Marxism, Opportunism and the Balkan Crisis

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1. The International significance of the Balkan crisis

An immense tragedy has unfolded in the Balkans. A people which has suffered so terribly in the past has once again been dragged into a bloodbath.

In one of history's cruel ironies, great questions posed at the outset of the twentieth century not only remain unresolved in our day, but are reemerging with explosive force.

As in earlier Balkan wars, the great powers are warming their hands over the fire. They both encourage Serbs, Moslems and Croats to slaughter one another and make use of Yugoslavia as a testing ground for military intervention. All the while, the regimes in Washington, Bonn, London and Paris are seeking to advance their own strategic and economic interests through Yugoslavia's violent dismemberment.

The Yugoslav working class, which has repeatedly demonstrated its power and combativity, has been bitterly betrayed. Ex-Stalinist bureaucrats Slobodan Milosevic in Serbia, Franjo Tudjman in Croatia and Milan Kucan in Slovenia have joined with communalist politicians like Alija Izetbegovic in Bosnia to deliberately stoke up ethnic chauvinism. Their aim has been to block Yugoslav workers from conducting a united struggle against the deepening poverty and rising unemployment created by the bureaucracy's own capitalist economic policies.

Marxists must develop a perspective to help Balkan workers find a way out of the current morass. The strong internationalist traditions of the Yugoslav proletariat must be revived on the basis of a scientific analysis and revolutionary program.

There is no reason to believe that the atrocities carried out in Bosnia have the support of masses of workers in Belgrade, Zagreb or Sarajevo. The betrayal of their old leaderships and the resulting confusion has left them--together with workers in other parts of the world--without an independent political alternative.

Nonetheless, such an alternative does exist. It is the program of socialist internationalism, which alone can provide a progressive solution to the crisis produced by capitalism.

The fight for this perspective in the Balkans has great international significance. The ethnic warfare in Bosnia is not a peculiarly Balkan phenomenon.

The southern tier of the former Soviet Union has been torn by clashes between rival national and ethnic factions. Georgia is torn by civil war. The six-year-old struggle over Nagorno-Karabakh has claimed the lives of many thousands of Azeris and Armenians, with no end in sight.

The Indian subcontinent, the scene of massive bloodletting in the partition of 1948, is threatened once again by ethnoreligious conflicts. And in Africa, tribal antagonisms are producing mass carnage.

Chauvinism and racism are being promoted in the advanced capitalist countries as well. In Canada, separatism is being encouraged among French-speaking and English-speaking Canadians. Attacks on immigrants and xenophobic demagogy has spread throughout Europe. And in the United States, the two capitalist parties pursue politics which are ever more openly based upon race.

In the absence of a powerful socialist working class movement which makes an appeal to all those oppressed by capitalism--regardless of national, ethnic or religious differences--there is not a population on the planet which is not in danger of being plunged into the kind of carnage now taking place in Bosnia.

Thus, it is the task of the Fourth International to fight intransigently against the nationalist poison spread by capitalism and its agents, the ex-Stalinists and petty-bourgeois demagogues. It must raise the banner of proletarian internationalism, confident that the revolutionary response of the masses of workers and oppressed will be all the more decisive as a result of the monstrous attacks to which they are now being subjected.

The tumultuous events of the last several years have created a chasm between those who have responded by adapting themselves to imperialism and those who have sought to assimilate the harsh lessons in order to prepare for coming revolutionary struggles.

Under the impact of these events, layers of petty-bourgeois leftists who in the past leaned upon the Stalinist bureaucracies no longer pretend to base their politics on the theoretical legacy of Marxism or to approach political phenomena from a class standpoint. A particularly sinister manifestation of this tendency is to be found in the political operations being carried out by the British Workers Revolutionary Party.

The WRP, led by its political secretary Cliff Slaughter, launched Workers Aid for Bosnia last June. The ostensible purpose of this campaign, which has constituted the main political work of the WRP for nearly one year, is to organize convoys of medical and food aid for residents of Tuzla, a city in eastern Bosnia.

Behind the smokescreen of humanitarian pretenses and rhetorical appeals to proletarian internationalism, Slaughter has utilized Workers Aid to promote bourgeois nationalism and engage in outright provocations in the Balkans in direct collaboration with the Bosnian and Croatian governments and the imperialist powers.

The political foundations of the WRP's campaign are (1) the insistence that socialists have no right to criticize the bourgeois regime of Bosnian President Izetbegovic and (2) the contention that the ongoing breakup of Yugoslavia into a half a dozen ethnically-based statelets represents the historic realization of national self-determination and emancipation for the people of the Balkans.

There is an objective social basis to the WRP's policies. To understand it requires examining the national political context out of which these policies have arisen.

For more than three years, the British bourgeoisie has sharply debated its Balkan strategy. Britain's Tory government initially opposed the dismemberment of Yugoslavia, which began with the declarations of independence by the republics of Slovenia and Croatia in 1991 and Germany's rush to grant them recognition.

The prevailing faction within the British Foreign Office saw control of the region by London's old Serbian ally as providing a degree of stability and serving as the best vehicle for British influence. This policy was also aimed at countering German imperialism's ambitions in the Balkans, which involve its support for Croatian nationalism.

As the region continued to disintegrate, however, elements within the British ruling class raised the demand that London break its ties with Serbia and seize the military initiative.

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The conflict over Balkan strategy expresses more substantive differences which have divided both the Tory and Labour Parties in recent years. Within the ruling class as a whole, there exist substantial fears that "British interests" are endangered by integration into the European Union and in particular by Germany's economic supremacy on the continent. The more forceful use of Britain's military strength is seen by sections of the bourgeoisie as a means of offsetting its economic subordination to German capital.

The contending sides in this debate have cut across party lines. Britain's "Iron Lady," Margaret Thatcher, has been joined by Labour Party "lefts" in calling for military intervention against Serbia.

Workers Aid for Bosnia has emerged as the official left wing of this anti-Serbian bloc within the British bourgeoisie. It has the public support of the Bosnian and Croatian regimes, official endorsement from scores of Labour MPs and the backing of TUC (the British AFL-CIO) General Secretary John Monks and the federation's President Alan Tuffin.

