in Asia – China, India and Russia – all have good reason to fear the tactic of Balkanisation currently being applied by the west to Yugoslavia.

The Soviet Union has already been broken up leaving 25 million Russians stranded outside Russia, which itself is fighting wars against secessionists in the Caucasus. As a result, vast forces in Russia oppose any further fragmentation of the country.

China's Communists came to power in a socialist revolution in 1949 precisely because the Chinese capitalist class proved incapable of overcoming the plundering, national humiliation and effective division of the country imposed by competing imperialist powers of the preceding 100 years. The increased aggressiveness of the US fol-

lowing the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and Washington's growing alarm at the success of the Chinese economic reform which is inevitably increasing the country's weight in world politics, is the context in which weakening China has now become a central goal of US foreign policy.

The Chinese leadership clearly understands that, given the difficulty of absorbing a country of 1.2 billion people, renewed imperialist penetration of the country would obviously include trying to break it up into digestible pieces.

India is the largest capitalist semi-colonial state in the world with a population which has just reached one billion. A comparison of social conditions in India and China provides a stark demonstration of the difference which the overthrow of capitalism in the latter has made in terms of living conditions, health and education. While China has seen one of the largest and most broad-based increases in living standards in history since 1978, India, on the other hand, has seen the number living on less than a dollar a day rise from 300 million in the 1980s to 340 million in 1997.

Nonetheless, despite the capitalist squalor which the majority of India's population endures, the country's sheer size allowed its capitalist class to create a greater degree of independence of imperialism than most other semi-colonial states – in particular by balancing between the Soviet Union and imperialism.

In the wake of the dissolution of the USSR, imperialist demands for the opening of the Indian economy have inevitably increased and its rulers are aware that future attempts to increase imperialist dominance of the country would take the form of promoting a process of Balkanisation of the sub-continent. Indeed, the first step in this was the legacy of British rule with the partition of the country to create Pakistan – now the principal US ally in South Asia – a process which cost a million lives and was followed

by three wars before the recent Kargil conflict. Pakistan's goal is precisely to break up India – and both countries now have the means to manufacture and deliver nuclear weapons.

Thus, from different class bases, the governments of China, Russia and India all stood out against the bombing of Yugoslavia. Former Russian Prime Minister Yegeny Primakov aimed to build upon this de facto common ground to try to create a strategic alliance of the three countries against the US.

Following the end of the Vietnam war China was, in effect, in an alliance with the US against the Soviet Union. This was a decisive factor in allowing the US to concentrate its arms race on cracking the Soviet economy. However, following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, China itself is now more threatened than at any time since the Korean war. Having brought down the Soviet Union the US is able to focus its attention upon attempting to destroy the next most powerful non-capitalist state – China.

In these circumstances, Chinese foreign policy has been shifting – to the point where today it views the main threat it faces as the preparations by the United States for a major confrontation to prevent China emerging as the most powerful state in Asia over the next decade or so. This has led China to a rapprochement and diplomatic cooperation with Russia against both the bombing of Iraq and the bombing of Yugoslavia. More recently, in August, the Russian and Chinese governments agreed on steps to resolve border disputes in central Asia – where the US is trying to build new alliances with former Soviet states – and denounced what Chinese President Jiang Zemin called: a 'new display of hegemony relying on force.' This situation is also leading to attempts to change China's relations with India. Both of these moves are totally opposed by the US.

A typical perception was that of Ruan Wun, editor of the Chinese magazine *Viewpoint*, who commented on concerns about proposed Chinese concessions to gain entry into the World Trade Organisation: 'As soon as America has weakened or gained control over vital parts of our country's economy, then it may treat us in the same way it treated its former ally, Yugoslavia. It may use military intervention to achieve its strategic aim of splitting up China or making China collapse.'

The bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade simply accelerated the reappraisal and shift in China's foreign policy and alliances to defend itself against the US. As Susan V. Lawrence wrote in the *Far Eastern Economic Review* on 17 June: 'Chinese who have been involved in their government's policy debates over the last few weeks say that Beijing's world view has been profoundly affected not simply by the 7 May bombing of the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade but by the entire NATO military campaign in Yugoslavia. As a result, China is rethinking the

dangers it faces in the world, its military priorities and key diplomatic relationships.'

An article by Frank Ching spelled out the reasons for this in terms which recalled that little more than 50 years ago India was a British colony and China was fighting to emerge from imperialist domination: 'It seems as though the West – or "democratic nations" – can do whatever it wants, as long as it possesses the power to do so, regardless of the rest of the world. The West will decide who is fit to rule and who isn't. This is reminiscent of earlier years, when Europeans invaded and subjugated numerous countries under the pretext of bringing Christianity and civilisation to benighted savages. Colonialism and exploitation were justified in the name of a high cause. Now, as the world stands to enter the twenty-first century, the same argument is being made again. Only this time, instead of Christianity, the banner is democracy and human rights.' He added: 'The 79-day air war in Yugoslavia is over. The West is triumphant, with its actions vindicated. But those opposed to NATO's intervention – including Russia, China and India – remain unconvinced' (*Far Eastern Economic Review*, 22 July).

There have been a series of meetings with key foreign countries that Beijing wants to establish closer or less hostile relations with including not simply Russia – but also India – with the first foreign minister level meeting in June this year. As Zhang Yunling, Director of a key think tank – the Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences – explained: 'The bombing will likely produce stronger Chinese relations with North Korea and India too...China isn't likely to join the US in taking any stance on South Asia again. China will think it more important to improve relations between China and India.'

Whether common Sino-Indian opposition to the bombing of Yugoslavia develops into broader cooperation remains to be seen. There are important obstacles to it – rooted in the different class characters of the Chinese and Indian states as well as the different alliances constructed by the Indian bourgeoisie and the Chinese bureaucracy in the period prior to the dissolution of the Soviet Union.

In 1962 China and India fought a border war at a time when the Sino-Soviet split was deepening as the Soviet Union withdrew aid from China – at that time in the very front line of opposition to American efforts to crush the colonial revolution in Asia.

As the Sino-Soviet conflict deepened, and with India allied to the Soviet Union, the Chinese bureaucracy built up strong relations with the Pakistani regime as part of its orien-

tation to building closer relations with the United States as a counter-weight to the Soviet Union. Although, the Sino-Soviet conflict had originated in Soviet attempts to pursue peaceful coexistence with the US at a time when the Chinese revolution was deeply threatened, it ended up with Washington exploiting the division to maximise its pressure on the USSR and China's criminal invasion of Vietnam in 1979 – attacking the country which had taken the main brunt of imperialist war, with millions of deaths and near total devastation of the country, for the previous decade.

Until this year, the Indian bourgeoisie has treated China as, after Pakistan, its principal adversary in Asia – with its right wing BJP government specifically justifying its nuclear test in the summer of 1998 as directed at defence against China. Defence Minister, George Fernandez, described China as: 'India's enemy number one.' At the same time, the BJP government has tried to build up closer relations with the US and the European Union by dismantling some of the obstacles to imperialist capital in India.

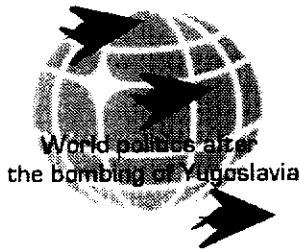
However, these relations started to shift during the bombing of Yugoslavia. Indian ministers explained that in a world where international law could be ignored by the strong, states would inevitably seek to acquire nuclear weapons to deter similar attacks upon themselves. The media opposed the bombing and welcomed the meeting with China in June this year. A typical comment was: 'The mandarins of the [Indian] Foreign Office are also satisfied over the talks Mr Jaswant Singh had in

Beijing with his Chinese counterparts' (*Asian Age*, 17 June 1999). The Opposition Congress Party welcomed the talks, while the mass Communist Party of India (Marxist) embraced the idea, not endorsed by the Indian government, of a bloc of China, Russia and India to oppose US domination of Asia.

During the Pakistani intervention at Kargil in Kashmir earlier this year, China very prominently did not back Pakistan. The danger of any realignment, or simply less hostile relations between China and India, so alarmed Washington that President Clinton eventually personally intervened to instruct its ally Pakistan, which had been its key instrument in the war against the Soviet forces in Afghanistan, to withdraw its forces from Indian territory in Kargil. This retreat then created serious internal problems for the Pakistani government which culminated in the military coup, which Washington has done all but openly welcome.



The Chinese embassy in Belgrade after NATO bombing



The propaganda war

In a speech to the Royal United Services Institute in July Tony Blair's spin doctor, Alistair Campbell, who had been lent to NATO during the bombing of Yugoslavia, explained why the manipulation of public opinion had been a central part of the NATO war: 'That NATO could win militarily was never really in doubt. The only battle we might lose was the battle for hearts and minds', therefore 'the media battle mattered'.

Public opinion and a military victory were indeed as connected as Campbell suggested: while NATO's military superiority over Yugoslavia was total, public opinion – both in Yugoslavia and the NATO states – could nonetheless be a major factor in the war. That is why, on the one hand the western media were fed endless lies and unsubstantiated horror stories, and, on the other hand, the Yugoslav civilian media were treated as key military targets and bombed.

This was most obvious over the issue of a land war. NATO was militarily capable of ground invasion. But it was politically too dangerous: public opinion in the United States and most of the European Union was opposed. German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder argued a ground deployment was 'unthinkable' and Italian prime minister Massimo D'Alema said that 'There are not the political premises to discuss deploying ground troops: US public opinion, still haunted by the ghost of the 52,000 Americans killed in Vietnam, massively opposed a ground invasion. The US Senate persistently refused to back ground troops. This limited NATO's options. BBC's *Newsnight* argued: 'America's reluctance to endanger its soldiers was limiting NATO's freedom of action.' and 'When June's deal was finally done to send in the international Kosovo Force (K-For), the whole operation had to be postponed for 24 hours because US troops were not ready to go in. The reason: the White House had refused to let them go ashore until it was absolutely clear they wouldn't have to fight their way into Kosovo.' [*Newsnight*, 20 August]. Even the much vaunted high tech Apache helicopter gunships were not allowed to fly combat missions for fear of casualties.

This problem was present on two levels. Clinton wished to avoid a ground war, or even pilots flying below 15,000 feet, because the impact on public opinion of US casualties would have been dangerously unpredictable

given the legacy of the 'Vietnam syndrome'. Indeed, the entire US war-fighting strategy is premised on the need to minimise US casualties – not because Washington is particularly concerned about the lives of US soldiers but because it fears the political backlash which can be provoked at home by bodybags arriving in the US. The corollary of this approach, of course, is the historically unparalleled savagery of US war fighting



techniques towards 'enemy' civilian populations. The US pioneered the use of carpet bombing of Germany in World War Two, used atomic bombs on Japanese cities and slaughtered millions in Korea and Vietnam as part of a strategic approach to war which tries to minimise US deaths by maximising the destructive power unleashed on the civilian infrastructure of its antagonists.

