

Two years later Where is Yugoslavia?

Price inflation, layoffs, cancers, suicides And a rejection of the IMF government

By Michel Collon (november 2002)

Why doesn't anybody speak anymore about Yugoslavia? There are especially interesting things happening there

With the new government, the prices of bread, meat, and electricity have exploded. So have suicides. And strikes. But the miners from Kolubura, who helped turn out Milosevic, are currently being accused of 'blackmail' by prime minister Djindjic--whose popularity has dropped to 8%. During this time, Kosovo, used to justify the NATO bombardment of Yugoslavia, has lived under the terror of mafias and has seen all nationalities 'ethnically cleansed' despite (or because of) the presence of 40,000 NATO troops.

Welcome to Yugoslavia, the exemplary new colony and a showcase for globalization. A warning to all the countries that the USA is getting ready to 'conquer'. And a valuable experience for all those who supported NATO's war in 1999. Shouldn't they ask themselves why the majority of Serbs refused to vote last October?

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The price of bread has gone from 4 dinars to over 30 in one year. A kilo of pork, from 180 dinars to 260 (it was 60 under Milosevic). Potatoes from 7 to 12, sugar from 25 to 50, a liter of cooking oil from 36 to 70 dinars. Compared to prices during the Milosevic era, the increases are even more enormous.

The rate for a cubic meter of gas went from 3 to 11.20 dinars. 170,000 families in Belgrade can't pay their electricity bills because they have doubled in four months as a result of IMF demands, and other rate hikes have been announced. So these city-dwellers will be deprived of heating this Winter.

"The French could not live with so little," Dominique told me on returning to Belgrade. "My old friends, a Belgrade intellectual couple, when they go shopping, just buy a banana and a yogurt because they can't afford more. Coffee is no longer sold in half-kilo packages but only in packets of 100 grams. But they don't drink coffee anymore because it's become too much of a luxury. 'Yes, it's ok, we're managing,' they tell me, but they've both lost about 20 lbs. A meal is a tin of sardines for three, some paprika and some bread. . . . And we no longer even count the suicides of the elderly who can't pay for the medicine."

Likewise, Senka, a housewife from Jagodina, told us with great pain: "What am I supposed to do when my child says, 'Can I have some bread, mama! Some milk' and I have nothing to give him?"

“No one has anything left to buy things with,” our French friend explained. Many people have no work and even more receive no welfare. They survive through bartering like “I’ll fix your car, you give me a kilo of potatoes and some cooking oil. About half of all households have family in the countryside that help them eat. If they didn’t they couldn’t exist.”

Some militants from the recently formed Labour Party made a little survey at our request: “In three average-sized working class towns, 85% of the people told us that their standard of living had decreased by 150%!” (Personal communication)

4,900 Belgrade women with cancer go without medicine

Another catastrophe: The health situation. Since 1991 Yugoslavs have suffered enormously from the privations caused by the Western embargo. Then came the serious pollution caused by the NATO bombardment of the chemical complex at Pancevo, a violation of the rules of war.

This was not helped by the dramatic drop in the standard of living and the availability of food. And to top it all off, these privations did their damage: no more low-cost drugs from the state pharmacies, they are nearly impossible to find. Instead, one has to have a fat wallet to buy medicine in the privately owned pharmacies. 30 capsules of an anti-cancer medicine cost 60 euros: almost a month’s pay for a worker.

According to the journal Novosti, 4,900 Belgrade women who’ve contracted cancer have no access to medicine. There is also a marked increase in the rate of cancer, particularly lung cancer. (Statistics april-may-june 2002) The Ministry of Health recognizes this phenomenon, but no study has been undertaken. Is this uranium-caused?

The health problem runs the risk of becoming even more dramatic: a recent statistic shows a 30% increase in deaths over the last three years. This includes all age groups including the young.

After the father of a Belgrade friend died, the family had to “wait for weeks before burying him because we couldn’t find any place in the cemeteries, they’ had become too small.” she told us bitterly.

What has happened to the promises of 2000?

What a difference in the campaign promises made in October 2000 by the pro-Western parties! To believe them, prosperity was just waiting for every Serb, they just had to turn toward the West. . . .

Recently, under the headline “Will Kostunica, Djindjic and Washington Keep Their Promises?” we wrote: “A grand illusion currently dominates Yugoslav youth, because it is especially the youth who feed on most of the illusions about Western promises. The grand illusion is that they believe that if they accede to the will of the multinationals and the Western executives, prosperity will come to Yugoslavia and compensate the Yugoslav people. The decisive question remains: What are the promises of the US and its allies worth? Lured by the promises of prosperity made in 1989, countries like Russia, Bulgaria or

Albania went on their knees before Western capitalism. Do their people live better today? The facts speak for themselves.” (Michel Collon, *Journal de Belgrade*, 1-12 octobre 2000)

In Belgrade also, the facts have spoken for themselves for two years now. Globalization made in the USA and in Brussels has impoverished the people. It’s the so-called “Western investors” who have demanded the end of price controls – and got it.

The IMF: ‘At least 800,000 workers must be laid off.’

Can the standards of living and health be restored in the next few years? Don’t hold your breath, because unemployment is going to reach catastrophic proportions: “At least 800,000 Serbian workers in public services and state-run enterprises must be laid off,” insists Arvo Cuddo, representative of the World Bank. All the while he advises the government to go slowly and expect to make adjustments to avoid “an explosive social situation.” (*Tanjug* (Belgrade), January 24, 2002).

Basically, there is nothing new with the policies of the World Bank. Already in 1989 it was demanding the bankruptcy of 2,435 Yugoslav businesses and the massive elimination of jobs (two out three in Serbia). . . These Western demands put the leaders of different republics on the run to stay ahead of the high-bidding nationalists. The first shots of the war were fired by the World Bank and the IMF.

Ten years later, thanks to NATO’s bombs, privatization has effectively begun. The five most important public companies have been targeted by the Djindjic government, but resistance is strong. For example, the 36,000 workers at the agribusiness Karnex. In June, they discovered that their pension fund was empty. If an employee got sick, he or she no longer had any right to compensation. Where did the money go? “No idea,” replied the government, which refused to help these workers and tried to make them accept the privatization.

