

What a carve-up!

The “end” of the war in ex-Yugoslavia

Anarchist Communist Federation

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We have analysed in detail the situation in ex-Yugoslavia over the last few years in previous issues of Organise! It's time now to take a look at the "peace" engineered by the West, above all the influence of the US, the various manoeuvres of the different nationalist leaders, whether they be Croat, Serb or Bosnian Muslim, as well as the attitude of the left and extreme left in Britain.

The peace agreement has been imposed under great pressure from the US. Three and a half years of civil war in Bosnia, have left at least 200,000 dead, many others maimed and mutilated and mentally scarred, mass rapes of women and girls, the devastation of many towns and villages, and millions of refugees scattered all over ex-Yugoslavia. The region of Bosnia is now divided into two—the Croat-Muslim federation and the Republic of Srpska controlled by the Bosnian Serb nationalists. Depending on what is decided by the West, this may further be carved-up with Serbia annexing Srpska and Croatia seizing much of Bosnia, leaving a rump Bosnian Muslim statelet.

The United Nations troops in occupation in ex-Yugoslavia already allowed carve-ups of territory. The United Nations troops stood by and allowed the Bosnian Serb militarists under Radovan Karadzic to invade the 'safe havens' of Zepa and Srebrenica, as a result of which 8,000 Bosnian Muslims were slaughtered and many others forced to flee. In a move backed by both the US and Germany, the Croatian leader Tudjman sent his army into the Serb-controlled area of Krajina, forcing 200,000 Croatian Serbs to run for their lives. At the end of this bloody month, August 1995, the Clinton administration approved joint NATO/UN actions under the pretext of raising the siege of Sarajevo. For 2 weeks NATO warplanes and the artillery from the Rapid Reaction Force bombarded Bosnian Serb positions, destroying ammo dumps, telecommunications systems and gun emplacements. There were more than 3,200 air sorties, tons of bombs were dropped, and American warships fired Cruise missiles. Many Bosnian towns and villages were devastated, hundreds of civilians killed and wounded.

This allowed the Croatian army, in tandem with Bosnian Muslim and Bosnian Croat forces, to overrun Serb-held areas of north-west Bosnia. Again this offensive involved thousands of dead and wounded and another 125,000 refugees fled north to Banja Luka.

Stage-managed

The US thus stage-managed the greatest acts of ethnic cleansing that have so far occurred during the Bosnian civil war. Asserting itself over its European allies, the US carved up Bosnia into separate Bosnian, Serbian and Muslim enclaves. 60,000 NATO troops will enforce the peace.

Slobodan Milosevic, the leader of Serbia, Tudjman and the Bosnian President Izetbegovic were summoned to the US Air Force base in Dayton, Ohio to rubber-stamp the deal. The US will give economic concessions for Milosevic's willingness to hand back territory held by Serbs. Milosevic, who had been denounced within the UN and in the media by the US and its allies for the last 3 years, the ex-Stalinist bureaucrat who hangs on to power by stirring up Serbian nationalism, responsible for unleashing war against the Slovenes and Croats, and for backing the Croatian Serb and Bosnian Serb war-bands, and responsible for mass murder. Tudjman, thanks to the Americans now has most of the territory he wanted in the drive for a greater Croatia. This includes much of the territory in Bosnia held by the Croatian regular army and Croatian Serb militias, and where ethnic cleansing and massacre was carried out by Croatian regulars against Bosnian Muslims.

Captives

The Bosnian Muslim forces themselves carried out attacks on Serbs and Croats in Bosnia. All these political leaders, ex-Stalinist bureaucrats and born-again nationalists, are seeking to carve out States for themselves based on ethnicity. All of them are captives or agents of one or other of the other Great Powers pursuing their own interests in the Balkans.

Any idea that the USA has fixed the Balkans for good should be forgotten. Tensions still continue with the main areas of the former Republic of Macedonia, aggravating conflicts between Albania, Greece, Bulgaria and Serbia. Tension continues to mount between Turkey and Greece. Also important are the rivalries between the Allied Great Powers themselves. One indication of this is the unilateral French bombing raid on the Bosnian Serb headquarters of Pale, without prior consultation with NATO. This highlights the differing interests of the various European powers and of the US, as they attempt to establish their own particular spheres of influence in the area, and beyond into the former Soviet Union and its ex-satellites. They all want a slice of the pie, as new capitalist markets start opening up.

What about the left, both in Britain and throughout the world? Some of them, the Stalinists and those who have traditionally tail-ended the Stalinists, backed Serbia. For instance the Morning Star wrote approvingly of Serb victories. Others took up the idea of a multi-ethnic Bosnia, as something worth defending, deliberately forgetting about the particular class interests of the ruling elite, the bureaucrats and the military. The Bosnian leadership is just as much interested in opening up ex-Yugoslavia to the market as are the other leaders.

Contortions

This support for Bosnia as somehow better than the other sides, involved these leftists in all sorts of contortions. When Croatia allied with Bosnia to attack the Serbs, Workers Press, the paper of the Workers Revolutionary Party, drooled over the Croat victories, talking about the Bosnian people's "gratitude for the Croat soldiers' bold victory". It was conveniently forgotten that these bold soldiers were responsible for massacres against Bosnian Serbs and, indeed, Bosnian Muslims! Bosnian military leaders touring Britain were cheered by the likes of the WRP and Workers Power. You got the glorious situation of self-proclaimed "internationalists" leaping from their seats to give a high ranking general, a militarist and class enemy, a standing ovation! Both the WRP through their front Workers Aid for Bosnia, and Socialist Outlook through its International Workers Aid, have established toadying relations with representatives of the Izetbegovic regime.

Internationally, NATO/UN intervention and bombing was enthusiastically supported by a host of "radicals"-the same people who, decades before, had denounced the US military intervention and bombings in Indo-China. From Susan Sontag to our old "friend" Daniel Cohn-Bendit, all these born again apologists for US imperialism gave a hearty thumbs-up.

There is a danger that some anarchists might be drawn into this circus under the banner of "anti-fascism", tail-ending the WRP, Workers Power and Socialist Outlook. For our part, we refuse to take sides with any of the capitalist States carved out of ex-Yugoslavia. In practical terms this means any effort to establish links between the working classes, be they Croat, Serb, Muslim, Albanian, or Gypsy. We support any strike against austerity programmes launched by any of these States, and any anti-militarist mobilisation against any further war moves. We

encourage the development of revolutionary Anarchist groups and organisations throughout ex-Yugoslavia. Against the false ideas of “self-determination” (in reality the building of new national States thoroughly committed to capitalism) and “anti-fascism” we advance the ideas of international solidarity.

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