Yugoslavia continued the pattern. While Jamie Shea lied about ever mounting numbers of Serb tanks and artillery destroyed, the

real war was directed from 15,000 feet against civilian TV, radio, roads, railways and bridges. That's why at least 1500 civilians were killed by NATO bombing but only '169 soldiers [were] killed in Kosovo under NATO assault and 299 wounded' [Robert Fisk, *Independent* 21 June].

This posed a second problem – of western public opinion on the war. The public had to be deceived as to how the war was being fought – by NATO lies, by vilifying journalists who reported even a little of the truth as 'pro-Serb' and by physically destroying the ability of the Serbs to broadcast their side of the story. At the end of the bombing, the mass expulsion of the Serbs and Roma gypsies from Kosovo was then covered up by the barrage of stories about 'mass graves' – most of which turned out to be empty. By the time the dust settled 200,000 people had been driven from their homes while NATO led forces, which claimed that the entire war had been to prevent ethnic cleansing, looked on.

Nonetheless, even the tiny minority of stories which cast light on NATO's real motives and methods in Yugoslavia seriously rattled Blair, Clinton and their generals. After all if the rationale of the war was 'humanitarianism', pictures of massacred train passengers, refugee columns and media workers did not play well.

So for Campbell the main lesson of the war is that even those few isolated voices in the British media which sounded a note of dissent should have been stifled – just as NATO bombs tried to silence the Serbs means of communicating with the outside world. This provoked a debate – with some sections of the media arguing that if they blinded themselves to every NATO atrocity the material they were pumping out about the Serbs would end up losing credibility. Their argument was that an appearance of balance – a Robert Fisk on the *Independent*, a John Simpson on the BBC,

the occasional Pilger piece in the *Guardian* – was necessary in order to persuade their audiences that the other 95 per cent of their stories regurgitating NATO claims had at least a semblance of objectivity.

Campbell rejects this and argues that the 95 per cent subservience to NATO's propaganda operation during the bombing of Yugoslavia was insufficient. Even to have every mass circulation daily newspaper and the entire broadcast media pro-bombing, when a third of the population was against, was not

enough.

Too much of the truth and too many questions slipped into the media coverage. This is what Campbell meant, in his July speech, when he said that 'next time' NATO 'must have the media set up better prepared'. Any dissent weakened NATO's case and its ability to bomb at will. After all, by the end of the war 82 per cent of Americans thought there should be a pause to allow negotiations.

For Campbell, in war the media are simply an instrument of state policy – media must 'voluntarily' pump out NATO propaganda. For Campbell, it is intolerable that a few journalists have been allowed into print to suggest that NATO 'exaggerated military effectiveness for propaganda purposes', even though this is absolutely true. As NATO troops entered Kosovo and Yugoslavia's withdrew it became clear that 'NATO's 79 day bombing campaign against Yugoslavia, which involved thousands of sorties and some of the most sophisticated precision weapons, succeeded in damaging only 13 of the Serbs' main battle tanks in Kosovo, despite alliance claims of large-scale destruction of Belgrade's heavy armour...It was claimed that up to 60 per cent of Serb artillery and mortar pieces had been hit and about 40 per cent of the Yugoslav army's main battle tanks had been damaged or destroyed. When the Serbs finally withdrew from the province at least 250 tanks were counted out, as well as 450 armoured personnel carriers and 600 artillery and mortar pieces'. [Michael Evans, *The Times* 24 June].

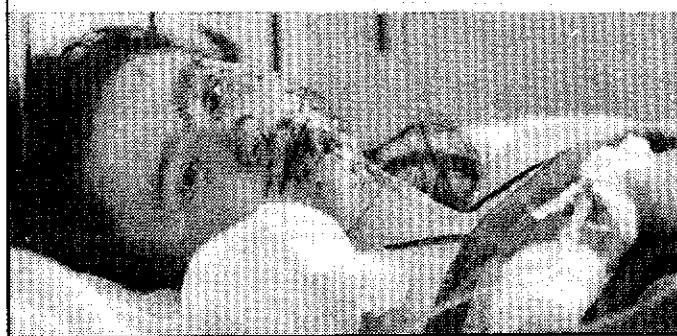
Given that every report of civilian casualties was accompanied by assurances from Jamie Shea and George Robertson that the main result of bombing was that the Serb military machine in Kosovo was being systematically 'degraded' it is not surprising that this information was suppressed for the duration of the air campaign. After all, it demonstrated that NATO's real strategy was not the destruction of Serb tanks in Kosovo – impossible from 15,000 feet – but pulverising the civilian population of Serbia into submission. As Campbell explained, the media in NATO states could not be allowed to report this truth for fear that: 'If public opinion had crumbled, as parts of the media and some military-men-turned-commentators would have had it, there is a risk that it would have had a direct impact upon the determination with which we pursued our goals.'

That is perfectly true. At the end of the bombing NATO settled for less than its full demands because the Serb population endured 78 days of bombing and NATO preferred to settle for what the Russians could impose rather than risk the domestic political repercussions of possible casualties in a land invasion.

Tightening NATO's grip

Since the end of the bombing the importance of the media as a weapon in NATO's armoury has been underlined by attempts to normalise and legitimate new standards of acceptability of propaganda, bias and government control of the mass media during wars and conflicts. Campbell knows it is sheer nonsense to claim that the media was taken in by the 'Serb Lie Machine' – a 'machine' eclipsed by NATO's own propa-

Was she a human shield or another Nato mistake?



The Observer's spin on NATO bombing of the village of Korisa, which killed 87 civilians and injured a hundred more

ganda factory. In reality, he has a clear appreciation of the fact that the vast majority of media in Britain regurgitated NATO's press briefings and of the pressure brought on them to do so – from NATO's high-tech daily press briefings through to the NATO-run pool system which controlled journalists' access to Kosovo as NATO troops entered. ITN's editorial guidelines for reporting 'conflict in the Balkans' stipulated that casualty figures had to be 'checked with the MoD'. Campbell's innuendo that there was 'an unhealthy relationship between some Western journalists and Serb spokesmen' was a thinly veiled warning to all journalists and media workers not to deviate from the NATO script.

Indeed, Campbell's attack on something which did not exist – media independence – had the desired result. Journalists fell over themselves with indignation to defend the media's role in assisting NATO. As John Simpson put it: 'Why did British, American, German and French public opinion stay rock-solid for the bombing, in spite of NATO's mistakes? Because they knew the war was right. Who gave them the information? The media'. [John Simpson, *The Times* 10 July].

Like any good double act, Campbell's assertion that the media was too independent and that greater censorship should be considered a legitimate goal, was followed by a speech from NATO chief spokesman, Jamie Shea, criticising spin doctors. Shea's claim was that NATO's media operation was engaged solely in the presentation of facts, and was not the sophisticated and, more importantly, powerful, propaganda and news management machine that the anti-war move-

ment argued it was. With a straight face, NATO's chief spin doctor went on to claim that spin doctors had damaged the war effort: 'the Media Operations Centre has to be seen as the creation of NATO headquarters and not something imposed on us. During Allied Force the perception that spin doctors more interested in message than accuracy were running our public information activities was damaging' [*Observer* 25 July].

The whole point of this shadowboxing is to reassert the idea that NATO disseminated facts rather than propaganda and to intimidate journalists into compliance. As Jamie Shea claimed repeatedly during the bombing: 'I only, as NATO spokesman, give out information when it is totally accurate and confirmed'. This was the same Jamie Shea who wrote to Aiden White, general secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, on 12 April 1999, in response to concern about targeting of media outlets, that NATO had no policy to 'strike television and radio transmitters' and that 'Allied air missions are planned to avoid civilian casualties, including of course journalists, and have been frequently abandoned when it has proven impossible to distinguish

between military and civilian targets'. Less than a fortnight later Jamie Shea was defending NATO's bombing of a working television station, killing 15 media workers, in Belgrade on 23 April as an operation against a 'legitimate' target. No wonder Alistair Campbell, describes Shea as 'a genuinely nice man'.

The fantasy of an almost amateurish NATO media operation fighting for the truth against the vast resources of Belgrade TV was enhanced further by Campbell when, in his July speech, he summoned up an image of a NATO 'communications outfit' which was hard-pressed, under-resourced and battling-against-the-odds: 'I was amazed that Jamie was still alive. He was doing his own scripts, fixing his own interviews, attending key meetings, handling everything that came his way, large and small. He was the front man for the whole campaign, yet he was expected to do the job without adequate support. No general would go into battle without all the necessary back up. Nor should Jamie Shea have been expected to. If there is a next time, we must have the media set up better prepared'. This absurd claim, of a virtual 'one-man' NATO media outfit, was repeated in BBC2's *Correspondent* programme on the media and the war, broadcast on 16 October.

NATO will define the truth

Campbell argues that there should now be discussion 'about whether our media should treat as equals, in terms of how they are quizzed and covered, the leaders of an Alliance of democratic governments and spokesmen of a disgusting murder machine'.

What he means is that when the US is bombing Korea or Vietnam, Iraq or Yugoslavia all media contact with the victims should be suppressed. This is why John Simpson was denounced by 10 Downing St for reporting such 'amazing' facts as that residents of Belgrade blamed NATO not Milosevic for bombing their bridges, homes and schools. Even talking to ordinary Serb civilians being bombed was viewed as subversion of NATO morale and the public might be led to believe that Yugoslav civilians did not welcome NATO bombs, that Serbs bleed like anyone else.

The number of times Tony Benn, Alice Mahon, Tam Dalyell, or other representatives of the anti-war movement appeared in television studios to discuss the war will be remembered because they were so rare. Opinion polls near the start of the bombing showed about one third of the public opposed, but this was never reflected in the balance of coverage. The premier newspaper of British left-of-centre opinion, the *Guardian*, for example — whose National Union of Journalists branch voted to oppose the bombing — became notorious for not reporting anti-war activities and points of view. National demonstrations (as big as many of the anti-Milosevic demonstrations in Serbia which the *Guardian* lavishly reports)

were simply not reported. One television report showed shots of a London demonstration as reported on Belgrade TV, to get across the idea that opponents of the bombing were some kind of 'fifth column'. Anti-war letters were not printed. Only when the bombing was virtually over, was the *Guardian* prepared to report some opposition to it. On the initiative of the Committee for Peace in the Balkans and the National Union of Journalists, the Campaign for Media Accuracy and Free Speech on War was set up by journalists whose jobs gave them a personal insight into how the public was being lied to.

have no place in NATO's wars.

The problem according to Campbell was that broadcasters chose to see the truth as 'being somewhere in the middle' between NATO and Serb sources, when 'it was not'. That is, NATO's view was 'the truth', and the job of the media was simply to disseminate it.