Ex-Labour Party leader Michael Foot, the first British politician to advocate aerial bombardment of Serbia, was the featured speaker at the September rally launching the WRP convoy into Europe.

The enthusiastic backing which Workers Aid has won from both British ruling circles and the bourgeois regimes in Zagreb and Sarajevo is a measure of the politics which underlie the campaign. The WRP's convoy to Tuzla was prepared ideologically through an explicit rejection of socialism and a public embrace of bourgeois nationalism.

Under conditions in which the poison of national chauvinism is engulfing the Balkans in the most savage struggles since the Second World War, the Workers Revolutionary Party has arrived at the position that nationalism has an inherently progressive role to play in the region.

In its editorial of July 31, 1993, *Workers Press* declared: "The war is characterized by one fundamental fact: it is a war of an oppressor nation, Serbia, against an oppressed nation, Bosnia Hercegovina.... It is the duty of socialists to defend the right of Bosnia to self-determination, to defend the right of the oppressed nation against the oppressor.... For there is nationalism and there is nationalism. There is the nationalism of Greater Serbia and there is the struggle by Bosnia for its right to determine its own affairs."

Tearing terms like "oppressor and oppressed nations" and "self-determination" out of their historical context, Slaughter attempts to justify the WRP's lining up behind the bourgeois regime of Izetbegovic in Bosnia.

Slaughter borrows these terms not from the lexicon of Marxism, but from the political jargon of moralizing liberals. They are meant to express general hostility toward an evil Serbia and sympathy for a virtuous Bosnia.

"In politics as in private life there is nothing cheaper than moralizing--nothing cheaper and more useless," Leon Trotsky wrote during the Balkan wars of the first part of this century. "Many people, however, find it attractive because it saves them from having to look into the objective mechanism of events" (Leon Trotsky, *The Balkan Wars* [New York: Pathfinder Press, 1980], p. 90.

Slaughter and the WRP have no interest in examining this "objective mechanism of events" because they are not elaborating an independent policy for the working class. Their role in the former Yugoslavia is one of aiding bourgeois national separatism and abetting imperialist intervention.

2. The historical evolution of the national question

The most striking feature of its political intervention is the WRP's failure even to attempt squaring its politics with the historic positions of the Marxist movement in relation to the former Yugoslavia or the question of nationalism in general.

Slaughter argues the Bosnian question in essentially the same terms as the editorial pages of *The New York Times*. The rich history of Marxist debate on these issues is a closed book.

He tries to palm off his invocation of the "right to self-determination" in Bosnia as having time-honored legitimacy, consecrated by the writings of Lenin and Trotsky. In this regard he is no different than countless bourgeois nationalists, Stalinist bureaucrats and petty-bourgeois demagogues before him. Moreover, Slaughter employs this slogan as if there had been no significant changes in world economy and politics in the course of the 80 years since Lenin drafted his theses.

Lenin did not uphold the defense of the right to self-determination as some timeless principle, but with a definite historic objective in mind; i.e., combating nationalist influences over the working class and oppressed masses and striking down ethnic and linguistic barriers characteristic of regimes with a belated capitalist development.

Lenin's historical-materialist approach to this issue was indicated in his division of the world into "three types of countries with respect to the self-determination of nations."

The first type, he stated, included "the advanced capitalist countries of Western Europe and the United States. In these countries progressive bourgeois national movements came to an end long ago."

"Second," Lenin continued, "Eastern Europe: Austria, the Balkans and particularly Russia. Here it was the twentieth century that particularly developed the bourgeois-democratic national movements and intensified the national struggle. The tasks of the proletariat in these countries, both in completing their bourgeois-democratic reforms, and rendering assistance to the socialist revolution in other countries, cannot be carried out without championing the right of nations to self-determination.

"Thirdly, the semicolonial countries such as China, Persia and Turkey, and all the colonies, which have a combined population of 1,000 million. In these countries, the bourgeois-democratic movements either have hardly begun, or have still a long way to go. Socialists must not only demand the unconditional and immediate liberation of the colonies without compensation--and this demand in its political expression signifies nothing else than the recognition of the right to self-determination; they must also render determined support to the more revolutionary elements in the bourgeois-democratic movements for national liberation in these countries and assist their uprising--or revolutionary war, in the event of one--against the imperialist powers that oppress them" (V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works* [Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970], vol. 22, pp. 150-52).

In the countries included in both the second and third categories defined by Lenin, there have been far-reaching transformations. Both Russia and the Balkans have passed through immense revolutionary convulsions and the social relations which exist in these countries in the present era cannot be mechanically compared to those which prevailed in 1915.

Lenin described a world in which the great majority of mankind lived under direct colonial rule. The masses of Asia and Africa have passed through the rise of bourgeois national movements and the experience of decolonization. This historic episode has already provided conclusive proof that the oppressed people of the world cannot achieve liberation through the establishment of new national states under the leadership of the national bourgeoisie.

But even at that time, Lenin was no champion of national separatism. He developed his conceptions in the shadow of the Balkan wars of 1912-13 and he absorbed many of the bitter lessons of imperialism's subjugation of that region through its fomenting of national divisions.

Lenin saw national self-determination in the Balkans as a question of uniting the region's population in a federated republic which would tear down the economically irrational boundaries of the petty states manipulated by imperialism. His perspective was diametrically opposed to the kind of chauvinism promoted today by the WRP.

In his pamphlet *Socialism and War*, written in 1915, Lenin explained: "The championing of this right, far from encouraging the formation of petty states, leads, on the contrary, to the freer, fearless and therefore

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wider and more universal formation of large states and federations of states, which are more to the advantage of the masses and are more in keeping with economic development" (V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works* [Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1970], vol. 21, p. 298).

The national movements which emerged in countries like India and China in the early part of the century were posed with the historically progressive task--unrealizable under the leadership of the bourgeoisie--of unifying disparate linguistic groups and throwing off the feudal divisions maintained by imperialism.