“Forget it,” responded the workers. And they decided to sell their products directly to the supermarkets and no longer let the government make off with 50% of the profits: “When we deliver, you send us only partial payments and always late. But we don’t need the foreign capital to save us, because we already export to 24 countries. We will do without you.”

Resistance to privatizations

These workers are looking for away to save their system of self-management. That can also be seen with the success of the initiative of the new (opposition) union “Toward the future” that proposed to the workers that they themselves create a social savings account, and work four Saturdays a month to pay into it.

The problems are identical in the four other "great" enterprises: Cassava (automobile), Smederevo (steel), GOSA (construction) and among the metal workers of Startid 13. In this last firm, 150,000 tons of steel produced in three months were picked up and delivered by the government, but were not paid for.

This cut the workers' salary in half. The firm's account was emptied. In June, Prime Minister Djindjic visited the factory and proposed that by privatizing the factory they could get back the money. The workers rejected his maneuver, greeting it with a 48-hour strike.

Indeed, workers at the five largest factories in the country remain faithful to self-management and refuse to let their enterprises be privatized and subordinated to foreign multinationals. Gosa is coveted by German interests, while Peugeot seeks Zastava. A little while before the elections, the government, after having laid off half of its 30,000 workers, came back again making beautiful promises. As if by chance on the eve of the elections, it announced that the factory would be taken over by a miraculous U.S. investor who promised to restart production, making as many as 220,000 autos each year! Quite a hypothetical promise at a time when the worldwide capitalist automobile industry is capable of producing 70 million cars per year, but can only succeed in selling 50 million – a symptom of the crisis of overproduction. If they lay off and impoverish their potential customers, to whom will they sell.

Confronted with all the promises, prior illusions have given way to suspicion: “The government doesn't care about the people, only about its own pockets.”

Has privatization managed to fill these pockets? Certain examples confirm this conclusion. With have of its telecoms having been sold, the network Mobil 063 has fallen into the hand of the Karic brothers. Everyone asks where has the all the money come from to install a network in all of Serbia. And also the funds to finance the television channel BK, which shows the best programs in the country. The Karic brothers are quite close to Djindjic. As for network 064, it is German capital that is behind the buyers, while a new operator has been sold to British Telecom.

Who is growing rich in Yugoslavia?

If the majority of the Yugoslavs are considerably impoverished, what happened to the money they had? “Those filling their pockets are the Mafia around Prime Minister Djindjic,” said Zarko, summing up a common opinion.

Mafia? Perhaps an exaggerated accusation? Not at all, a French citizen returning from Belgrade writes to us: “A capitalist close to Mr. Djindjic's party was recently murdered. He had obtained the concession to build the Belgrade-Horgos highway and should in principle have been able to finish its construction. ... If you go there by car, you will see that this highway is in the same state that ... Milosevic ... left it. It is believed that this capitalist was killed to hide the embezzlement of funds for the profit of the DOS [the government party].”

This accusation was also expressed by President Voyislav Kostunica's entourage. At the end of August, the ministers of his party, the DSS, left the government in protest over the murder of Momir

Gavrilovic. A high official in the security services, he had just visited Kostunica to turn over information to him about the existing ties between Prime Minister Djindjic and the Mafia capo Stanko Subotic. Up to now, no one has been arrested or charged with this murder.

One can also see that the privatization of the principle public enterprises has been carried out to the profit of certain banking groups. Among them the boards of directors are dominated by members of the government party, the DOS.

The power is not in Belgrade

But it is not only the friends of Mr. Djindjic who are growing rich. When he closes the four largest Serb banks, eliminating 10,000 jobs, who takes them over? The French Societe General and the German bank Raiffeisen. In the beer industry, it is the Belgian firm Interbrew that has taken over.

Which country claims the largest piece of the pie? Germany, hands down. Certain people are already speaking of “the new German invasion.” In the schools, German-language courses have already overtaken English. This German invasion is taking place in many areas. It is a German firm that covets the water installations in Montenegro. German companies have purchased the majority of the Serb media. The West German Allgemeine Zeitung has taken control of the well-known daily Politika, while Grunner & Jahr has seized the tabloid daily Blic.

One comment, in passing. While under Milosevic the pro-Western opposition, generously financed by people like the U.S. billionaire George Soros, controlled the majority of the newspapers, currently all the press are pro-Western. This is pluralism?

All of this should be no surprise. Current events are only the application of a scenario written many years ago in Washington, Berlin and Brussels. It is the United States and the European Union that have taken the economic and social life of Yugoslavia directly in their hands. They exercise their absolute control through the “G-17 Plus,” an economic circle financed by the West and made up of former directors of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

It is the “G-17 Plus” that has provided all the key actors of the new regime: Vice Premier Miroslav Labus, director of the National Bank Mladan Dinkic and Finance Minister Bozidar Djelic. They have prepared all the laws liquidating social security and dismantling workers’ rights.

It is they, the IMF agents, who have unleashed the privatization of the enterprises formerly self-managed by the workers, the last remaining vestige of the Tito period. Twenty-two companies have been sold at auctions, five privatized, 26 are being restructured. (Tony Robson & Paul Bond, WSWS Sept 23, 2002). The law protecting workers from layoffs has been suppressed in order to please foreign investors.

It is Djelic who reduced the tax on corporations from 20% to 14%. At the same time that ordinary people don't have enough to live on, the new bosses, the multinationals and the rich countries are being inundated with gifts. Djelic has announced that his government would immediately "reimburse" 60 million euros to the World Bank, the European Investment bank and the "Club of Paris." For destroying Yugoslavia, the West is being "reimbursed."

Disillusionment but also resistance

Today, two out of three Serbs live below the poverty level. This situation has brought disillusionment, but it has also spurred resistance.

Where are the Serb people today? The answer is unanimous: "deceived, disenchanted, disheartened," says Dominique. "They see that they have been taken," Stefan confides. And Jelena: "They accuse Milosevic, but when he was in power, you could eat three times a day. Now ..."