The 'Big Lies'

The kinds of NATO 'truths' that the media should — and generally did — disseminate unquestioningly, were rehearsed by Campbell in his address to the Royal United Services Institute.

The first 'big lie' is the idea of the world's first 'humanitarian war'. As Campbell put it, NATO was supposedly fighting 'the worst barbarism since World War Two'. Leaving aside the United States' calculated murder by atomic bombs of the people of Nagasaki and Hiroshima when the outcome of that war was



Nonetheless some editors argued that by asking NATO at least a few embarrassing questions they were showing their impartiality and respect for the public's intelligence. It is this which Campbell seeks to change. His point is that impartiality and objectivity

already a foregone conclusion, this absurd claim ignores the imperialist murders of millions in Korea, Vietnam, El Salvador, Nicaragua and the Gulf war. And of course countless millions have died, and continue daily to do so, as a result of US economic policies.

Some questioned the overarching myth that NATO peddled — that this was a new type of war, a 'humanitarian' war. Or 'the world's first "anti-genocidal" war' as the *Observer* termed it, in its eight page, post-war supplement 'How the war was won' by Peter Beaumont and Blair-enthusiast Patrick Wintour (*Observer* 18 July).

The bombing started as a means to force Yugoslavia to accept the occupation of Kosovo under the terms of the Rambouillet ultimatum. The claim that the war was to protect Albanian refugees only arose after the bombing had started. There was no significant refugee crisis before NATO's intervention. The United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) reported its first registered refugees outside Kosovo on 27 March, three days after bombing began. Nonetheless, the exodus of refugees from Kosovo was then translated into the reason the bombing.

As the bombing progressed it leaked out via the internet, not the mass media, that officials of the US state department had admitted that at Rambouillet the US had 'deliberately set the bar higher than the Serbs could accept' [George Kenney, the *Nation* 14 June] because the US wanted to bomb Serbia. When John Pilger said as much in the *Guardian*, the paper's diplomatic editor claimed Pilger had invented the sections of the Rambouillet accord which would give NATO access to and

Independent media too independent for NATO

In a blatant attempt to control the flow of facts about what is happening under the Kfor/KLA regime in Kosovo, the United Nations has appointed a 'media commissioner' with sweeping powers in the region. On 24 October it was announced that Bernard Kouchner, head of the UN civilian mission for Kosovo, had appointed OSCE media director Douglas Davidson as temporary media commissioner in Kosovo, and the establishment of a 'regulation regime' for all media. Under this 'regime' Kouchner and Davidson will have the right to issue permits and otherwise control the work of media in Kosovo.

The decision follows political attacks by the west on anti-Milosevic, western-funded media in Yugoslavia for failing to propagandise in favour of NATO bombing. Journalists from pseudo-independent publications and organisations in Yugoslavia, which receive funding from US intelligence operations euphemistically termed 'western donors', report being told, at private meetings in Budapest in July and August, that they had let down their Western patrons by opposing the bombing and insufficiently reporting NATO claims of genocide against ethnic Albanians.

Ljiljana Smajlovic, foreign editor of *Evropljanin* — whose publisher, a prominent opponent of Milosevic, was shot dead on Orthodox Easter Sunday this year, opposed NATO bombing as 'illegal, illegitimate and immoral' — has circulated a report of a meeting organised by the OSCE and western funded 'human rights' organisations, held in Milocer, Montenegro on 10-12 September. At the meeting Serbian independent media were told they were in need of 'denazification'. NATO's problem, as Smajlovic comments, is that even Western-funded organisations opposed NATO bombing: 'censorship and propaganda seem to have had precious little to do with it'. She reports Dragoljub Zarkovic, editor of the Belgrade weekly *Vreme*, saying that 'whoever thinks that the Serbian people did not have enough information during the war is a fool. There were satellite dishes, FM stations broadcasting foreign news, the Internet... whoever wanted information in Serbia was able to get it.'

legal immunity in the whole of Yugoslavia, not just Kosovo. Pilger was, however, perfectly correct.

Nonetheless, Campbell repeats the NATO mantra of a 'humanitarian' war to help the Kosovo refugees, and is busy in the creation of a new myth: 'the worst barbarism' since 1945. This claim of defending 'civilisation against barbarism', advanced by Tony Blair during the bombing, was answered by playwright Harold Pinter: 'The truth is that neither Clinton nor Blair gives a damn about the Kosovar Albanians. This action has been yet another blatant and brutal assertion of US power using NATO as its missile.' [Anti-war demonstration, London 5 June]. The refusal to allow any but a handful of refugees into the NATO states confirmed Pilger's point.

NATO's 'humanitarianism' – which included using cluster bombs and depleted uranium – did not stretch to protecting Serbs being either murdered by the KLA or driven out of Kosovo: in the weeks following the end of bombing UNHCR estimated that 180,000 left Kosovo in terror for their lives. NATO's General Wesley Clark insisted that 'KLA leaders are not organising a concerted campaign to drive out Serbs' [Chris Bird, *Guardian* 18 August]. After all, if it were admitted that they were then questions might be asked as to why they too, like Serbia's leaders, are not being indicted as 'war criminals'. Neither does humanitarianism include acting to prevent the 'humanitarian disaster in Serbia this winter' which the Economist Intelligence Unit estimates will follow from a denial of aid in the context of the 'enormous damage on the Yugoslav economy and infrastructure' inflicted by NATO's bombing campaign [Larry Elliott *Guardian* 23 August].

The second and related myth is that of the 'genocidal' war. This utilised the 'Nazi' label invented by the US PR firms hired to devise the demonisation campaign against the Serbs.

The casual references to the Serbian 'dictatorship', the 'disgusting murder machine', the 'Serb Lie Machine' and so on which peppered Tony Blair and George Robertson's pronouncements throughout the bombing set the tone for media reporting from the outset. German defence minister Rudolf Scharping claimed that Yugoslav forces in Kosovo had set up 'concentration camps' [*Telegraph* 1 April 1999]. A few days into the bombing George Robertson began referring to 'a humanitarian intervention' against a 'genocidal' power. [Beaumont and Wintour, *Observer* 18 July]. Under an article entitled 'Serbs use 'slave labour' to hide mass slaughter' the *Independent on Sunday* claimed that 'A forced "Red Army" is being deployed by Serbian

forces in Kosovo to dig mass graves and clear up the evidence of atrocities' – waving the twin ghouls of fascism and bolshevism in front of readers [18 April]. George Robertson consistently referred to 'Milosevic's murder machine'.

Without any evidence, Robin Cook insisted on the existence of 'rape camps': 'Young

your country is going to look like if this continues.' [*International Herald Tribune*, 25 May].

No evidence whatsoever has been found to substantiate the genocide charge and the puzzle of a 'fascist' dictatorship in which western-funded opposition parties organise regular legal demonstrations and own their own media is lost on the 'free' mass media of NATO-land.

However, having asserted the existence of Nazi-style systematic killing, concentration camps and mass graves – 'There is now mounting evidence of detentions, summary executions and mass graves' declared Jamie Shea [*Independent on Sunday*, 18 April] – following the settlement, NATO set about asserting their discovery. On 19 June, virtually every national newspaper and television news carried a *drawing*, issued by the Ministry of Defence, claiming to be locations of mass graves: 'Where the MoD says bodies are buried' – 'reported or found.'

[*Guardian* 19 June]. The claims, repeated ad nauseam, did not ask the MoD source for evidence.

Where are the 'mass graves'?

Even the factual reports by western agencies beginning to come out of Kosovo contradict this mountain of speculation. These reports admit a total failure to find mass graves. On 11 October, the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Republic of Yugoslavia (ICTY) reported that the Trepca mines in Kosovo, where it had been claimed that the bodies of 700 murdered Albanians were hidden, in fact contained no bodies whatsoever (*Where are Kosovo's killing fields*, STRATFOR.COM, 18 October).

The ICTY is made up of teams from 15 NATO states. The biggest single number is from the United States. This team, under the authority of the FBI, has conducted the most thorough-going investigations, yet of 30 sites reported found, the total bodies found is 200.

The Spanish team has also said that it has found no mass graves. It has reported finding a total of 187 bodies, all buried in individual graves.

One of the sites the investigation has visited is that in Ljubenic, near Pec, where it had been claimed that 350 bodies were buried: a *Times* report on 10 July was headlined 'Serbs "killed 350 in orgy of violence"' – although the article contained no such evidence. It quoted Captain Attilio Andre of the Italian army in Pec saying, of the claimed incident at Ljubenic: 'The figure we are talking about is 350 dead but I cannot confirm that.' A US refugee worker was quoted as saying he had 'seen 11 bodies in the ravine'. When the site was uncovered it reportedly contained

'If you wake up in the morning and you have no power to your house and no gas to your stove and the bridge you take to work is down and will be lying in the Danube for the next 20 years, I think you begin to ask, "Hey Sloba, what's all this about? How much more of this do we have to withstand? And at some point, you make the transition from applauding Serb machismo against the world to thinking what your country is going to look like if this continues.'

General Michael Short,
Commander, NATO air force in Yugoslavia
[*International Herald Tribune*, 25 May].

women are being separated from the refugee columns and forced to undergo systematic rape in an army camp' [*Guardian* 17 April]. Cook was said to have a 'dossier' with details of six Serbian commanders who 'master-minded' atrocities. Geoff Hoon, then a Foreign Office minister, claimed on 17 June that 'around 10,000 people have been killed in more than 100 massacres'. Geoffrey Robinson QC wrote equating Belsen and the Nazi murder machine with the Yugoslavs: 'When Richard Dimbleby told the world about the horrors of Belsen concentration camp, there were victims still alive to testify against political criminals rounded up as the allies advanced. Today the BBC broadcasts from the mass graves and torture centres of Kosovo, mocked by the unrepentant perpetrators of these crimes against humanity as they drive to safety in Serbia' [*Independent on Sunday* 20 June].

Tony Blair explained that the bombing was a 'struggle for values. It is a battle between democratic principles and the evil dictatorship of the Milosevic regime' [*Independent on Sunday* 30 May]. The character of NATO's 'democratic principles' was revealed by General Michael Short, commander of NATO's air force in Yugoslavia, who said, in words ignored by the British mass media, that his military strategy was to pound the civilian population until they capitulated: 'If you wake up in the morning and you have no power to your house and no gas to your stove and the bridge you take to work is down and will be lying in the Danube for the next 20 years, I think you begin to ask, "Hey Sloba, what's all this about? How much more of this do we have to withstand? And at some point, you make the transition from applauding Serb machismo against the world to thinking what

seven bodies.