This progressive, unifying characteristic of the national movements of the epoch in which Lenin put forward the slogan of self-determination of nations had a profound economic content. In "The Right of Nations to Self-Determination" Lenin explained the objective impulse of such movements in the development of capitalism: "Throughout the world, the period of the final victory of capitalism over feudalism has been linked up with national movements. For the complete victory of commodity production, the bourgeoisie must capture the home market, must have politically united territories with a population speaking a single language and all obstacles to the development of this language and to its consolidation in literature must be removed."

He added: "Therefore the tendency of every national movement is toward the formation of *national states*, under which these requirements of modern capitalism are best satisfied." The kind of state he was referring to was clearly not one based on ethnic separatism (ibid., p. 396).

In politics, terms which had a definite social and class content in one period often come to represent something quite different in the next. This is the case with the slogan of "self-determination."

Vast changes in world economic and political relations have created corresponding changes in the character of the national movements. Slaughter and his WRP proceed as if none of these historical transformations have occurred.

Can it be seriously argued that the resurgence of ethnic chauvinism in the Balkans, or for that matter in the former USSR or the Indian subcontinent, expresses an effort to put an end to the legacy of imperialist and feudal domination? Can one speak today of the national bourgeoisie of Bosnia, or Kazakhstan or Kashmir seeking to "capture the home market," thereby creating conditions for the "victory of commodity production" and hence a fuller development of the class struggle?

On the contrary, these new ethnocentric movements seek the Balkanization of existing states. Rather than proposing to create a home market, they desire more direct economic ties with imperialism and globally-mobile capital. The "right to self-determination" is invoked as a means of advancing the interests of small sections of the local bourgeoisie.

In the former colonial countries, many of these chauvinist trends represent the flotsam and jetsam arising from the shipwreck of the old bourgeois nationalist movements. Having abandoned the national development strategies promoted during the initial period of decolonization, rival bourgeois cliques seek a more advantageous distribution of limited resources by agitating for national separatism.

In Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union in particular, nationalism arises today as part of a retrograde tendency seeking to restore both direct imperialist domination and capitalist property relations.

In Yugoslavia, this began with the drive by the emerging bourgeoisies in Croatia and Slovenia--republics which enjoyed a far greater concentration of wealth than the rest of the country--to cut themselves off from the poorer regions and consolidate their own relations with the capitalist world market.

A similar form of separatism has arisen in Italy as well, where the Lombard League emerged as a movement fighting for the separation of the wealthier north from the more backward and impoverished south.

Self-determination, to the extent that this slogan retains the democratic and progressive content originally intended by Lenin, means putting an end to all forms of national oppression. This goal cannot be realized in the present period through the division of Yugoslavia or any other country into a collection of ethnically-based dwarf states.

Events have demonstrated that such states can never be more than the protectorates and semicolonies of the imperialist powers, reproducing and intensifying the forms of economic and social oppression which existed before their creation.

At every stage of their political work, Marxists are obliged to consider the implications of the policies they advance, not only in relation to one or another immediate contingency, but in the context of the developing struggle of the international working class.

Slaughter and the WRP, however, never trouble themselves with the global implications of their slogan of "self-determination." They never rise above an expression of selective outrage over Serb atrocities and capitulation to the accomplished fact in Bosnia. They do not so much as consider the relation between the positions which they adopt on the Balkans and an entire series of other questions.

After all, the Marxist movement opposed the partition of India and Pakistan along ethnic and religious lines in 1947 and fought to unify the working class against the chauvinist demagogues. Once again India is faced with the threat of dismemberment. Is the previous orientation invalid? Based on the WRP's position in Bosnia, must we not also accept separatism in Kashmir, Punjab or the northeast as historically progressive?

Does the WRP side with the Azeris or the Armenians in the struggle for Nagorno-Karabakh? How about the myriad of regional and tribal conflicts in Africa? Or, for that matter, the demands for "self-determination" put forward in the imperialist countries by bourgeois parties like the Bloc Quebecois, the Lombard League, the Scottish National Party or by black nationalists in the US?

In his struggle against the petty-bourgeois opposition in the Socialist Workers Party, Trotsky described this refusal to think through the implications of positions adopted in relation to "concrete" political questions as a fundamental feature of such class tendencies:

"The opposition leaders ... split our tasks in Poland from our experience in Spain--our tasks in Finland from our position on Poland. History becomes transformed into a series of exceptional instances; politics transformed into a series of improvisations. We have here, in the full sense of the term, the disintegration of Marxism, the disintegration of theoretical thought, the disintegration of politics into its constituent elements" (Leon Trotsky, *In Defence of Marxism* [London: New Park Publications, 1971], p. 114).

Those who advance the demand for self-determination through national separatism and bourgeois rule are responsible for the global consequences of such slogans. This "right" will be championed by imperialist powers and backed by their military forces in other parts of the Balkans and throughout the world.

All of these conflicts demonstrate that there is no answer to the problems of national divisions created by imperialism and its agencies outside the struggle to unite the workers of all nationalities in the struggle for socialist revolution.

3. The nature of the Bosnian regime

A key role in Slaughter's Bosnian initiative has been played by one Attila Hoare, a student of Croatian background from Cambridge University. His mother, Branca Magas, is the author of *The Destruction of Yugoslavia*, a political apologia for Stalinism and Croatian nationalism. She has also played a prominent role in the WRP's campaign.

Before the launching of Workers Aid, Hoare had no connection whatsoever with the WRP or the workers movement. Since that time, he has written the bulk of the party's polemical material relating to the Balkans.

In an article written several years ago, we described Slaughter as a

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"master procurer," a man who prides himself on his ability to sniff out potential allies and accomplices among cynical and/or demoralized middle class radicals. In Hoare he has procured precisely such a man. Here is a person who manages to combine the provincial backwardness of a Croatian nationalist with the upper class arrogance of Cambridge University.

The choice of such a spokesman speaks volumes about the class character of the WRP's campaign. If Slaughter felt he had to justify his policy before the working class and defend it on the basis of Marxism, he would not have chosen A. Hoare to do the job. The WRP clearly is speaking to other class forces.

Let us now turn to the political positions elaborated by Hoare, with the encouragement of Cliff Slaughter.