The very low participation in the last election confirmed the general disgust toward the political parties: "All of them rotten." Djindjic, the new prime minister, has seen his popularity rating fall to 8%. But President Kostunica has also seen his popularity slipping: "He promises much, but he does nothing," Branko says indignantly. And Branko voted for him, full of hope. Even the youths, hostile to Milosevic and hoping to taste the Western way of life, are disillusioned.

The suicide rate has exploded. They counted 900 last year in Belgrade. In Nis, a city of 300,000 inhabitants, the police record a suicide every five days. In 2001, the Serbian population consumed 41 million Bensedin anti-stress tablets, 63 million Bromazepam tablets and 40 million Diazepam tablets.

Even the extremely Western-oriented Associated Press agency reported the social catastrophe: "Thousands of taxi drivers and peasants have shut down traffic in Belgrade and a highway towards Bosnia to protest against a new tax (on the average, a month's salary) hitting the cab drivers and in order to exact the highest prices for raspberries purchased by the government." (*AP*, May 31, 2002).

The slogan of the protesters – "DOS-ta!" (Enough!) -- expresses quite well the total disillusionment regarding the DOS, put in power by the West in October 2000.

This summer, the police (which the new regime had almost entirely replaced) repressed many demonstrations with great brutality. In June, in front of the Belgrade Parliament, 40 people were wounded during a demonstration of "poor people."

But none of this passed through the filter of the Western media. Western public opinion is held in ignorance. One is prevented from explaining the deep disenchantment of the Yugoslav population regarding the "promisers." This disenchantment is the real cause of the political crisis in Serbia, of the Kostunica-Djindjic confrontation and the recent electoral impasse. But before getting to this, we first have

to examine the real reasons that have led the United States and German to intervene in the Balkans. And to explain the relationships with the Mafia and the local terrorists.

The battle for the “corridors” comes out of the shadows

Indeed, Yugoslavia’s great crime was its attempt to conserve a system oriented toward social security and independent of the multinational monopolies. But it was also a “geographical” crime: to be situated at the heart of “Corridors 8 and 10.” What is a corridor. What is involved is the collection of modern communications: highways, railroads, sea and river ports, pipelines and gas mains. The goal: to bring into Western Europe the merchandise produced from all over the world but also and above all the petroleum and gas coming from the Caucasus and Central Asia.

This gigantic European Union project (90 billion Euros of investment funds foreseen between now and 2015), is aimed at assuring the direct and cheap commercial connection with export industries in the Balkans and above all with oil and gas coming from the Caucasus and the Caspian Sea. It is one of the future strategic commercial axes in the world.

Where does the Corridor pass through? The competing plans have contended for a decade, the goal of a secret but ferocious rivalry between Washington and Berlin. This rivalry was at the heart of the Yugoslavia conflict, which each of the great powers wanted to control, as we wrote in our books “Liar’s Poker” and “Monopoly.”

Does international politics seem complicated and sometimes incomprehensible? Here is a simple rule to clarify it: in each region of the world where you can find a route for petrol or gas, you can determine that the United States is trying to install their military bases, provoking or inciting local conflicts that serve this purpose. Then the U.S. presents itself there as an observer or as a fire-fighter. This essential rule explains the majority of the “incomprehensible” wars: Yugoslavia, Macedonia, Chechnya, Caucasus, Afghanistan, and ex-Soviet Central Asian republics... (Michel Collon, *Liar’s Poker* chapters 7 and 9. Michel Collon, *Monopoly*, EPO, Bruxelles, 2000, p. 96-99, p. 120-123 (soon in English).)

In the Balkans, the German route is: Constantan (Romania) – Belgrade – Hamburg. Along the Danube and the large pipelines still to be built, paved highways, railroads, sea and river ports. The rival U.S. route is Bulgaria – Macedonia – Albania (Mediterranean). Three countries that Washington is doing everything it can to control at the expense of the European Union. (Balkan Infrastructure, *UPI Business Correspondent*, 11 septembre 2002).

We admit that our theory of corridors as motor of the war on Yugoslavia has left some people skeptical. This despite an admission by General Jackson, who commanded the NATO force in Macedonia

and then in Kosovo in 1999: “We will certainly remain here for a long time in order to guarantee the security of the energy corridors that cross the country.” (*Monopoly*, p. 96).

But at present, the corridors are coming out of the shadows. Last September 10, the ministers of the economy of Romania, Yugoslavia and Croatia signed the go-ahead for “Corridor 10.” This 1,200 kilometer-long pipeline will transport 10 million tons of crude oil per year, with the possibility of extending it to Italy and the Mediterranean.

And the routes? There also the rival plans contend. Belgrade has just chosen to invest in a complement to Corridor 10: the north-south connection with Greece. This investment is being made to the detriment of a West-East connection with Bulgaria. The European Reconstruction Agency has invested 47 million euros in the roads and highways of Kosovo, complementary to Corridor 10: Bulgaria – Macedonia – Albania that the United States Agency for International Development has invested \$30 million.

Aid: is it truly aid?

The Yugoslavs are paying dearly for these routes, as much as they are supported by the European multinationals. Certainly, the West is officially giving “aid.” Here the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (BERD) and the European Investment Bank have advanced capital for the construction of “Corridor 10.” But this “aid” consists in fact of loans. These will permit the entrapment of those “aided,” who will pay dearly to reimburse the loaners: the Yugoslav state will have to slash its social services and public employment.

The word “aid,” could it also be a synonym for “extortion”? An example involves neighboring Macedonia. Last June, this country did not submit quickly enough to the demands, and the IMF broke off negotiations and suspended all the agreed-to aid. It even blocked “the projects that could not legally be stopped,” as Macedonian Minister of Finance Nikola Guevski said. (*Balkan Infrastructure, UPI Business Correspondent*, 11 septembre 2002). The only projects to find mercy in the eyes of the IMF were those that favored the Albanian UCK (KLA) rebels. “Aid” = “extortion.”