The scale of the discrepancy between the earlier claims of 'genocide' and 'mass graves' and the reality is so great, however, that as the months following the end of bombing go by, that reports are beginning to surface in the press. Perez Pujol, the pathologist who led the Spanish investigative team was reported by the *Sunday Times* and *Reuters* on 31 October saying he was finishing his investigation, having 'found a total of 187 bodies. Four or five had died from natural causes'. He speculated that he thought 'the final figure of dead in Kosovo will be 2,500 at most'. These embarrassing revelations forced the International War Crimes Tribunal prosecutor to admit, on 10 November, that after months of unhindered access to Kosovo they had found only 2,108 bodies. These had not yet been broken down by nationality. We know that hundreds of Albanian refugees were killed by NATO bombs. Some Yugoslav soldiers and police were killed by NATO (Yugoslavia says 169, NATO claimed 'thousands'). Hundreds of KLA fighters and Serb soldiers were killed in their civil war, plus many civilians were killed by the KLA. If these figures are subtracted from the IWCT total of 2,108 – which, as Perez Pujol said 'includes a lot of strange deaths that can't be blamed on anyone in particular' – we may be left with a few hundred Albanian civilian victims of Serb atrocities. That is far less than the numbers of civilians slaughtered by NATO and certainly not genocide.

An article in the *Daily Mail* on 5 November highlighted the discrepancy: 'The murder of Kosovars by the Serbians was put by the U.S. Defence Secretary William Cohen at 'up to 100,000'. Our own Geoffrey Hoon, Minister of State at the Foreign Office, put the figure at 10,000. The United Nations suggested, with the relative precision which always helps make a claim authoritative, that the figure was likely to prove to be 44,000. The head of the Spanish team sent out ready to provide 2,000 post-mortems left last month having found only 187 corpses, some of which may have been bombing casualties. He guesses that perhaps 2,500 civilians were killed. A study group examining data so far, thinks the total could turn out to be a few hundred...we cannot know at this stage how many Kosovars killed might not have been from the Kosovo Liberation Army, once listed by the US State Department as a "terrorist organisation". Such deaths would suggest crude justice rather than a simple atrocity against civilians...Would the public have supported the war so readily without the death toll being exaggerated? And how many murders justify a massive military campaign, which led us, the Western Alliance, to kill innocent civilians in turn? NATO knew that its actions against such targets as bridges and broadcasting stations were liable, even certain, to kill and maim civilians....The whole war seems to have been a big lie.'

During the bombing, the genocide and 'Serb Nazis' themes were used to stifle rational discussion, and vilify anyone who opposed NATO. Clare Short declared that those opposed to NATO's actions were akin to Hitler apologists: 'They [those opposing NATO's actions in Yugoslavia]

Nato insists bus was not hit by jets

Second bus hit in Nato attack

Serbs say 17 killed as allied raid switches off the lights



would have said "Oh, and Mr Hitler said from his bunker today, and he criticised this bombing", and that the concentration camps weren't there when the war began, so it's our responsibility...Are we capable, our kind of country now, to take military action to defeat monstrous evil?' [Hansard 17 June]. The 'anti-fascist' Clare Short did not, however, flinch from declaring RTS television and its staff in Belgrade a legitimate target – after they had been bombed.

A further consequence of demonising the Serbs in these ways was to justify the treatment of the Serbs under KFOR law in Kosovo. The *Guardian*, which distinguished itself for the savagery of its support for bombing and a land war to stop 'ethnic cleansing' of Albanians, referred to the expulsion of Serbs and Gypsies as 'ethnic self-cleansing'.

The *Independent's* Phil Davison explained that 'It was an ironic sight to see so many Serbs – men, women and children – about to become the region's new refugees. But it was difficult to feel sympathy' [14 June]. BBC *Newsnight's* Matt Frei echoed these sentiments: 'Imagine the Serbs' reversal of fortune today: the rulers have themselves become the refugees, shedding tears of departure and stashing the loot – two phones in the back of the car. Brutality has given way to self-pity. Overnight, the villains think they've become the victims in this war.' [Newsnight 16 June]. Yet some of the reality did filter through. *Time* magazine reported: 'Dejan Backovic, director of the Center for Peace and Tolerance, says: "I tell them to stay, to trust KFOR, to work with them. But we all know that when night falls it's terror time for non-Albanians." The same night that Blagojevec was attacked in her flat the list of violence in the capital included: the gang rape

of a 65-year-old Serb woman a kilometre from Blagojevec's block; the strangling of Lubica Vujovic, a 78-year-old Serb woman; the shooting of an unidentified Serb man; the murder of Serb Momcilo Milenovic and the kidnapping of his son, 15' [Rod Usher, *Time* August 16].

On 18 June the *Guardian* and virtually every other newspaper reported what it called a 'Serb torture chamber' under the headline 'Serb savagery exposed'. The basis of the story was an empty police station with a club, a few knuckle dusters and a knife, reportedly found by KFOR.

The next day the *Guardian* ran a report of a real and verifiable KLA torture chamber – verifiable because the torturers and their victims were still there. This time the report was on page two. The headline said 'KLA attack on informers' implying a certain sense of justice to the 'attack'. It contained 15 badly beaten victims and one man, in his seventies, still chained and who had been beaten to death. The report, however, ran to a mere three paragraphs in a longer article about tensions between Serb and Albanian populations.

The third 'big lie' alluded to in Campbell's speech flows from these grand themes of 'humanitarian' war against a new type of 'Nazi' regime – the idea that Yugoslavia was distinguished from the NATO countries by its lack of a free media. As Campbell pictured it: 'In each of the NATO countries, governments have a duty to govern with consent, to explain to our publics what we are doing and why. Milosevic was under no such constraints and this was an advantage to him, not just in his own media, a personal Lie Machine, but in the way it influenced our countries' own media too'. Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for defence John Spellar argued, in a defence of NATO's bombing the Yugoslav television station RTS, that: 'Here [Britain], and in all the democratic countries of NATO, people are allowed to know the truth of what is happening in this war and to express their views. The media is open and free. I contrast that openness with the situation in Serbia.' [Observer 25 April].

In reality, prior to the bombing, the opposition controlled not only newspapers but, unlike in Britain, radio and television stations in Serbia. Once the bombing started a state of emergency imposed controls on the media – as would be the case in any state under constant aerial bombardment. In the US and Britain in world war two not only were the media tightly controlled but all German and Japanese civilians were interned. NATO attacked Serb TV and radio not to promote press freedom but to deny Serbs and NATO audiences alike access to television pictures and news of what NATO was doing to the Yugoslav people. Bombing RTS (a state media like the BBC) and radio and television transmitters, and success-

fully pressurising Eutelstat to stop broadcasting Yugoslav television and radio to western Europe, were decisive parts of the NATO war effort. The US made huge efforts to cut of internet communications with Yugoslavia. Media opponents of the Milosevic government, such as the B92 radio station, were united in their opposition to NATO's air strikes, and particularly to the targeting of the media. Such facts had the potential to influence western public opinion against NATO and therefore had to be suppressed.

Suppressing the evidence

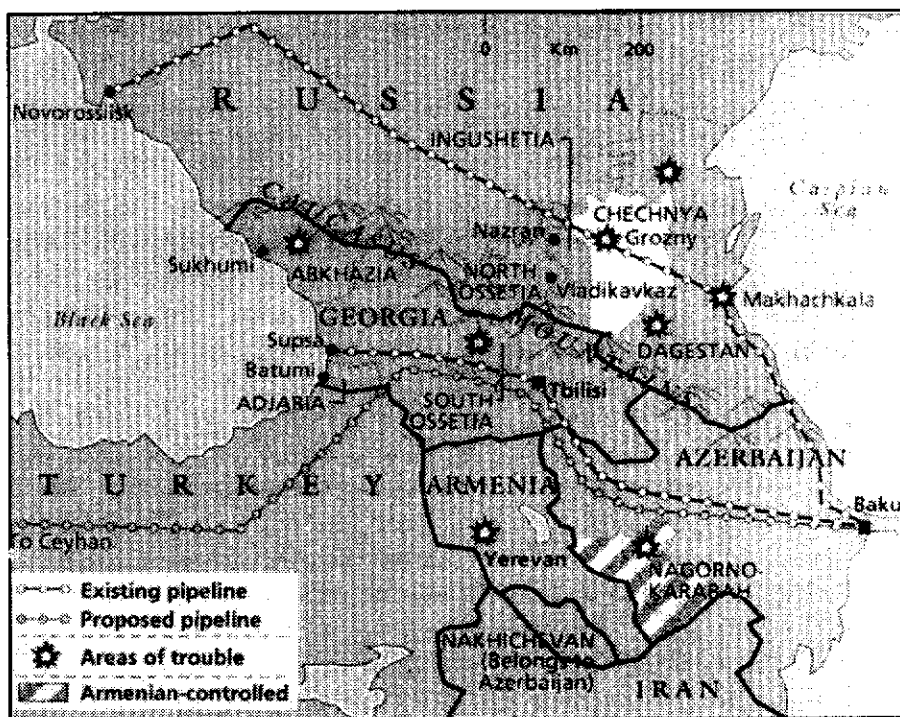
Campbell admitted this when he expressed concern that pictures of the level of destruction of civilian areas and the deaths resulting from NATO 'blunders' and 'mistakes' could, and did, influence opinion in the NATO countries. He explained: 'If a bomb went astray [sic], the Serb media machine could round up a few chosen journalists at the Hyatt in Belgrade, take them down to the scene, and get the story running. Pictures. Therefore news. Therefore difficult questions to Jamie Shea, Jamie Rubin, Joe Lockhart, me.' The problem, as Campbell would have it, was that while 'a Pentagon map showing the major incidents of barbarism inside Kosovo' and showing 'dozens, even hundreds [which?] of deaths' was 'barely reported' because 'no pictures, no news'. In reality, no evidence. Instead 'a stray bomb that created a hole in the road was news around the world, because the Serbs took the cameras there.' It was not the 'hole in the road' that was news, but the many dead civilians around the 'holes' created by NATO's policy of indiscriminate bombing of civilian targets. As when NATO bombers, in two separate rounds, attacked civilian vehicles on the Varvarin bridge at lunchtime on 30 May, a holiday, killing at least 11 people and injuring many more. Or when NATO bombed buses, civilian trains and even convoys of Albanian refugees (if they happened to be heading into Yugoslavia rather than away from it).

Campbell and NATO wanted to suppress the pictures which showed NATO committing war crimes under the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which outlaw the targeting of civilians. As Walter J Rockler, a former Nuremberg War Crimes prosecutor said: 'The current conduct of the bombing by the United States and Nato constitutes a war crime. Contrary to the beliefs of our war planners, unrestricted air bombing is barred under international law' [*Chicago Tribune*, 23 May]. Former German Finance minister, Oscar Lafontaine pointed out: 'More and more innocent people are becoming victims of the bombing'. For NATO it was imperative to limit the access of the western public to visual evidence of its bombing campaign. In these circumstances the battle for the truth has become a vital part of the international struggle against the NATO killing machine.