In the *Workers Press* of August 7, Hoare/Slaughter attacked the British Socialist Workers Party for refusing to support the Bosnian government, which the former defined as "democratically elected by the Bosnian people as a whole ... a multinational government at the head of a multinational state, which engaged in no national oppression of Serbs and Croats and has no territorial claims on its neighbors."

This is a gross falsification. Izetbegovic is a communalist leader who began his career as the advocate of an Islamic state. He was jailed in 1946, shortly after the Tito regime took power, for communalist agitation. In 1983, he was again arrested and tried for promoting Islamic fundamentalism and anticommunism and for advocating the expulsion of all Serbs and Croats from Bosnia-Hercegovina.

In an essay circulated clandestinely in 1970 and openly published in 1990, Izetbegovic declared that there "could be neither peace nor coexistence between the Islamic religion and non-Islamic social and political institutions."

The claim that his is a government "democratically elected by the Bosnian people" leading a "multinational state" is likewise a fraud. Izetbegovic was elected in 1990 as part of a coalition government consisting of three communally-based parties, his own Moslem Party for Democratic Action, the Serbian Democratic Party of Radovan Karadzic and the Croatian Democratic Union.

With the breakup of Yugoslavia and the move to declare Bosnia independent, this coalition also disintegrated. Bosnian Serbs, comprising nearly a third of the population, opposed the move. They boycotted a 1992 referendum on secession and local Serb leaders made it clear that they would break with the Bosnian regime and seek a union with Serbia if independence were declared. Bosnian Croats supported independence only as a means of breaking with Serbia and orienting toward Zagreb.

More fundamentally, Hoare/Slaughter forget one thing: the ***class*** nature of the Bosnian state. All the talk about the regime's "democratically-elected" and "multinational" character only demonstrates that they themselves are saturated through and through with bourgeois democratic prejudices, making them useful lackeys of imperialism.

The liberal drivel about Izetbegovic being elected by "all the people" not withstanding, his government serves the definite class interests of an emerging strata of capitalist owners, gangsters and state functionaries who see national separatism as the best means of erecting a society based on private ownership and exploitation of wage labor. Should the workers of Bosnia oppose the aims of this ruling strata in any fundamental way, the regime's pacifist facade would rapidly fall away.

Despite the pervasive anti-Serbian slant of the media, it has been obliged to report accounts of Bosnian government troops engaging in "ethnic cleansing" against Croat and Serb populations. Thus, in its September 12, 1993 issue, the *Washington Post* reported, "The Bosnian army has systematically pushed the Croat population out of many ethnically mixed towns such as Forinica all across the industrial heartland of Bosnia."

In recent months the Bosnian Moslem army has notably increased its strength and intensified this campaign. Moreover, the principal strategy of this military force is to provoke Serb forces into the kind of attacks which would serve as the pretext for a NATO intervention.

Hoare/Slaughter present their idealized portrait of the Bosnian regime for a definite political purpose. They demand that it be given uncritical support.

In the *Workers Press* of August 28, 1993, they inveighed against any opposition to the Izetbegovic regime: "Support for Bosnian self-determination is precisely support for the survival of Bosnian society and the survival of the Bosnian working class. The Bosnia government is leading this struggle, and until socialists have built up an alternative mass liberation movement, they have no right to denounce the existing one."

This injunction against any criticism of the Izetbegovic regime is delivered as if it were an indisputable verity of Marxism that socialists are barred from denouncing a bourgeois government so long as it is "leading a struggle."

How they will create an "alternative mass liberation movement" while refraining from attacks on such a government is never explained. It is clear that Hoare/Slaughter have no interest in building such an alternative.

Certainly Trotsky obeyed no such proscription during the Spanish Civil War, when the Republican government, backed by the Stalinists, Social Democrats and anarchists, was "leading a struggle" against the fascist forces of Franco. The Trotskyist movement opposed providing any political support to the Republican government, insisting that the defense of the democratic gains of the working class against fascism was possible only through the overthrow of the capitalist state.

Of course, all such historical analogies have their limits, and this speaks even more strongly against Slaughter/Hoare. In Spain, a civil war erupted on the basis of a proletarian uprising against the fascist threat, an uprising which was subsequently strangled by the bourgeoisie and its servants. In Bosnia, the previous betrayals of the working class by their leaderships allowed rival cliques of ethnic chauvinists to drag the workers into a civil war.

In Spain, a case can be made that the struggle which was betrayed by the Republican government was a defense of the democratic and social conquests of the Spanish working class against fascism. But what precisely is the nature of the "struggle" being led by the Bosnian government?

Hoare/Slaughter claim that it is fighting for the "survival of Bosnian society." This high-sounding and utterly classless phrase boils down in practice to the defense of a capitalist government battling to carve out a territorial and communal niche for itself with the aid of imperialism.

The WRP does not and cannot point to any programmatic differences between the regime in Bosnia and its counterparts in Serbia and Croatia. There are none. On the basis of cheap moralism, it has decided to support Moslem chauvinism against Serb chauvinism.

In opposition to the call for uniting the workers of Yugoslavia, Hoare/Slaughter stated: "There is hardly a working class left in Bosnia, never mind class struggle." Under these conditions, Hoare/Slaughter declared that talk of unity between Moslem, Serb and Croat workers amounts to advocating "unity between concentration camp guards and inmates."

These are the politics of petty-bourgeois chauvinism. There is no working class, no class struggle and therefore no room for socialist politics. Having written off any possibility of mobilizing the working class against communalism and war, the WRP theoreticians declare that there is nothing left but to choose sides between warring bourgeois factions.

They denounced those who refuse to "take a stand" for the Bosnian regime, "talking instead of an abstract 'working class solution.'" Basing oneself on the working class is "abstract," while a concrete strategy--the "real" struggle--involves supporting ethnic-based militias and imperialist bombing raids.