Once more, nothing here took place by chance. The scenario had nothing that was improvised, as the commentary in the Business section of the U.S. press agency UPI made clear: “The construction of infrastructures in the Balkans has been characterized by the political character of the agreed-to international aid. NATO’s war in 1999 destroyed the infrastructure like the petroleum refinery at Novi Sad, Serb radio-television, the roads, the bridges, etc. That subsequently Western policies had been imposed on the reconstruction plans was neither a surprise nor a short-term phenomenon.” (*Balkan Infrastructure, UPI Business Correspondent*, 11 septembre 2002).

They admit then, three years later, to having bombed not military but economic targets. And if that is translated into a less hypocritical language: NATO's bombs were the first step of privatization - globalization.

Thus the Yugoslavs are paying the same bill many times over. 1. First, the West destroyed their wealth. 2. This done, it deprived them of their jobs and means of subsistence. 3. And it will make them pay for a "reconstruction" which in reality profits the Western multinational monopolies.

War and military bases: good business

What has been carefully hidden from us since 1991 is that Yugoslavia was the target not of humanitarian blows but of a war with the aim of recolonizing that country and annexing its market to the "great market" of the multinationals. And to control its strategic routes. In addition, this war was also a "self-service" operation for certain U.S. officials, tied closely to the large arms multinationals.

In Kosovo, just to the side of the petrol route, the United States has installed an enormous military base: Camp Bondsteel. A strategic post to intervene in the Middle East, in the Caucasus, maybe even one day against Moscow. Who built this base, who runs it, who has pocketed the enormous profits? Brown and Root Services. It's a subsidiary of the U.S. petroleum services firm Halliburton, the largest seller of goods and services to the petroleum industry. An enormous market. At the head of Halliburton can be found ... Dick Cheney, current vice president of the United States.

Brown and Root, specializing in the supplying the U.S. Army, took on greater importance in 1992 when Dick Cheney, then secretary of defense in the government of Bush Senior provided it with its first contract to supply logistic support to the external operations of the U.S. Army. Between 1995 and 2000, Cheney left public service and entered the Halliburton Corporation. The fortunes of this enterprise has risen parallel to the rise of militarism in the United States.

In 1992, Brown and Root constructed and maintained the U.S. Army bases in Somalia. It pocketed \$62 million there. This amount doubled in 1994: \$133 million thanks to the bases and logistic support furnished for 18,000 troops in Haiti. In 1999, the company could look to a contract for \$180 million to construct military installations in Hungary, Croatia and Bosnia. But it is Camp Bondsteel that was to be "the pearl of contracts," as Paul Stuart explained.

"At Camp Bondsteel, it's Brown and Root that assured all: furnishing 2,500 cubic meters of water per day, electricity necessary for a city of 25,000 inhabitants, washing 1,200 laundry bags, 18,000 meals per day and 95% of the connections by rail and air, plus the heat. With 5,000 Kosovar Albanian employees and 15,000 from elsewhere, Brown and Root is the number one employer in Kosovo." This was confirmed by David Capouya, his supervisor: "We are doing all here that doesn't require carrying a rifle."

Effectively, the Houston firm furnishes all, from breakfast to movable armor. The war directly fills the wallet of Mr. Cheney. *Balkans-Infos*, juin 2002.

And more and more: the occupation of Afghanistan also brought juicy contracts to Brown and Root. And in the Balkans, it is always the same company that carried out the preparatory studies of the Greek Egnatia highway (Greek prolongation of Corridor 10). Also the studies for the U.S. pipeline along Bulgaria-Macedonia-Albania mentioned above. The Bush administration truly practices self-help with record-breaking impudence.

Why did the U.S. and Germany have to support racists and criminals?

To take control of strategic routes in the Balkans, Washington and Berlin needed local forces they could support to avoid making war directly themselves. Who did they choose and arm?

For Croatia, it was the racist group around Tudjman. The man who rewrote in revisionist fashion the history of the Second World War. A Croat version of the French fascist Le Pen who could rejoice that his “wife is neither Jewish nor Serb.” (Michel Collon, *Poker menteur*, EPO, Bruxelles 1998, chapitre 14)

For Bosnia, it was the Islamist nationalist Izetbegovic. For him, there was “no possibility of coexistence between the Islamic religion and non-Islamic social and political institutions.” This did not stop him, to keep his power and his deals, from shooting at Moslem forces in Bosnia, at Bihac and at Sarajevo. This fanatic was also quickly rebaptised “democrat” and “anti-racist.” (Idem, chapter 15) But now that the wind has shifted it is discreetly recognized that Washington sent to aid him a number of Mujahedins who were followers of Bin Laden. (Idem, chapter 1 (p. 28-33) and chapter. 9 (p. 187)

For Kosovo, the instrument was the UCK (KLA). A separatist and racist organization, which provoked war (it wrote in its own documents) to impose a “Greater Albania” that would be ethnically pure. (Michel Collon, *Monopoly*, EPO, Bruxelles, 2000, map of “Greater Albania”, p. 69.

The U.S. special envoy to the region, Robert Gelbard, had declared three separate times in February 1998 before the international press: “The KLA represents without any doubt a terrorist group.” This was also confirmed by the U.S. Secretary of State: “The leaders of the KLA have threatened to murder villagers and to burn their homes if they refuse to join its ranks. The threat represented by the KLA takes such proportions that the inhabitants of six villages in the Stimle region are preparing to flee.”

Despite all that, three months later NATO became the air force of this “terrorist” KLA. What is the lesson regarding the United States that claims now to carry out a war everywhere in the name of the fight against terrorism? While they still manage to use today certain Islamic terrorists, for example in Chechnya.