By Louise Lang

Russia prepares for elections

The multiple exposures of Russian money laundering operations involving billions of dollars passing Western banks — with the connivance of Western governments — the appointment of the head of the secret police as Prime Minister, the new war in Chechnya and intense efforts by the United States to persuade Russia to revise the Anti-Ballistic Missiles Treaty are all symptoms of the fact that Russia's President Boris Yeltsin's term of office is due to end next year.



The growing file of corruption revelations, reflect the infighting between Russian financial groups as they prepare for elections in which less plunder is available because significant resources are required to try to influence the vote. Yeltsin's appointment of Vladimir Putin, the former head of the internal security service, as Prime Minister and designated successor followed the failure of his predecessor to prevent the emergence of a powerful new alliance of regional governors around Moscow Mayor Yuri Lushkov and later former prime minister Yevgeny Primakov. The intensity of US efforts to pressure the Russian administration into accepting changes to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty reflects concern in Wash-

ington about the real possibility that the present government of national betrayal may be ejected from the Kremlin within nine months.

Russia is obliged under its constitution to hold elections to its lower house of parliament on 19 December this year followed by presidential elections by the middle of next year. Given that the president appoints the government, is commander in chief of the armed forces, controls the judiciary and can dissolve parliament, it is the presidential elections which are decisive.

For the Yeltsin entourage, control of the succession, or preferably its prevention by some sort of coup is the primary concern. Responsibility for the terrorist bombings

which traumatised Moscow in October should be judged in this light. The only force which had anything to gain from such acts was the Yeltsin administration. In the subsequent security clampdown and war in Chechnya, Putin has seen his popularity soar.

The coming to office and maintenance in power of the Kremlin administration of President Boris Yeltsin has been one of the United States' most important foreign policy achievement since the Second World War. Yeltsin's regime presided over the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 – against the wishes of the majority of its population. He sponsored the capitalist economic programme which has destroyed most of the Russian economy and immensely weakened its military potential. And, irrespective of what noises are periodically made for Russian domestic consumption, Yeltsin's administrations have provided crucial diplomatic cover for US imperialism's overseas wars – most recently in the pressure it brought to bear upon Yugoslavia to accept the NATO-led occupation of Kosovo.

The problem for the United States is that the domestic consequences of these policies within Russia – plummeting living standards, rise of the mafia to the highest levels of state power and the accurate perception that the country is weaker and more threatened on the military level than at any time since 1943 – have destroyed the political base of the Yeltsin regime. Opinion polls regularly record public disapproval of Yeltsin at higher than 90 per cent and more than two thirds of voters say he should be impeached.

Even Yegor Gaidar, who launched economic shock therapy with the liberalisation of prices in January 1992, acknowledges in his recent book that public support for privatisation of large-scale industry in Russia peaked at just 20 per cent in 1993 – with 59 per cent against – and that opposition has been rising ever since.

According to a nationwide opinion poll by VTsIOM, held on 20-24 August 1999, the two parties which the US would regard as closest to its interests have the support of less than the five per cent of voters needed to win representation in parliament. These are the Alliance of the Right-Wing Forces – led by Anatoly Chubais, who, as privatisation minister, organised the transfer of public assets to the criminalised oligarchy and Yegor Gaidar, who initiated the January 1992 liberalisation of prices which inaugurated the country's economic collapse – and Our Home is Russia, led by ex-premier Viktor Chernomyrdin.

Under his own constitution Yeltsin cannot stand for a third term of office and at the same time there is no political party and no potential presidential candidate who, on present showings, would be able to preserve his regime.

Given the risk of retribution under any new regime – for the vast scale of corruption presided over by the Yeltsin 'family', and as-

sorted other crimes ranging from the impoverishment of tens of millions of people, through the bombardment of the Russian parliament in 1993, to the conduct of the previous war in Chechnya – there is a powerful lobby in the Yeltsin camp which advocates preserving office by some kind of *coup d'état*. This is a real possibility with the war in Chechnya and the mysterious terrorist bombings providing a possible pretext.

Vladimir Putin's appointment as Prime Minister is consistent with this. As head of the internal secret police, he has spent recent years protecting the Yeltsin family from their opponents.

But while such moves towards dictatorship are being canvassed within Yeltsin's inner circle, they face significant obstacles.

First, the United States, pending the outcome of the parliamentary elections at least, is opposed to moving to a dictatorship in Russia because it fears that it would be highly unstable and, whatever its starting point, given the strategic pressures upon the Russian military, it could easily be transformed into an anti-western regime. Thus the US is concerned to halt Russian operations in Chechnya for fear that they create a dynamic strengthening anti-western military com-

'The only force which gained from the Moscow bombings was the Yeltsin administration'

manders. In addition, the Chechen leadership, like the Shevadnadze regime in Georgia is pro-NATO, and oriented to drawing the US into the Caucasus. Second, the situation in the Russian army is such that a dictatorship, even if it got off the ground in the first place, would fairly rapidly collapse – leaving a far worse situation for those who had ordered it.

In these circumstances, it is possible that the resolution of this debate will be postponed until after the parliamentary elections – because, given the weakness of the parliament, a parliamentary defeat need not necessarily be fatal for the regime.

The key political problem for Yeltsin is the rise of a new 'centre-left' alliance in Russian politics around former Prime Minister Yegeny Primakov and the Mayor of Moscow, Yuri Lushkov. This has bitten deep into the alliances which have sustained the regime against the left – the regional governors and part of the capitalist oligarchy. The space for this new coalition, Fatherland-All Russia, has been opened up by the collapse of the pro-Western right, on the one hand, and the mistakes of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, on the other.

The bombing of Yugoslavia was another nail in the coffin of the free market liberals, already hated by a majority of the population due to the effects of their economic poli-

cies on living standards and their role in the organised theft of the country's national assets. Russian liberals, whatever their private views, were publicly forced to denounce the bombing on the grounds that it was destroying what little support existed in Russia for politicians linked to the West.

Prior to the bombing, with the financial melt-down in August 1998, political support for both the free market liberals and the Yeltsin regime itself had already been shattered.

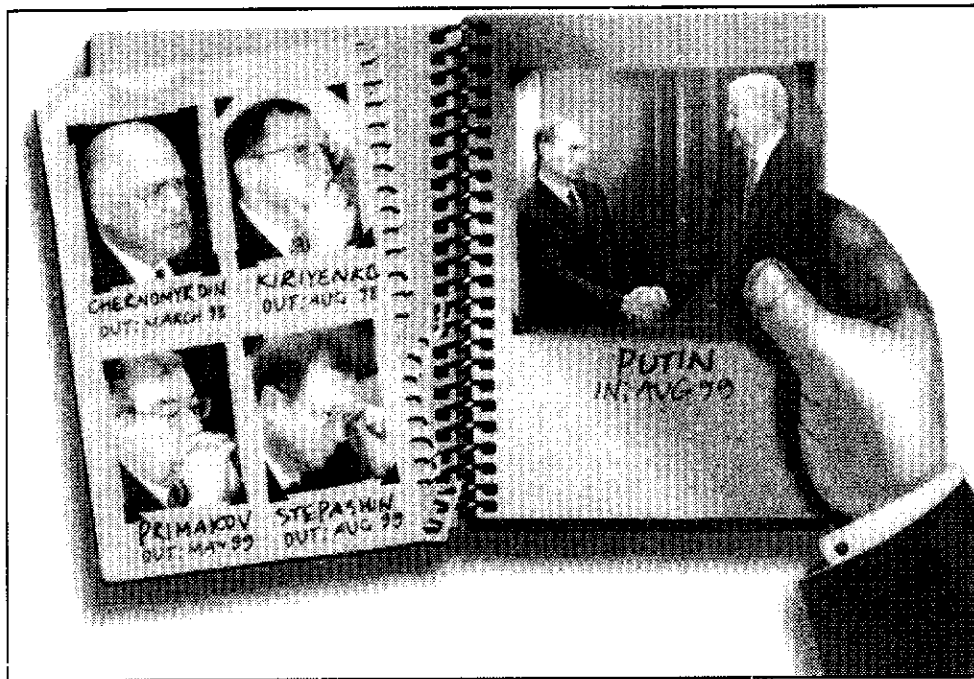
Yegeny Primakov, the Prime Minister who came to power following the crash, backed by the majority in parliament, had embarked on a radical shift in both domestic and foreign policy. While arguing, wrongly, that renationalisation of companies virtually given away to the oligarchy in the privatisation process was impossible because it would result in civil war, Primakov did, however, shift economic policy in favour of rebuilding domestic production. He used exchange controls to try to limit the flight of capital and increase taxation of the energy sector. This shift was symbolised by re-appointing the former Soviet central banker, Victor Gerachenko, as chair of the central bank. The latter's first act was a wholesale purge of corrupt officials.

It was Primakov and Gerachenko's highly popular drive against the flight of capital and investigation of top level corruption which directly led to the financial scandals in the western press. Under Primakov investigations were launched into:

- the use of a secret offshore company to secretly use Central Bank reserves to speculate on the Russian treasury bond market,
- corruption in the award of contracts for an obscene \$1.5 billion renovation of the Kremlin involving the Swiss company Mabatex in \$1m plus bribes directly implicating Yeltsin's immediate family;
- an investigation into the Swiss bank account and arrest warrant against Russia's number one criminal oligarch, and Yeltsin family friend, Boris Berezovsky – who fled the country.
- the misappropriation of funds from Aeroflot – which is run by Yeltsin's son in law – into a Swiss bank account controlled by Berezovsky.

These actions earned Primakov the bitter enmity of Yeltsin and his entourage.

Primakov's foreign policy broke with the subordination of Russia to the US. Based on the military and state apparatus Primakov had no illusions in the West and proposed a strategic alliance of Russia, China and India as a counter-weight to US world dominance. When the US attempted to humiliate Russia, by launching the bombing of Yugoslavia while Primakov was on his way to Washington to negotiate IMF loans, Primakov turned his plane around in mid-air and flew home. This was viewed in Russia as a necessary ex-



garchs for far below their real value, robbed both the Russian people and the state. While robbing the people just as thoroughly, Lushkov used part of the proceeds of privatisations in Moscow to build popular support by maintaining public services. On foreign policy Lushkov regularly engages in strong anti-western rhetoric. As no capitalist force in Russia is capable of standing up to western imperialism, he would ultimately capitulate.

Consistent with prioritising an alliance with Lushkov over Primakov – a strategy opposed by the left wing of the CPRF who supported Primakov – Zyuganov launched a disastrously ill-timed and unsuccessful attempt to impeach the president. Done at the height of the bombing of Yugoslavia, by opening hostilities first, this helped provide Yeltsin with the pretext to move against Primakov. Having removed Primakov, the regime then launched an all-out

pression of national dignity.

Primakov's policies reflected the forces he represented in Russian society – essentially the remnants of the former Soviet state machine in the security services, the army and the military industrial complex – not the corrupt capitalist oligarchy of which Yeltsin, Chernomyrdin and, in Moscow, Lushkov, form part.