After all, if Serb workers are nothing but a group of "concentration

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camp guards," who could object if NATO launches air strikes on Bosnian Serbs or on Belgrade itself? Hoare/Slaughter return to this theme again and again. In an article entitled "The Marxist left's capitulation to Western imperialism and Serbian nationalism in the Balkans" in the August 1993 issue of the WRP's misnamed journal, *The International*, they dismissed any perspective of unifying the Balkan peoples as utopian: "The Bosnian people cannot wage a 'common struggle against the war' as the war was caused by Serbian and Croatian expansionism into Bosnia.... A socialist federation of the Balkans is, of course, a completely arbitrary concept which is not based in any way on the struggle as it really exists."

What bowing to the accomplished fact! Is it not the case that the "struggle as it really exists" today in Bosnia has been shaped by the absence of a revolutionary leadership in the working class and the dominance of bourgeois chauvinist tendencies?

The revolutionary party must fight tooth and nail against such tendencies, advancing the perspective that the working class is an international class which alone can resolve these conflicts through the overthrow of capitalism and the creation of a new and higher social system.

Hoare/Slaughter reject this fundamental principle and insist that the dominance of chauvinism must be accepted as an immutable "reality." They are specialists in what Marx once referred to as "justifying today's swinishness by yesterday's swinishness."

The WRP insists that Bosnian workers cannot join with their class brothers in Croatia and Serbia in opposing a fratricidal war because Serbs and Croats are "expansionists." What a fantastic position for an organization pretending to have something to do with Marxism!

One can only conclude that the social chauvinists of the Second International had it right and Lenin was advancing a hopelessly "abstract working class solution" during the First World War. If Bosnian workers should reject unity with Croat and Serb workers on the grounds of the "expansionist tendencies" of the Milosevic and Tudjman regimes, then certainly German Social Democracy was justified in telling German workers to defend the fatherland against the "Russian hordes." The Serb socialists of that period, moreover, were entirely wrong not to come to the aid of "their" government in fighting the invading "Huns."

4. Balkan history and Marxist principles

Hoare/Slaughter casually dismiss the programmatic heritage of the Marxist movement in relation to the Balkans. What they call the "completely arbitrary concept" of a socialist federation of the Balkans has constituted the principal axis of socialist politics in the region since the end of the last century.

Marxists developed the demand for a socialist federation of the Balkans as the only method of putting an end to the division of the Balkans among rival empires and petty states and to the continuous fomenting of chauvinism and war by both foreign powers and the native ruling classes.

To grasp the profound content of this demand--which the WRP today contemptuously rejects--requires an examination of the history of the region. While Hoare is celebrated in the pages of *Workers Press* as a student who is "reading history" at Cambridge, it would appear that his studies have concentrated entirely on developing an alibi for Croatian nationalism, from the fascist Ustashe regime in the 1940s to the right-wing government of Tudjman today.

One cannot begin to elaborate a socialist policy toward the present conflict in the former Yugoslavia without a critical assimilation of the century-old Marxist debate over the complex national question in the Balkans.

For Hoare/Slaughter, this history does not exist, a convenient position given their present activities. Where history does not exist, then neither do principles.

In this attitude toward history, as in so much else about its politics, the WRP invents nothing new. It merely apes the imperialist bourgeoisie and its media. Since the recent events in the former Yugoslavia first broke into the headlines, there has been a noticeable silence on the historical issues which underlie these conflicts.

Ignorance of history is indispensable if one is to accept as legitimate the hypocritical denunciations of "aggression" and declarations of support for Bosnian "self-determination" and "national sovereignty" which echo through the statements of the State Department, the United Nations, NATO and the WRP.

There is a powerful sense in the present situation of a return to a bygone era. Russian troops have taken up positions alongside Serbs, and the new "great powers," the United States and Germany, have thrown their support behind the Moslems and the Croats, respectively. In addition to the civil war in Bosnia, the Greek government has instituted a blockade of Macedonia in recent months in a dispute over the latter's national identity.

Bourgeois commentators, as well as their "socialist" imitators, tend to attribute this characteristic of the present disputes in Yugoslavia to the psychology of the Balkan people or, most frequently, to the villainous character of the Serbs.

This apparent return to the old, however, has an objective source. The contradiction between the world economy and the nation-state system, which is throwing the capitalist system as a whole into crisis, has revived long-suppressed, but never resolved, national and ethnic conflicts which have plagued the Balkans since the breakup of the Ottoman Empire.

Marxism's imperishable contribution to the Balkan question was precisely to develop an approach to what historically has seemed an insoluble conflict between several ethnic and national groups inhabiting the same small territory. Basing themselves on the logic of economic development itself, Marxists advocated the unification of the South Slav peoples in a single, federated state.

From 1815 to 1915, the "Eastern Question" was the major bone of contention in European affairs, ultimately providing the spark for the imperialist First World War. The European great powers--Britain and France, Austria-Hungary and Russia, as well as in some instances Prussia--vied for control over this highly strategic region and the fate of the territories belonging to the disintegrating Ottoman Empire.

Britain, and to some extent the Austro-Hungarian Habsburg Empire, supported the territorial integrity of Ottoman territories as a counterbalance to Russian expansion in the Near East. Russia and France tended to pursue their interests by sympathizing, at times, with the nationalist movements in the region.

Domination over the small territory of Bosnia and Hercegovina has repeatedly been contested by the different nationalities of the region and manipulated by imperialist powers seeking to pit one group against another.

In 1875, a revolt by peasants erupted in Bosnia and Hercegovina, then possessions of the Ottoman Empire. The combined efforts of the Turkish rulers and the great powers proved incapable of subduing the peasantry, and a year later Serbia and Montenegro seized the opportunity to launch a brief and unsuccessful war against the Ottoman Empire.

The following year, Russia declared war, securing a quick victory over the Ottoman armies and imposing its own terms in the Treaty of San Stefano. Britain, Germany and the Habsburg Empire all opposed this upsetting of the balance of power in the Balkans. They organized the Congress of Berlin in 1878 to redivide the region once again.

The great powers took the lion's share of the territories which the Ottoman Empire had lost to the peasant rebellion and war. Austria-Hungary was granted the right to occupy and administer Bosnia and Hercegovina as well as the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, a strip of land which separated Montenegro from Serbia. Russia took back southern Bessarabia, while Britain occupied Cyprus. The Congress of Berlin settled none of the national demands of the Balkan states themselves and served only to sow divisions and future conflicts between them.