Kosovo NATOized: ethnic cleansing, terror and mafia

What are the consequences of all this today? Well, as we have shown in the film, “The Damned of Kosovo,” this region is at present still in the grip of ethnic cleansing, terror and the Mafia. And the solution to the local conflict has not come any closer, but is further away than before. (Michel Collon & Vanessa Stojilkovic, *The Damned of Kosovo*, video 78 minutes. See <http://lesdamesdukosovo.chiffonrouge.org>)

A true ethnic cleansing has chased from Kosovo the large majority of non-Albanians: Serbs, Jews, Roma, Moslems, Turks, Gorans, Egyptians, etc. All these nationalities were systematically driven out by terror: Bomb attacks, murders, destruction of their homes, permanent threats ... 230,000 people had to seek refuge in Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia or elsewhere. Those who remain are blocked off in small enclaves—ghettos from which they can only rarely go out and then when escorted by NATO troops.

Was this “cleansing” limited to the period immediately following the war? Certain forces would like us to believe that. But, following the revelations of our film, “The Damned of Kosovo,” a journalist questioned Niurka Pineiro, spokesperson for the International Organization of Migration, connected to the UN, at Geneva. She confirmed: “We continue to record daily intimidation and harassment, and also extremely violent attacks, often fatal, although less numerous.” (Mail of Robert James Parsons (Genève), october 2002)

There, certain defenders of NATO claim, things are starting to normalize, there are fewer killed than in the beginning. Yes, but why? With the risk of being considered cynical, we have to say that it is because the majority of the members of the national minorities have already fled the region, and there are fewer people to kill!

Indeed, the situation has improved not at all, as the same UN spokesperson recognized: “The minorities remain vulnerable to attacks ... Freedom of movement remains their key problem, affecting their possibility of living a normal life ... Without freedom of movement, the access to essential social services, to jobs and to civilian structures (hospitals, education, etc. ...) remains extremely difficult and often impossible.” (Idem)

We sum up. No moving about. No access to public services, nor to education, nor to hospitals. No jobs. And on top of that the daily terror. NATO-run Kosovo remains a land without law, a hell for those who are the targets of the KLA, including numerous Albanians. Last November 5, the UN governor of Kosovo, Michael Steiner, himself recognized that “the members of the small communities of Kosovo have still not taken back their homes, and most of those who stayed in place live under unacceptable conditions.” Hasn’t the pretext of NATO’s intervention been shown to have collapsed completely? (Official website Unmik (www.un.org), november 5, 2002.

Why don't the Western media speak of this, and also the media of a certain part of the left?

“In Kosovo, NATO has made a marriage of convenience with the mafia”

Why also has the criminal character of the mafia regimes put in place by NATO never been analyzed? The observation is quite clear, however, to hear James Bisset, former Canadian ambassador to Yugoslavia: “Kosovo remains a lawless society, completely intolerant of ethnic minorities and one of the most dangerous places on earth.” (*Ottawa Citizen*, June 22, 2002)

Why does Kosovo remain a land without laws? Because of powerful economic interests, explains Canadian expert Chossudovsky: “The drug barons of Kosovo, Albanian and Macedonia have become the new economic elite, often linked to important Western commercial interests. The income from trafficking in drugs and arms was then recycled into other illegal activities like networks of prostitution.

“Highly placed members in the regime of Albanian President Berisha were implicated in the trafficking of drugs and guns with Kosovo. This traffic was able to flourish with impunity despite the presence since 1993 of an important contingent of American troops. During the last few years, the drug trade permitted the KLA to arm thirty thousand men for war in a very short time. NATO entered into a marriage of convenience with the mafia.” (Quoted in *The Damned of Kosovo*). This is confirmed by European Police services and notably by the German Federal Criminal Agency: “The Albanians are at present the most important group for the distribution of heroin in the West.”

It is known that drugs, along with guns and advertising, are one of the three most important economic sectors of today's capitalist societies, and that the CIA has set up trafficking operations in drugs, as well as systems for bartering 'drugs-guns-oil,' all over the world, and have done this in collaboration with the very worst organized criminals. This romance with the KLA has many precedents.

The Albanian mafia also controls the hijacking of international aid, which it then redirects with all the incumbent corruption that entails. In July 2002, investigators from the European Union “discovered 4.5 million euros on various accounts in Gibraltar.” (European Union news web site, 17 juillet 2002). This money was embezzled from the Kosovo Energy Agency. So the daily blackouts in Kosovo should come as no surprise.

Is all this fraud by accident, or some secondary phenomenon? Or, on the contrary, is it an integral part of the system put in place? A European official, speaking on conditions of anonymity, said: “The international community has injected between 15 and 18 million euros into Kosovo in the last three years, but we still have not established the basic infrastructures.” (*Ottawa Citizen*, June 22, 2002). It's not a matter of secondary frauds. The same sort of massive escape of funds happened in Bosnia with the clan that surrounded Muslim president Izetbegovic.

Occupied Territories: an artificial and corrupt economy

The economy of the territories under neocolonial administration constitute a completely artificial system. All the 4x4s of the international NGOs, as well as the dozens of hotels and service stations all along the highways, can create a kind of illusion. But in the enclaves (ghettos) where the minorities live, there has been almost no reconstruction and, as the word on the street has it, the principal employer in Kosovo is still the U.S. firm Brown & Root which built the military base Camp Bondsteel.

The two Western protectorates in the Balkans are in fact the two “countries” with the highest unemployment rates in all of Europe: 57% in Kosovo, and 60% in Bosnia. (Declaration of Steiner, *International Herald Tribune*, July 24, 2002). (*Associated Press*, October 8, 2002).

Does all this represent an “inevitable transition” or is it rather a lasting phenomenon? In reality, the occupation of pieces of the ex-Yugoslavia transformed into protectorates promises to be a long-running catastrophe for the people of the region. Far from taking off, these economies have been colonized.

And morally perverted. In Bosnia also, the U.S. military occupation has caused a surge in illegal trafficking, illustrated by the recent DynCorp scandal. This company, one of the largest suppliers of services to the U.S. Army, sent 181 employees to Bosnia and teams for servicing Apache and Blackhawk helicopters.