The impact of the NATO bombing on the Russian population was traumatic. More than 90 per cent opposed NATO's action. Support for the Serbs was almost unanimous. The feeling that Russia itself was threatened was palpable. Anti-Americanism swept the country. Top level discussions in the military on the need for Russia to countenance the 'first-use' of nuclear weapons to defend its borders given the crisis of its conventional military capacity were widely reported. On the cultural level, even the Moscow intelligentsia, previously extreme pro-Western, began to take up patriotic themes.

With virtually no military means of stopping the attack on Yugoslavia other than threatening nuclear war with the US – which public opinion opposed as strongly as it supported the Serbs – Primakov was seen as, nonetheless, totally opposing the bombing. As a result, Primakov was, and remains, the most popular politician in Russia – even though living standards fell dramatically, with more than a third drop in real wages, in the aftermath of the financial crash which brought him to power. The popular perception was that this was the result of the mess created by the previous regime, which he was attempting to clear up.

However, the bombing of Yugoslavia presented the Yeltsin camp with the opportunity to recover from the political paralysis which had followed the financial meltdown in August 1998. This was because the number one issue for

the United States had become the pursuit of victory over Yugoslavia – and Russian backing would be critical to this.

Yeltsin's calculation was that, even if the US did not necessarily consider precipitate action against Primakov wise, they would back the President whatever he did in order to secure a change in the Russian line on Yugoslavia. Yeltsin's first step was to take control of policy on Yugoslavia out of Primakov's hands by appointing Victor Chernomyrdin as his special representative on the war. The second step was to sack Primakov as Prime Minister – both Strobe

struggle to recoup lost ground. There were attempts to discredit and sack the public prosecutor handing the corruption charges, to drop those against Berezovsky, to try to tighten its control over the media and key companies (notably Russia's largest, Gazprom) in order to get control of all sources of funds to influence the elections and to examine options for either building up a political force to fight the elections or imposing conditions for their cancellation.

Yeltsin was assisted by the Clinton administration which tried to defend its record in colluding with the theft of Russia's national assets and the transfer of much of the proceeds through US banks – but this was rendered more difficult by the attempt by the Republicans to exploit the issue in the run-up to the US presidential elections.

'Primakov was, and remains, the most popular politician in Russia'

Talbott and Jacques Chirac were in Moscow on the day he was sacked.

This action was made easier by the mistakes of the leadership of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF). CPRF leader, Gennady Zyuganov, was pursuing a policy of seeking to find, and ally with, a 'patriotic' wing of the capitalist class in Russia. This approach was particularly promoted by Alexei Podberyozkin, formerly a key Zyuganov advisor.

Primakov did not fit the bill for the simple reason that he represents, not a supposedly patriotic wing of Russia's new capitalists, but parts of the old state apparatus. Therefore, Zyuganov's strategy centred on creating an alliance with Yuri Lushkov, the capitalist Mayor of Moscow.

There is no distinction between Lushkov and the other components of Russia's new capitalist oligarchy in terms of corruption – his Moscow government is legendary in that respect. But Lushkov refused to carry out the Chubais 'voucher privatisation' which, by transferring state companies to individual oli-

The new Russian government moved to consolidate the backing of the US for the regime by pressuring Belgrade to accept a NATO led occupation of Kosovo and even indicating a willingness to open negotiations on changes to the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missiles (ABM) treaty. These moves further disintegrated Yeltsin's support in the military. The shift on the ABM treaty was publicly characterised as 'tantamount to treason' by one Russian general. Another dissociated himself from Chernomyrdin in front of the TV cameras on their return from Belgrade.

Lushkov, having been built up by Zyuganov, then abandoned the Communists and began to construct his own set of alliances in preparation for the forthcoming elections. He first sought an agreement with the free market liberal Yavlinsky and later with Primakov. The net result was a significant setback for the Communists in subsequent regional elections and an opening for a new centre-left to emerge – to fill the vacuum created by the popular revulsion against the liberals on their right and the mistakes of

Zyuganov on their left.

Primakov and Lushkov are competing to fill this vacuum. Lushkov's goal is an alliance of the part of Russian criminalised national capital represented by himself, with the remnants of the old state apparatus in a subordinate role, on a policy of greater independence from the West internationally and opposition to the Communists internally. Primakov on the other hand stands for an alliance in which the remnants of the old state apparatus have the leading role with subordinate places for Russian national capital, on the one hand, and the Communist left on the other. Both have support from some of the most powerful regional governors.

The conclusion of the electoral pact between Primakov and Lushkov in August gave enor-

to the development of the real economy and state intervention to promote enterprise.

The United States is opposed to both Lushkov and Primakov, particularly the latter, because unlike Yeltsin, neither are puppets of the West. For the US it is not enough to have a capitalist government in Russia – it has to be a capitalist government which respects Washington's vital interests. In this regard, Primakov's line is straightforwardly to build up a strategic counterweight to American dominance of the world. Even Lushkov makes rhetoric in favour of strong Russia, and possible reunification with Ukraine and Belarus to create a wider field of operations for specifically Russian capital.

On the other hand, on the domestic front, the Russian national bourgeoisie, of which Lushkov is

'The Communist Party has shifted to the left in response to the Lushkov/Primakov bloc'

mous impetus to their centre-left block – Fatherland-All Russia. The press conference launching the alliance was backed not only by Primakov and Lushkov, but also the governors of two of the key regions, Tatarstan and St Petersburg, and the leader of the Agrarian Party which had, until then, been a core part of the Communist Party's alliances. With the backing of the key capitalist regional governors, and peeling away part of the CPRF's alliances, the Primakov/Lushkov bloc puts Yeltsin in a desperate situation.

Primakov spelt out the policies of the new alliance at a press conference on 17 August. It was made clear that no decision had been made on who would be its presidential candidate. Policies included moving to a form of government based on the majority in parliament, to amend the constitution to create the post of vice president, to guarantee the safety of the outgoing president (to try to persuade Yeltsin to go quietly), to strengthen the state of Russia and defend its unity as a multinational country, to strengthen the armed forces and to work 'actively and resolutely towards rapprochement between Russia and other CIS countries'. Primakov said that the bloc's economic policy would be oriented

part, has no solutions to Russia's economic collapse. If Lushkov were to gain the presidency he would be quite likely to end up taking harsh measures against the Communist-led left.

So, notwithstanding their current alliance, Lushkov and Primakov represent different forces – which are the driving force of the intense competition between them for leadership of their bloc. This rivalry will come down to the choice of presidential candidate.

The Communist Party of the Russian Federation has responded to the launch of the new electoral bloc and its resulting isolation by shifting to the left – including by expelling the key ideologue of the party's right wing, Podberyozkin.

Yeltsin's last card may be to try to exploit the new war in Chechnya to postpone elections, organise a coup, or at least build up his latest prime minister, Putin, against both the centre and the left. But any such moves would take place in a country where the great majority of people have lost all illusions in the free market and the west.

By Paul Simpson

Lessons of Bosnia

In 1995, Bosnia became an international protectorate – effectively a NATO colony. David Chandler, in his book *Bosnia - faking democracy after Dayton* analyses the results.

The US is applying lessons learned from the Bosnia experiment to the governing of Kosovo today.

NATO intervention was presented as a crusade to 'democratise' Bosnia and end ethnic strife. In reality, it was designed to suppress one national group — the Bosnian Serbs — who make up nearly a third of the population. Chandler details how in reality all important decisions are taken by the High Representative who is appointed by agreement between the US and the European Union. The High Representative directly imposes legislation, vetoes candidates in elections and dismisses 'unco-operative' elected members of Bosnian governing bodies.

The merit of this book lies in its attention to the Dayton Agreement and its implementation. Chandler quotes Madeleine Albright: 'to a great extent the Dayton Accords and the peace process they built were made in America', and explains that Clinton, the US Department of Defence and the Joint Chiefs of Staff were the key players. He argues that Bosnia provides a testing ground for external intervention: 'The peace agreement signed at Dayton was

unlike any other peace treaty of modern times, not merely because it was imposed by powers external to the conflict, but because of the far-reaching powers given to the international community which extended well beyond military matters to cover the most basic aspects of the state.' The Bosnian Muslims, heavily dependent on US support, supported the Dayton Agreement. The Bosnian Serb leaders Radovan Karadzic and Radko Mladic had been indicted for war crimes, ensuring they would not be able to travel abroad, leaving Milosevic as their representative. Facing international sanctions, Milosevic signed the Agreement. Tudjman imposed a settlement on the Bosnian Croats in exchange for the freedom to expel Croatian Serbs from western Slavonia and the Krajina.

The annexes to the Dayton Agreement stipulate the right of IFOR to 'complete and unimpeded movement' throughout Bosnia with no liability for damage to property; granting NATO personnel legal immunity for their actions 'under



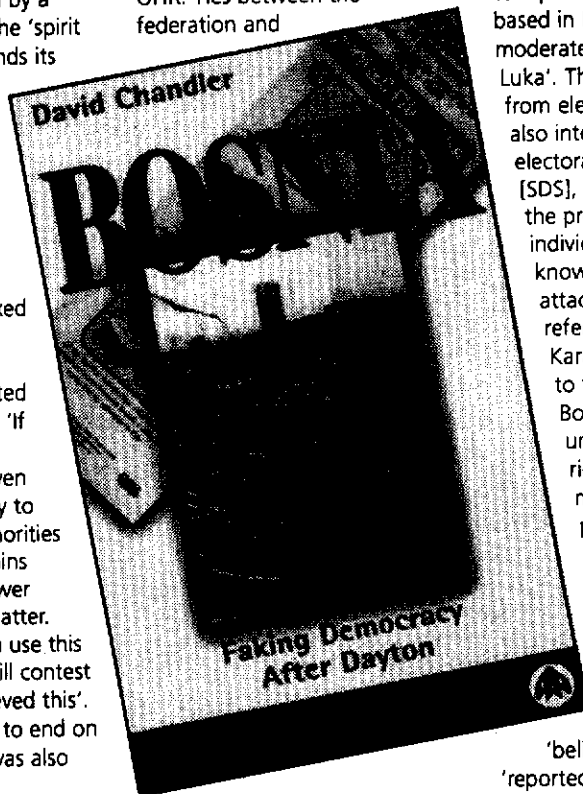
all circumstances and at all times'; and allowing powers to the OSCE to 'supervise' elections far beyond its role in other eastern European states. Article VII allowed the IMF to appoint the Governor of the Central Bank for six years, and specifically excluded any citizens of Bosnia or any neighbouring state.