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The Habsburg takeover of Bosnia-Hercegovina could be carried out only by overcoming bitter resistance from both the Moslem and Serb populations. The Austrians sent in the Croatian Thirteenth Army Corps to occupy the territory and staffed its new administration with Croatian officials. Both Croatia's legislative assembly and its governor petitioned the Habsburg emperor to annex the territory to their own.

Serbia also laid claim to the territory, whose population was at least 40 percent Serb. The dual monarchy opposed joining Bosnia-Hercegovina with Serbia, fearing that this would strengthen the national movement in the area and serve as a pole of attraction for the South Slav peoples living in Habsburg territories. At the same time, it had no intention of adding the provinces to Croatia, for fear of encouraging Croatian nationalism.

The issue was further complicated by concern that the addition of the territory to either Austria or Hungary would upset the balance established by the dual monarchy between Vienna and Budapest. As a result, the provinces were placed under the direct control of the crown and administered by the joint minister of finance.

Needless to say, the issue of self-determination for Bosnia-Hercegovina was never a consideration of the Habsburg regime. Moreover, no separate Bosnian or Moslem national movement even existed. It was the Habsburg finance minister who later attempted, without much success, to foster Bosnian Moslem nationalism as a means of intensifying and exploiting rivalry between Serbs and Croats.

The Austro-Hungarian annexation of Bosnia-Hercegovina, which had remained nominally an Ottoman possession, in 1908, upset the balance of power in the region. This unilateral action antagonized both Serbia and Russia, which saw the annexation as a blow to their ambitions in the region. It was a signal for the violent reopening of the Eastern Question.

This erupted in the first Balkan war of 1912, which took the form of an alliance of Balkan states--Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece and Montenegro--against the Ottoman Empire. The Turkish army collapsed in the face of superior Balkan forces, which overran the Albanian and Macedonian territories.

In May 1913, the great powers intervened, forcing an end to the fighting and once again dictating the terms of the settlement in the Treaty of London. The main aim of Austria-Hungary, supported by Italy, was to deny Serbia its objective of securing a port on the Adriatic Sea. To that end, they insisted on the formation of an independent Albanian state with strong national borders.

Frustrated in their planned division of Albanian territory, Serbia and Greece both demanded as compensation Macedonian territory which had been given to Bulgaria. This set the stage for the second Balkan war, which resulted in a defeat for Bulgaria. Greece and Serbia divided Macedonia between them, while Serbia and Montenegro split up the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, thereby establishing for the first time a common border between the two countries.

The imperialists designated Albania as a protectorate to be ruled by the great powers led by the British. They drew borders which left areas with large Albanian populations, most importantly Kosovo, outside this new entity. The Dutch took charge of organizing security forces and an International Control Commission, composed of representatives of each of the great powers and one Albanian, drafted a constitution. A German prince was selected to sit on the throne of a constitutional monarchy. This arrangement provoked a widespread and sustained peasant uprising, which continued throughout World War I, making the territory ungovernable.

The term "Balkanization" was coined to describe this continuous imperialist policy of divide and rule. The various powers manipulated national and ethnic conflicts in order to subjugate the peoples of the peninsula and secure their own strategic interests vis-à-vis their rivals.

Dismissing this history, Slaughter and Hoare now attempt to transform Balkanization from a historic curse into a virtue. In their political vocabulary it becomes a synonym for "self-determination" and "liberation."

How did the national question develop concretely in the Balkans, and what was the attitude adopted by Marxists toward national unification and separatism in the region?

Following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, national oppression in the Balkans found its most acute expression in the partition of national groups by state borders. The Serb population, for example, was found in five different countries.

The more progressive elements within the bourgeois nationalist movement posed the unification of the South Slavic peoples--Serb, Croat, Slovene and Moslem alike--as the road to national liberation.

The Croatian nationalist movement was divided on this issue. One wing based itself on Croatian particularism, calling for the unification of all Croatian lands--in which they included Croatia, Slavonia, Dalmatia and Bosnia-Hercegovina--in a separate state associated with Austria and Hungary. Another wing supported unity of Serbs and Croats and opposed the assiduous attempts of the Habsburg Empire to pit one against the other.

Similarly, the Serb national movement was split between those who embraced the unification of all Serbs, Croats and Slovenes in a single nation, and those who thought simply in terms of Greater Serbia and an expansion into all Serb-inhabited lands.

Thus, not only the Marxists but even the more farsighted nationalists in the Balkans in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries understood "self-determination" as a struggle to unite the southern Slavs in a single state, not their separation into a host of smaller ones.

In the case of the Croats and the Serbs, one was dealing with peoples who were not distinguished by language, but merely by religion, the legacy of their domination by the Habsburg and Ottoman Empires, respectively.

From the nineteenth century onward, Marxists had the habit--now renounced by the WRP and discredited among the petty-bourgeois left in general--of distinguishing between genuine nationalities on the one hand, and religious or racial groups, on the other.

The old Balkan dynasties and the emerging bourgeoisie proved incapable of carrying out the task of unification. They were dependent on foreign capital and imperialist diplomacy, on the one hand, and upon semifeudal relations and institutions, on the other. Within their own states, they sought to legitimize their rule by propagating chauvinism and provincialism.

5. The demand for a Balkan federation

The Marxist movement initiated the conception of a Balkan federation as the means of overcoming the region's oppression by imperialism.

Svetozar Markovic, the founder of the Serbian socialist movement, advanced the concept of a socialist federation of the Balkans in the 1870s. The first congress of Social Democratic parties and groups of southeastern Europe, which met in Belgrade in January 1910, called for the economic and political liberation of the peninsula's peoples, the abolition of all frontiers which divided them and the creation of a Balkan federation by means of proletarian class struggle.

The statement drafted by the congress declared that such a federation would provide the only means: "To free ourselves from particularism and narrowness; to abolish frontiers that divide peoples who are in part identical in language and culture, in part economically bound together; finally to sweep away forms of foreign domination both direct and indirect that deprive the people of their right to determine their destiny for themselves" (Trotsky, *The Balkan Wars*, p. 30).