In January 2002, one of these employees, Ben Johnston, blew the whistle on a sexual slavery ring based inside DynCorp: “From the time I arrived, they talked to me about prostitution, but it took me a while to learn that they bought this girls for between \$600 and \$800. I told them it was just plain slavery.” (Kelly Patricia Omeara, *Dyn Corp Disgrace*, January 14, 2002, <http://insightmag.com/main.cfm/include/detail/stoyid/163052.html>)

Some of these girls were between 12 and 15 yrs old. The charges Johnson made cost him his job, but nonetheless wound up bringing about an investigation. However, the U.S. Army took care in 1995 to make sure its troops and other personnel would have impunity from the laws of the country. In the end, the guilty would return to the U.S. without facing prosecution. Here is the indignant commentary of Christine Dolan, the founder of the International Humanitarian Campaign Against the Exploitation of Children: “Here are these employees of these contractors to the U.S. Army in bed with the mafias and buying children as sex objects. What a surprise to hear that DynCorp kept its contract while the U.S. pretended to want to put a stop to the exploitation of human beings!” Kelly Patricia Omeara, *Dyn Corp Disgrace*, January 14, 2002, <http://insightmag.com/main.cfm/include/detail/stoyid/163052.html>)

In fact, all over the world, U.S. military bases are the centers for female sexual slavery, organized in conjunction with the local mafias. A document of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights explains that Bosnia after the war became a very important hub for trafficking in women. This document, of course, draws no connections between these crimes and the NATO base in Tuzla, where thousands of men are stationed. But the Islamic leader Mrisada Suljic says: "Can you imagine 20,000 young men without women for a year?" By 1995, the New York Times had printed the eloquent headline: "Tuzla: The Americans have landed. So have prostitution, drugs and AIDS."

The Djindjic government wants a Serbia to belong to NATO no matter what the cost. If that happens, will the fate of Serbian women be any different from those of Bosnia?

Because the DynCorp affair is not an isolated scandal. It is a classic phenomenon. At the end of WWII, U.S. soldiers forced 40,000 women from Naples—that's a third of the female population--into prostitution. (*La violaction estadounidense de Italia. Obrero Revolucionario*, June 19, 1994). During the war in Algeria, the rape of Algerian women by the French troops was used as a weapon of war against the fighters of the FLN and the civilian population, as was seen in a recent documentary based on the testimony of several witnesses. (Patrick Rotman, *L'Ennemi intime, France 3*, March 4-6, 2002). The Western media are very quick to give lessons in war crimes (real or imagined) to "smaller" nations. On the other hand, they are generally very discreet about this unquestionable fact: The arrival of troops from the great Western powers is inseparable from the social and economic exploitation of the occupied people, and the women in particular.

"The Albanians will kill all those who stay"

Why don't the KLA leaders have any intention of finding a peaceful solutions to the problems of Kosovo? Because they, as a mafia, are intent on protecting their economic, criminal interests. Instability and illegality are indispensable to them.

And so, the protection offered by the West to the KLA's racist and terrorist strategy constitutes a veritable time-bomb for the coming months and years. Because the leaders of the KLA continue to be threatening. For example, Ethm Ceku, Minister of the Environment and cousin of Agim Ceku, head of the TMK ("Civilian Protection Corps," the new name for the KLA militias that have been integrated into the state apparatus). In early 2002, he declared publicly: "Serbs trying to return to Kosovo without authorization will be turned back by force of arms if necessary." A threat taken very seriously by Everett Erlandson, a retired Chicago policeman currently serving with the UN in Pristina: "When the 'internationals' leave Kosovo, the Albanians will kill all those who remain." (Scott Taylor, *Ottawa Citizen*, June 22 2002). But does the U.S. intend to leave Kosovo? Or at least to come down a little harder against the terrorists? The recent 'prison break' by Florim Ejupi seems to indicate not.

How do you break out of a U.S. military base without a problem?

Who is this Florim Ejupi? A man with a lot of blood on his hands. ... February 16, 2001, Albanian terrorists exploded a remote-controlled bomb under a Serb bus running from Nis to Grancanica, leaving 11 dead and 40 injured. "There was smoke and blood everywhere," said the 25 years old journalist Gorica Scepanovic, who survived the attack, but remains forever scarred by the horrible shock. (Scott Taylor, Ottawa Citizen, June 22, 2002).

For once the investigation hit on something. "While in the past they have accused us of going slow, this investigation was really an example of good police work," said Derek Chappell, the British spokesman for the UN police. (Scott Taylor, Ottawa Citizen, June 22, 2002).

In fact, four people were arrested. Two were officers of the 'Kosovo Civilian Protection Corps' (ex-KLA). But only one, Florim Ejupi, was locked up. And the UN police were so afraid that his cohorts would bust him out that they transferred Ejupi from the Detention Center in Pristina to the U.S. base at Camp Bondsteel.

That seemed a good idea on paper when it was presented to the Canadian military expert Scott Taylor: "Situated at the top of a hill, this impressive installation--40 kilometres square--is a veritable fortress. Completely surrounded by three rows of barbed wire, with large defensive perimeters, and guard towers and search lights everywhere." But despite all these obstacles, Ejupi easily got out of Camp Bondsteel in May 2002, before even being tried. Here's the indignant reaction of the British policeman Chapell: "The Americans told us that he got a metal object in a spinach quiche. I'm not making this up." (Scott Taylor, Ottawa Citizen, June 22, 2002).

He had good reason to be indignant. How could a prisoner wearing a bright orange jumpsuit quietly escape from the middle of 5,000 US troops, unless they purposely let him walk out?

KLA: a sudden metamorphosis or a triumph of marketing?

Are these suspicions exaggerated? Isn't it just the Serbs and the other national minorities of Kosovo who accuse the U.S. of protecting criminals? No. General Klaus Reinhardt, who commanded the NATO troops in Kosovo until March 2000, is also angry: "The Americans placed too much confidence in the loyalty of the KLA. The Albanian extremists who were arrested by KFOR were very quickly released. If KFOR had acted sooner against the extremists, the situation in Macedonia would not have gotten so bad."

If today one can thus criticize his "dear ally," it is because of the greatly increased rivalry between Washington and Berlin in the Balkans and in the rest of the world. At its basis is the "global" economic crisis.