Dayton was due to expire in September 1996 after the elections. But although the elections were internationally supervised and ratified, international administration was extended for a further 2 years, and then extended indefinitely in December 1997. This extension has been accompanied by a growing reference to the 'spirit of Dayton' which extends its powers further. As the only parties bound by the Dayton Agreement are the Bosnians, the international institutions overseeing and implementing the Agreement have no fixed limits. Carlos Westendorp, UN High Representative, is quoted in the book as stating: 'If you read Dayton very carefully...Annex 10 even gives me the possibility to interpret my own authorities and powers'. He explains 'you do not [have] power handed to you on a platter. You just seize it, if you use this power well, no one will contest it. I have already achieved this'. NATO's mandate, due to end on 20 December 1996, was also extended unilaterally.

The effect of 'power sharing' and 'multi-ethnic administration', argues Chandler, is one which allows disputes to be settled by the High Representative, rather than by majority decision. Consensus is presented as obligatory and dissent as illegitimate obstruction. Westendorp is quoted as describing the Bosnian leaders as 'like animals who cling to their turf'. Croatian, Muslim and Serb leaders have all accused the UN High Representative and leading international institutions of breaking the Dayton Agreement.

Although tensions between the Croat-Muslim Federation and the UN High Representative are well documented in the book, it is the intervention into Republika Srpska which has been most brutal. As Chandler says: 'The

central area of dispute with the Office of the High Representative was over the powers and authority that elected representatives could wield over the entity. The desire for greater autonomy was considered as a 'pretence of statehood' by the High Representative and therefore contrary to the Dayton Agreement. Of particular concern was legislation on the economy and citizenship. Republika Srpska's desire to extend citizenship to residents of the former Yugoslavia, for example, Serb refugees from the Croatian Krajina, was resisted by the legal department of the OHR. Ties between the federation and



Croatia are encouraged, but 'special relations' between Republika Srpska and Serbia are described as destructive. Former High Representative Carl Bildt is quoted as stating that the people in Republika Srpska were in a fortunate situation because they were part of Bosnia-Herzegovina and only this could save them from 'economic catastrophe'. The IMF programme for the economy insisted on maintaining the fixed exchange rate and preventing credit creation; no government domestic borrowing; politically dependent funding for economic reconstruction, and structural and legal reforms to rapidly facilitate transition to a market economy.

Chandler explains how NATO

troops were used to engineer the election of a pro-Dayton Prime Minister by intercepting a member of the parliament and returning them for the vote. The book also details the intervention into elections — from engineering a split in the Serb Democratic Party (SDS) to funding pro-Dayton forces and closing down television stations run by the Serb Democratic Party for commenting on the war crimes tribunals. It also shows how the war crimes tribunals have been used to remove nationalist leaders: 'the indictment of Karadzic was part of an ongoing US-led campaign to replace the Serb leadership, based in Pale, with more moderate Serbs based in Banja Luka'. The removal of Karadzic from election literature 'was also intended to weaken the electoral support given to [SDS], which had to rely on the promotion of other individuals less well known...the importance attached to banning references and photos of Karadzic also contributed to the idea that the Bosnian Serbs had so little understanding of human rights that an image might set them on the path to violence'.

Research carried out by Chandler exposed the 'evidence' behind a paper detailing accusations against SDS leaders; 'words and phrases such as 'believed to be', 'rumoured', 'reported to be', 'may involve', 'allegedly', and 'unsubstantiated' run right through the document. Evidence against people included being 'vehemently opposed to the Dayton Peace Agreement and known to be openly defiant about it' or being 'uncompromising in his views'. However, despite the lack of hard evidence the press-released summary stated that: 'the national and local political leadership of Republika Srpska as well as the state organs and agencies under its control... are responsible for directing, aiding and abetting continuing human rights abuses'.

The economic effects of the Dayton Agreement are also highlighted. Republika Srpska, with nearly one third of the population, receives only 5 per cent of the international

reconstruction aid to Bosnia. At the start of 1998, while the Federation's economic output was only half the 1990 level, that of Republika Srpska was a quarter of the 1990 level. The average wage in RS is 25 per cent that of the Federation's.

Chandler explains that by attacking the political capacity of the Bosnian people, imperialism can justify extending its control. Westendorp is quoted as saying in his 1998 New Year message: 'As High Representative, I have to take decisions now and in the future with your best interests in mind, should your leaders fail to take them.'

The significance of Bosnia in the new world order after 1989 is not minimised: 'Bosnia has been the focus through which international relations has been reconstituted after the cold war: political restrictions on German military actions were removed, allowing involvement outside NATO frontiers for the first time since the defeat of Nazism; NATO's strike against the Bosnian Serbs was the first NATO combat action since its founding...In 1991, there were no foreign troops in south east Europe; by May 1997, there were deployments in southern Hungary, Croatia, Montenegro, Macedonia and Albania, apart from Bosnia.'

The lessons from the Dayton Agreement are important for the future of Kosovo. Kosovo is far easier for the US to control if 'ethnically cleansed' of Serbs and Roma. The Dayton Agreement is not a blueprint for Kosovo, but the project used to justify continuing imperialist intervention into the region — to 'democratise' and deal with 'human rights violations' — remains the same and the US will apply lessons learned from Bosnia to Kosovo. The continuing demonisation of the Serbs, from Bosnia to Kosovo, is intended to help neutralise international opposition to the continuing attacks on Yugoslavia.

Chandler's book is a vital contribution to exposing imperialism's role in the former Yugoslavia and spells out the colonialism used to justify this intervention.

By Rachel Garvey

Bosnia — faking democracy after Dayton. David Chandler, Pluto Press £14.99

Myth of the 'new economy'

The international economy has passed the bottom point in the international business cycle and is proceeding to an upturn. A number of commentators have argued that this upturn will be strong and sustained — essentially a return to the stable boom conditions of the 1950s and 1960s.

US commentators talk about the 'new economy'. The *Financial Times*, in its editorial on 17 September, stated: 'With the global economy settling back to normal, and signs of recovery apparent in the euro-zone's largest economy, Germany, the European Central Bank has found the confidence to endorse a fairly upbeat growth forecast...

'Oil apart, price pressures are very subdued... And some of the structural obstacles to growth are being removed. European merger and acquisition is picking up. Deregulation is already leading to price falls. And governments are embarking on a more reform minded agenda... After several years of sub-par growth, the euro-zone has a chance of a long and sustained period of US-style non-inflationary growth.'

Larry Elliott, the *Guardian's* economics editor put the case more systematically: 'While it could be argued that the economy is enjoying a brief, blissful period before the next downward lurch, we could be moving back to a more benign era, where economic cycles are shallow and prolonged rather than short and violent. The economic horror story of 1973-92... may prove to be the exception rather than the rule.'

'There are two reasons why the world could be on the cusp of a new boom. First, each new phase of the development of industrialisation has been driven by a dominant technology — coal and steam at the end of the eighteenth century, electricity towards the end of the nineteenth, the car in the years after 1945. Information technology is seen as the engine of the next boom.'

'Second, inflation is not only low but expected to stay low. One way of looking at the profile of inflation since OPEC raised the oil price five-fold in late 1973 is to see it as one big shock to the global economy followed by a series of aftershocks, each less powerful than the previous. Economist Paul Ormerod argues that a low inflation environment is the norm for industrial capitalism, because the essence of capitalism is competition, which keeps prices down.'

'The collapse of communism and

the spread of globalisation means that competition is much more intense than it was 30 years ago, when Russia and China were run on Stalinist lines, and both south-east Asia and Latin America were stuck in the early stages of industrial development. With global supply increasing faster than global demand, firms are constrained from putting up prices and the result is downward pressure on inflation.' [Larry Elliott, *Guardian* 30 August 1999]

Elliott is reporting, rather than necessarily endorsing, this analysis, and stresses the possibility of 'nasty shocks' like a collapse on Wall Street. Nonetheless, he has summarised the view that a new long wave of capitalist economic expansion may be in the offing.

It is true that long waves of capitalist economic expansion have been accompanied by technological revolutions in the productive process. However, the precondition for the generalised application of such technological revolutions to the productive process has

historically been a qualitative increase in the rate of capital accumulation. The technologies of 'fordist' mass production in sectors like the car industry, which accompanied the post-second world war economic boom, already existed, and had been applied, in the United States, prior to the second world war.

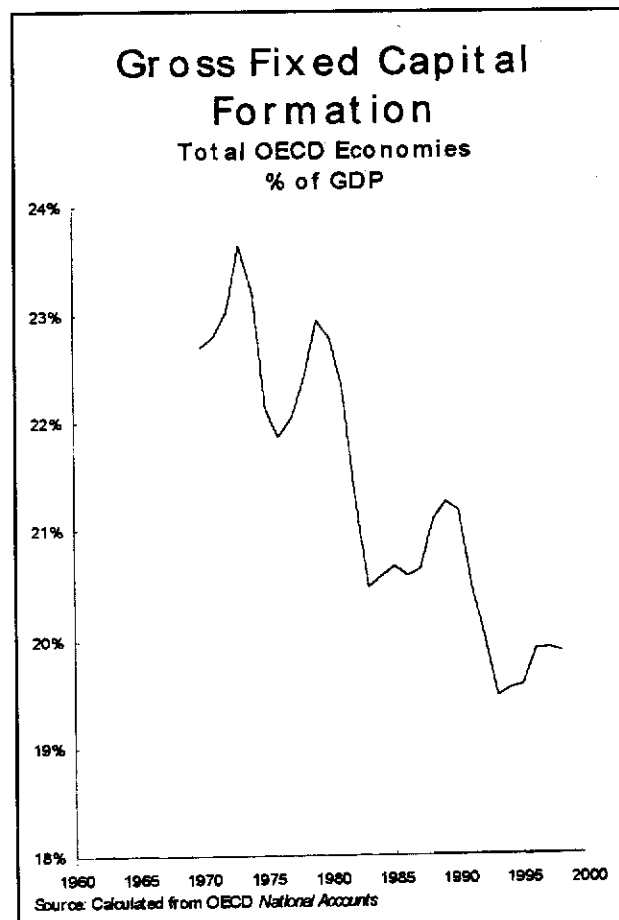
What prevented the inter-war generalisation of fordist production in Europe and Japan was the inability of the latter economies to fund a level of investment equivalent to that of the United States — the most dynamic capitalist economy in the world at that time. Funding a qualitatively higher level of investment, however, required a higher rate of profit.

That could not be achieved by purely economic means, because to increase the share of the economy at the disposal of the capitalist class and available for investment, required reducing the share of the economy being used for other purposes — basically the consumption of the working class and/or consumption by the state, as well as expanded access to cheap supplies of raw materials. Furthermore, an increase in the scale of production presupposed by a technological revolution in the productive process also required an expansion of the market into which the resulting commodities could be sold.

Achieving these objectives, required a vast explosion of class struggle — mass unemployment and fascism in western Europe, and the second world war in order to re-divide the world economy between the competing imperialist powers, notably by dismantling the British empire. Germany sought control of the raw materials of the Balkans, eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Japan seized the oil industries of the European colonial empires in Asia, and invaded China. The United States aimed for dominance over the entire world economy.