Karl Kautsky and other leading Social Democrats of the day also wrote on this question. The clearest--and most prophetic--exposition of the socialist program for a federation of the Balkans was formulated by Leon Trotsky.

In his article "The Balkan Question and Social Democracy," drafted in

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1910, Trotsky wrote: "The only way out of the national and state chaos and bloody confusion of Balkan life is a union of all the peoples of the peninsula in a single economic and political entity, on the basis of national autonomy of the constituent parts. Only within the framework of a single Balkan state can the Serbs of Macedonia, the sankjak, Serbia and Montenegro be united in a single national-cultural community, enjoying at the same time the advantages of a Balkan common market. Only the united Balkan peoples can give a real rebuff to the shameless pretensions of tsarism and European imperialism.

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

The formation of such a federation, Trotsky made clear, could be realized only through the united revolutionary struggles of the working class. "The Balkan bourgeoisie," he wrote, "as in all countries that have come late to the road of capitalist development, is politically sterile, cowardly, talentless and rotten through and through with chauvinism" (ibid., pp. 39-40).

While for Slaughter and Hoare these ideas are nothing but "arbitrary concepts" bearing no relation to the "real struggle" in Bosnia, the prescience of this perspective is evident today.

Though deliberately buried by ex-Stalinists and ethnocommunalists ruling over the fragments of Yugoslavia today--together with their accomplices in the WRP--there is a long tradition of socialist internationalism in the Balkans.

With the outbreak of the Balkan wars in 1912-1913, the Serbian Social Democratic Party's perspective of a Balkan federation was put to the test. It opposed the war aims of the Serbian regime. Even though there was a certain progressive content to the struggle to free the Balkans from Ottoman rule, the Serbian socialists placed no confidence in the predatory war aims of the ruling class.

Dimitrije Tucovic, the party's leader, denounced Serbia's invasion of Albania in 1913 and its attempts to secure an outlet to the sea through conquest. He likewise denounced Serbian, Greek and Montenegrin designs on dividing Albania and demanded a "political and economic union of all peoples in the Balkans, not excluding the Albanians, on the basis of full democracy and full equality." While the SSDP supported the unification of the Serbs on the basis of an internationalist policy of the Balkan federation, it consistently opposed attempts at annexation and conquest by the Serbian government.

In October 1912, Lenin and the Bolshevik Party solidarized themselves with the position of the Serbian socialists. The Bolsheviks issued a manifesto to the Russian workers and peasants, opposing the Balkan war and above all the tsarist regime's pretension to be supporting Slavic "liberation" in the Balkans.

"In Eastern Europe--the Balkans, Austria and Russia--alongside areas of highly developed capitalism, we find the masses oppressed by feudalism, absolutism and thousands of medieval relics. Like tens of millions of peasants in Central Russia, the peasants in Bosnia and Hercegovina, on the Adriatic coast, are still ground down by the landowning serf-masters. The piratical dynasties of the Habsburgs and the Romanovs support this medieval oppression and try to stoke up hostility between the peoples in an effort to strengthen the power of the monarchy and perpetuate the enslavement of a number of nationalities. In Eastern Europe, the monarchs still share out the peoples between them, exchange and trade in them, putting together different nationalities into patchwork states to promote their own dynastic interests, very much as the landowners under the serf system used to break up and shuffle the families of their subject peasants!

"A federal Balkan republic is the rallying cry that our brother socialists in the Balkan countries have issued to the masses in their struggle for self-determination and complete freedom of the peoples, to clear the way for a broad class struggle for socialism" (*Lenin's Struggle for a Revolutionary International: Documents 1907-1916; The Preparatory Years* [New York: Pathfinder Press, 1986], p. 85).

Outstanding revolutionary leaders of the working class, such as Christian Rakovsky, who became a prominent socialist in Bulgaria, Romania, Switzerland, Germany and France before becoming a leading Bolshevik, were developed on the basis of this perspective. Rakovsky was a cofounder of the Balkan Revolutionary Social Democratic Federation, formed in 1915 to oppose the war and fight for a Balkan socialist federation.

The Serbian Social Democratic Party was best known as the only socialist party outside of the Bolsheviks which rejected war credits in 1914. When World War I erupted, no party was subjected to greater national patriotic pressure than the Serbian Social Democrats. Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia in retaliation for the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand, heir to the Habsburg throne, at the hands of a young Bosnian Serb nationalist. This seemingly minor incident touched off the powder keg of great power rivalries, dragging the world into an imperialist slaughter.

Persuasive arguments could have been made for a national defensist policy. Serbia saw its own independence threatened by the encroachment of the Habsburg Empire and by 1915 was under the occupation of the Central Powers. It was bled white in the war, losing a greater proportion of its people, one-fifth, than any other nation on earth to battle casualties and disease.

Yet when Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia in July 1914, the two socialist deputies, Lapcevic and Kaclerovic, rejected the government's call for national defense and instead put forward the SSDP's own solution: "Serbia ... should endorse a Balkan policy which would bring about a federation.... To achieve this, it should immediately take steps to conclude a tariff union, establish joint means of communication ... form a common all-Balkan parliament, discontinue the standing army, and establish a common people's militia which would defend us ... from every attack of the Great Powers."

Lapcevic continued, warning that the Balkans were merely another field for conquest by the imperialists. "I fear that the Serbian government is being manipulated right now as a pawn of the great powers," he said. "When the costs of the war are assessed, the Great Powers will of course treat the small nations of the Balkans and Asia as mere objects to be handed out as compensation."

The heroic example set by the Serb socialists during the First World War provides a fitting rebuke to those like the WRP who today justify and prostrate themselves before ethnic chauvinism.

The assessment of the war made by the Serb socialists was confirmed not long after the armistice was declared in 1918. Their democratic rhetoric notwithstanding, the allied victors were not interested in the self-determination of nations, but in the division of the spoils, principally the former Ottoman territories and German colonies.