So it was in the German weekly Der Spiegel--and not in the U.S. press--that it was explained to us: The KLA leaders were not at all what we had been told. Last September 21, Der Spiegel interviewed Bujar Bukoshi, one-time “prime minister” of the Kosovo Albanians in exile: “After the war, the cruelest sort of eliminations took place among Albanians. The KLA leaders liquidated their political adversaries under the pretext that they were “collaborators.” According to the inquiry by Der Spiegel, “a former KLA commander engaged a war criminal to assassinate Ekrem Rexha, another KLA chief.” Rexha had prepared a book on the war crimes committed in Kosovo, notably those committed by the KLA.

The refugees from Kosovo have become the Palestinians of Europe

Of course, one wonders why we hadn't heard that sooner? Were the leaders of the KLA such angels when NATO used them to attack Yugoslavia? Or were they already “terrorists,” as they were called by the U.S. envoy in the region?

That is said only now because Washington and Berlin are fighting more and more over the energy corridors that pass through the Balkans, as well as a load of other things. But this is not a metamorphosis by the KLA. Simply put, the great powers hid the KLA's true nature because they had need of its services.

The drama of Kosovo adds to the discredit of NATO and the current Serbian government. Not only has nothing been done to return the 230,000 Serb refugees and others expelled from Kosovo, those who have come to be the Palestinians of Europe; but what's more, the Western administrators in charge of the UN mission have put all their efforts into dismantling ... the only area in Kosovo still populated by Serbs, precisely the northern part of the city of Kosovska Mitrovica. However, the number of Albanians removed from this area has been relatively small: about 5,000 residents. Very few compared with the 230,000 of other nationalities who have been expelled. But their return is the absolute priority of the UN administrators.

Some hold an even more aggressive attitude toward the Serbs, for example, the International Crisis Group, a pressure group close to the CIA and financed by the U.S. billionaire George Soros. According to this lobby, among whose members is Louise Arbour, the ex-Hague prosecutor, and Wesley Clark, the leader of the NATO bombardment of 1999: “The UN and the soldiers of KFOR led by NATO must establish their authority over Mitrovica. The new governor of Kosovo, Michael Steiner, has announced new arrests of Serbs.”

Kosovo: ‘Greater Albania’ and the new Israel?

In principle, Kosovo was always part of Yugoslavia, according to the UN resolution that put an end to the war. But there as elsewhere, the U.S. has only abided by those resolutions that served its interests. Most of

the U.S. media have been preparing the public for the independence of Kosovo--a promise made at the “wedding” of the U.S. and the KLA. The option of separation, pure and simple, was suggested by a so-called independent commission of “experts” which included Lord Robertson, Secretary General of NATO.

But the European powers don't want this independence. They know that Washington is looking to create a new Israel in the Balkans--a state that will owe them everything and that they can use like an aircraft carrier.

This said, is the U.S pushing hard for this independence? Absolutely not. They are using a strategy of maintaining tension. By stoking the conflicts--and thus the suffering--they justify the presence of their military bases.

The encouragement of the politics of terror also encourages the other separatist movements in neighboring areas. Montenegro and Macedonia are equally coveted by the KLA. But the primary attack is aimed perhaps at a territory in the southwest of Serbia. It's not talked about much, but the Sandzak could be a new Bosnia.

Tomorrow the Sandzak?

A pro-Western institute specializing in Balkan affairs, The International War and Peace Report, confirms: “The Serbs estimate that about a thousand members of their community have left the city of Novi Pazar in the last few years. New ‘For Sale’ signs appear everyday on the Serb houses and land. It is estimated that this exodus was accelerated by the SDA, the dominant Muslim political party, which fired the Serb directors of public companies and local administrations.” The percentage of Serbs in the population has fallen by 22% to 17% (i.e., a similar, but more massive, emigration was produced in Kosovo in the 70s and 80s). (IWPR'S Balkan Crisis Report, No. 353, July 26 , 2002.).

Last June, The National Bosniac Council of the Sandzak, tied directly to the Muslim SDA, declared: “We have no reason to integrate with Serbia and Montenegro, or with the international community, because Sandjak must become a separate territorial entity.”

Will The Sandzak explode? That depends. Like in Bosnia and Kosovo, the U.S. could pour fuel on the fire if it finds it needs a new conflict to put more pressure on a rebellious Serbia. In this cynical chess game, the people are the pawns.

And in any case, the Serb daily *Vecernje Novosti*, sounded the alert: “Soon the sidewalks and the coffee shops of the Sandzak will be divided and things will start jumping off faster even than they did in Bosnia. The first armed incidents will happen: political assassinations. If the authorities don't do anything, the Sandzak will explode within a year.” (*Vecernje Novosti*, September 29 2002).

This crisis of confidence is the cause of the Kostunica-Djindjic conflict

Why have the majority of Serbs refused to turn up to vote in the presidential elections? Why has the Kostunica-Djindjic alliance that defeated Milosevic in October 2000 broken up so quickly and why is it unravelling more and more?

“The great majority of Serbs figure they were conned by the U.S.,” explains Dragana. They were led to believe promises of a better future if their country made up with the West. Looks like they took a big fall. They’ve discovered that their day-to-day living is worse than before, and that the Western multinationals have enriched only a small minority of Serbs, but have mainly enriched themselves.

The Yugoslavs have noticed that after NATO’s military attack, the IMF’s economic attack followed. And that the two are part of the same global system whose objective is to impose the domination of the multinationals on the whole planet.

This is why the majority refused to go and vote. And to these discontented abstentions can be added the 66% who voted for Kostunica. Because for them he symbolizes, right or wrong, the will of their country to maintain its independence in the face of the West and NATO.

This is why Labus, the candidate of the IMF, suffered such a flagrant defeat in a massive media campaign. This was a total snub of prime minister Djindjic. Many fear that Djindjic will drag the country into a series of provocations and an ever-intensifying repression. Because if Kostunica is finally elected president, he will call for legislative elections and a discredited Djindjic will have to make a painful exit.