This vast outbreak of war and class struggle, in which more than 50 million people lost their lives, resulted in the victory of the United States over its imperialist rivals and the creation of a new international capitalist economic framework under US hegemony. At the same time, the colossal defeats of the working class in western Europe and Japan, laid the basis for a qualitative increase in the rate of profit in those countries.

The increase in the rate of profit in western Europe and Japan, together with the recreation of a world market under US authority, created the critical condition for a long



ascending wave of relatively friction free growth of the international capitalist economy – namely, a sustained high level of capital accumulation. Indeed, the level of capital accumulation in western Europe – other than Britain – overtook that of the United States through the 1950s and '60s, and this in turn was surpassed by that of Japan through the 1970s and '80s. This laid the basis for the relative economic decline of the US in the post-war period and set a new benchmark for the level of investment necessary for a competitive capitalist economy.

The rapid capital accumulation and economic expansion through the period of the post-war boom was brought to an end at the beginning of the 1970s by a sharp fall in the rate of profit, exacerbated by an explosion in the prices of commodities and wage rates as the boom put pressure on the supplies of all inputs into the production process. In consequence, of this decline in the resources available for investment the rate of capital accumulation fell.

From the perspective of capital as a whole, the mass unemployment, attacks on trade unions, deregulation of labour, attacks on welfare provision, capitalist re-colonisation of eastern Europe and intensified economic exploitation of the third world, over the last two decades are designed to attempt to rebuild the rate of profit, and thereby the resources available for investment, in order to create the conditions for a new period of capitalist expansion.

Within this, the competitive struggle between individual capitals also intensified – most significantly with the United States utilising the deregulation of capital markets to seize, for purposes of financing its domestic economic expansion, a growing share of the surplus value generated elsewhere in the world. Hence the phenomenon of a shortage of capital, whereby any economic recovery in Japan, East Asia and Western Europe tends to reduce the flow of capital into the United States, provoking the rising international interest rates which in turn limit the possibility of any synchronised expansion of the world economy as a whole.

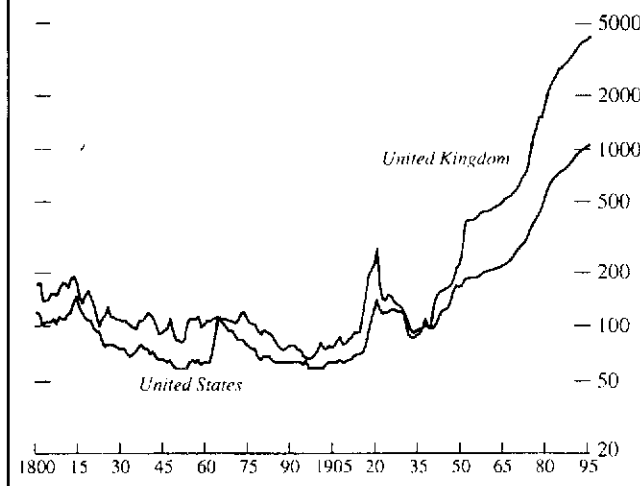
Have the two and a half decades of capitalist reaction unleashed by the end of the post-war boom succeeded in creating the conditions for a new, higher level of capital accumulation, sufficient to launch a new, prolonged period of capitalist economic expansion?

The answer to this question is clear and negative. As figure 1 shows, the share of investment in the OECD advanced industrialised capitalist economies has not risen, but has declined, since the end of the post-war boom. In each business cycle since 1973 the

Price level in the United States and the United Kingdom

(1938=100: logarithmic scale)

The 20th century has seen the greatest inflation in history



level of investment in the OECD economies has failed to reach the highest point of the previous cycle. Thus while a limited cyclical upturn in the international economy is certainly in the offing, capital has not created the conditions for breaking out of the long economic down-swing which commenced at the beginning of the 1970s.

From capital's perspective, still greater attacks on the working class, greater exploitation of the semi-colonial world, further expansion into the former Soviet Union and, if at all possible, China, and a more brutal struggle to eliminate capitalist rivals is necessary. A supplementary contradiction has also emerged. Even where the rate of exploitation of the working class has been increased, in the conditions of capitalist triumphalism which followed 1989, a greater share of the surplus value extracted from the working class is wasted upon luxury consumption by the capitalist class. This takes the form of the inflated dividend payments, astronomical director's salaries, share options, and so on, legitimised by the policies of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher. Reducing this luxury consumption of the capitalist class, is a point of agreement between left reformists, who wish to see a more dynamic and equitable functioning of capitalism, and Marxists, who wish to see capitalism eliminated altogether.

Elliott's second argument for a possible new period of capitalist prosperity is the suggestion that the constraint of inflationary pressures upon economic growth may have been eliminated: 'a low inflation environment is the norm for industrial capitalism, because the essence of capitalism is competition, which keeps prices down'. Factually, there is no correlation between modern industrial capitalism and low inflation. This was true in the era of liberal capitalist free competition in the nineteenth century characterised

by relatively stable prices. But it has not been the case for the last 100 years. Indeed, modern capitalism has brought by far the highest levels of inflation in history. Inflation in the twentieth century has exceeded all previous inflation by a factor of thousands of per cent (see figure 2).

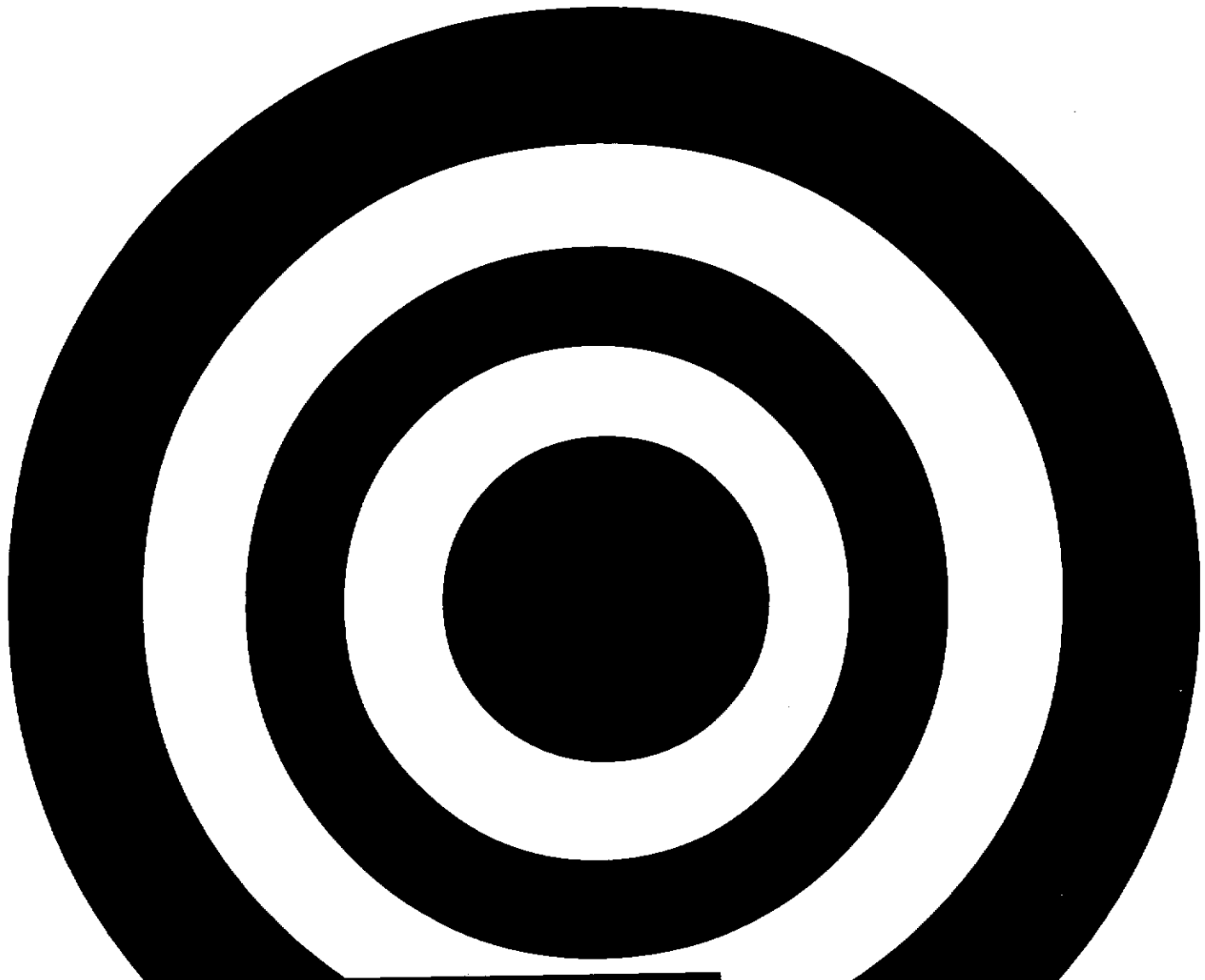
This is because, as Marx pointed out, competition by eliminating the weakest units of Capital inevitably leads to monopoly. By the beginning of the twentieth century monopoly had been generalised to key sectors of all of the main capitalist economies. Conditions of monopoly or near-monopoly give the suppliers greatly increased influence in setting prices. As a result, in conditions of monopoly, prices become inflexible downwards – they can rise, but they tend not to fall. Hence the era of monopoly capitalism, from the beginning of the twentieth century, is also the era of the greatest inflation in history.

Having said that, it might however, be argued that the current economic conjuncture is marked by a sharp reduction in inflationary pressures for the reasons given by Elliott. In fact, oil and raw material prices fell rapidly following the financial crash in east Asia due to the collapse in demand from that region. At the same time the large-scale devaluations of the region's currencies reduced the prices of their manufacturing goods on world markets. This did indeed reduce inflationary pressures in the United States. However, there is no evidence that these phenomena were anything other than the cyclical consequences of the economic slump in East Asia, recession in Japan and stagnation in western Europe. With the revival of economic growth in east Asia, and some signs of recovery in Japan, inflationary pressures have been rekindled. Oil prices have doubled over the last year. In the United States, while retail price inflation has remained low, inflationary pressures have manifested themselves in the financial markets with an expanding price bubble on the US stock market. A similar bubble has started to inflate on Japanese stock markets and in housing markets in southern England.

Thus there is no evidence that inflationary pressures have been abolished – either historically, or conjuncturally. Indeed, the continuing decline in investment in the advanced industrial economies will constrain growth and put capacity constraints in the way of any sustained upturn.

In sum, while a limited economic upturn has begun, it will be shorter and weaker than agencies like the IMF anticipate and the conditions for any prolonged new period of capitalist expansion are still far from being assembled.

By James Holmes



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