A note in passing to all those who bragged to us about the new “democracy” installed in Belgrade. What did you expect from the Serbian elections law? That the president could not be elected unless a majority of the electorate voted. But last October only 46% took part. What was the reaction of the EU? Did it wonder why the population rejected their politics? No, they just demanded that the election law and its 50% standard be repealed. And what if the people didn’t want to make that change? Then change the people!

The SPS, Milosevic’s party, did not seem to profit much from this crisis of the majority. After the pressure and the enticements of the West, the majority of its leadership tried to make a turn for the West. But it was disavowed by the voters. They gave very mediocre scores to the two candidates put forward by the SPS, and answered Milosevic’s call to vote for Seselj, the only candidate to stand against NATO and the IMF.

It looks bad as to the SPS’s presenting a viable alternative for the moment. On the Left many communist groups have come together to form a new Labor Party (Radnicka Stranka Jugoslavije). Threatened at once by the authorities, it nonetheless began a campaign of organization and consciousness-raising, particularly in the workers centers of Kragujevac and Kraljevo. Certainly the dramatic financial

situation in the country made all efforts at autonomous organization difficult, but its critique and its programme are beginning to gain a response.

Why this silence from Western intellectuals?

Here in the West, one thing is intriguing: the silence of the Western media. They presented the regime change of 2000 as a blessing. The replacement of Milosevic by the group of pro-Western parties was seen as an open door to a more or less brilliant future. Kostunica was the man for the president's job, NATO was going to straighten out the Kosovo problem. . . . This analysis had been espoused by the "media intellectuals."

But here, scarcely two years later, the majority of Serbs simply refused to take part in the presidential elections, and this did not bring the smallest comment, the slightest explanation, the merest analysis from the Western media. Amnesia?

Or the refusal to debate a position that had been shown in practice to be false? The war against Yugoslavia was just one of the many battles of the global war launched by the U.S., now against Afghanistan, Iraq, and many others. In light of this global war, it's time to do an accounting of the catastrophes the U.S. has wrought in the Balkans.

And of the paralysis engendered by positions like "Neither Bush nor Saddam," "Neither NATO nor Milosevic," "Neither Sharon nor Arafat." For a dozen years this dominant position on the European intellectual Left has condemned the antiwar movement to passivity. Because it placed the aggressor and the aggressed on the same moral footing. If everything is equally bad, then there is absolutely no reason to stop aggression.

The "neither nor" is a cancer on the antiwar movement. It must be eradicated. It is not Saddam or Milosevic who threaten the whole world, it is Bush. It is not Yugoslavia or Iraq who, every day, condemn 35,000 Third World children to death, it is the multinationals.

The U.S. threatens the peace of the world. By making charges, founded or unfounded, against those states that resist it, one merely takes part in the aggression. It is not for Western governments to decide who must rule this or that country in the Third World and according to what interests. It is for the people themselves to decide. But if Washington is allowed to occupy these regions, no democratic or social struggle will be made any easier--quite the contrary. Only the multinationals will win. (See our forthcoming text "The Disease of 'Neither, Nor': A Cancer on the Antiwar Movement")

To change the pain and anger into strength : a global warning

Why have we written this article? To analyse the problems of the past that we can't do anything about? No. To call out a warning: What the US has done in the Balkans, they are prepared to do against Iraq. Then it will be the turn of all the other countries that refuse to bow down to globalization: Iran, Korea, Cuba, Venezuela, Congo, the Palestinians, the Colombians and many others. . . . Why is it so important to continue talking about Yugoslavia and to support the struggle of its people? For 5 reasons:

1. Disinformation will also serve to 'justify' the many wars to come. This is why it is crucial to expose the media lies that have justified the war against Yugoslavia. The NATO aggression was privatization through bombing. Today, these people are without jobs, without buying power, without health care. To help them develop their resistance is part of the struggle against globalization. What they are suffering will be inflicted on all the people of the countries soon to be attacked.

2. Each one of us has a moral duty to support the right of return for the hundreds of thousands of refugees run out of their homes in Kosovo. Just like the right of return of the Palestinians. When NATO got its hooks into the Balkans and Eastern Europe, at the moment when 188 Slovene intellectuals demanded a referendum on their country's joining this military alliance, stressing the idea "to rejoin NATO is to rejoin the world, is a dangerous manipulation of public opinion": at this moment it is all important to demonstrate to everyone the full depth of the catastrophe on Kosovo by NATO and its true objectives.

3. In Iraq as in Yugoslavia, the US has elaborate plans to pit the nationalities one against the other. This will lead to the chaos of prolonged civil war. After having taken control of Iraq, Bush will use it as a base to first destabilize then control Iran and Syria. Then Saudi Arabia. All the large oil states could be broken up into mini-states more easily colonized. The Middle East and the Caucasus will also be "balkanized": crumbled in accordance with the recipe that served against Yugoslavia. If we let this happen again in Iraq, the relationship of global forces will further deteriorate. Each time Washington breaks up a state that resists it, it puts itself in a better position to attack the next one.

4. In order to unite the people in resistance to globalization and its wars, it is important to isolate completely the strategy of the US. Many Arabs and Muslims strongly affirm that the war against Yugoslavia was an aggression of the same kind as that against Iraq and the Palestinians. The US, who massacres Muslims in Palestine and Iraq, is not their friend in Bosnia and Kosovo. Besides, in the latter

region, the Muslims are also victims of ethnic cleansings organized by the KLA with the complicity of Washington.

5. In Iraq, as in Yugoslavia, the US army once again bombed chemical plants causing great pollution and again used its terrible weapons of depleted uranium. Once more causing cancer, leukemia and monstrous birth defects among the local populations, but also among its own Western soldiers who served there. A very recent report from the UN (Institute for Energy and Environmental Research), points up that _such acts as those committed against Yugoslavia had long-term and grave effects on the environment and on health_ notably by the release of massive amounts of PCBs and mercury. The report warned explicitly against the repetition in Iraq of such violations of international conventions.

Let's not forget Yugoslavia. Let's not forget those who resisted the IMF and NATO. What they endured is a warning to all the countries that the US is preparing to "conquer". May their suffering and anger be turned into the strength necessary to stop the aggressions that have already been programmed into our future.