Imperialism redrew the borders of the Balkans, once again leaving its peoples partitioned by arbitrary national boundaries and subject to harsh repression at the hands of the new regimes. Romania, for example, included more than five million non-Romanian people. A large Hungarian minority was concentrated in Transylvania, while in southern Dobrudja the population was predominantly Bulgarian. Bessarabia and Bukovina had large Ukrainian populations.

Greece and Turkey pursued a brutal "solution" to the national problem by organizing a forced exchange of populations in which masses of people were driven across the newly drawn border in an attempt to achieve

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ethnically homogeneous nations.

The new Yugoslav state was the illegitimate offspring of the great power horse-trading which followed the war. Like all of the other states and borders created in the imperialist settlements, it failed to realize any of the democratic and national aspirations of the Balkan peoples.

Its establishment was undertaken largely on the initiative of the Croatian and Slovenian ruling classes. With the collapse of the Habsburg Empire, they faced a choice of either joining in a single South Slav state or seeing a possible partition of their territories between Italy, Serbia and perhaps even Austria and Hungary.

Moreover, the ruling elites throughout the Balkans feared that the victorious Russian Revolution of October 1917 would be answered with revolutionary upheavals among the working class and oppressed masses of the region. For these reasons, the Croat and Slovene rulers turned to the stronger and more centralized Serbian state for protection.

6. The formation of Yugoslavia

On December 1, 1918, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was founded. The new country would officially be renamed Yugoslavia in 1929. The new state emerged as an extension of the rule of the Serbian monarchy, state bureaucracy and army over all the new territories. It eliminated previously existing institutions in the former Habsburg Empire and disbanded the Croatian military units. Serbs were placed in virtually all of the top government positions.

Political opposition, including individuals or movements demanding national autonomy, was harshly repressed. As the Croat ruling classes came to see their pact with the Serbian state as a Faustian bargain, new nationalist formations grew. Most prominent among these was the Croatian Republican Peasants Party of Stephen Radic.

After the war and the establishment of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, the revived Serbian Social Democratic Party issued its first proclamation entitled "To the Workers and Social Democrats." It championed Yugoslav unity, adopting the position that, "the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes are one people," whose "unification into one nation-state is an important political, economic and cultural necessity."

It went on to urge the destruction of all separatist organizations. The party warned that the nationality question could be resolved only through the abolition of private property and the organization of socialist production. It reaffirmed the slogan of a federation of Balkan republics as the sole means of satisfying the demands of the peninsula's peoples and throwing off the yoke of imperialist domination.

Based on this perspective, the SSDP held its "Concluding Congress" in April 1919 and voted to dissolve itself and unite with the other socialist organizations of the new kingdom into the Yugoslav Communist Party and affiliate to the Communist International.

The Communists were the only tendency to emerge as an "All-Yugoslav" political formation. In the first years of its existence, the CPY won broad support on the basis of a revolutionary program. It denounced the new Yugoslav state and exposed the ruling bourgeoisie as a puppet of Allied imperialism.

Opposing the national chauvinism espoused by all other parties--Serb, Croat, Slovene and Moslem alike--only the CPY appealed to all ethnic groups and nationalities, which was demonstrated in the vote it received in a series of elections.

In 1920, the party captured the majority of seats in the municipal elections in both the Croatian capital of Zagreb and the Serbian capital of Belgrade. Participating in the election to the Constituent Assembly, which was not organized along strictly ethnic lines, it won support from workers throughout Yugoslavia. It placed third, winning 58 seats. While the regime excluded the CPY from the assembly, the Communists actively opposed the new constitution imposed by Belgrade.

Fearing the broad support won by the CPY, Yugoslavia's bourgeoisie pushed through a "Law on the Protection of the State" which provided for the death penalty for engaging in Communist propaganda. The police drove Communists out of the city halls to which they had been elected. Strikes organized by the party were outlawed and broken. The regime tried, imprisoned and in some cases executed party leaders.

Like all of the new Communist parties formed in the immediate aftermath of the October Revolution, the CPY found itself thrust into revolutionary work without having undergone the necessary political and ideological preparation and not having fully settled accounts with Social Democracy. At its Second Congress, the Communist International took note of the problems encountered by the young Yugoslav Communist Party, attributing them to the uncompleted task of forging an authoritative leadership and a failure to adequately combat parliamentarist illusions within the party. Both these tendencies left the party vulnerable to the savage repression unleashed by the bourgeoisie.

There exists absolutely no record, however, that the Communist International--when it was led by Lenin and Trotsky--expressed any differences with the strategic line of the party in general or on the national question in particular. The fight for the socialist federation of the Balkans remained the perspective of the Communist International through its first four Congresses.

7. Stalinism and national separatism

It was at the Fifth World Congress of the Comintern, held in 1924 under the influence of the mounting struggle against "Trotskyism" and the elaboration by Stalin and Bukharin of the theory of "socialism in one country," that politics of national separatism similar to those now championed by the WRP were first introduced.

Yugoslavia became one of the principal arenas in which the bureaucratic faction led by Stalin and, at that time, Zinoviev, in the Soviet Union developed the policy which Trotsky referred to as "right-centrist downsliding."

This faction urged and ultimately imposed on the CPY an orientation toward the peasantry and nationalism. This line was part and parcel of an opportunist shift in the wake of the defeat of the 1923 revolutions in Bulgaria and Germany. Frustrated by the difficulties confronting the Communist International in winning the leadership of the world working class and extending the socialist revolution, the section of the party led by Stalin turned toward an alliance with other class forces.

The emerging bureaucracy sought to transform the New Economic Policy, described by Lenin as a "retreat" imposed upon the Soviet state by the delay in the world revolution, into a virtue. It adopted Bukharin's slogan of "turn to the country" and increasingly sought to consolidate its power by resting upon layers of wealthier peasants. To defend this policy, the bureaucracy launched a struggle against "permanent revolution" and denounced Trotsky for his alleged "underestimation of the peasantry."

The leadership under Stalin extended this new orientation into the Communist International. This was the period in which the Chinese bourgeois nationalist Kuomintang was proclaimed to be a "sympathizing party" of the Communist International; the "Anglo-Russian Committee" was founded with the British Trade Union Congress bureaucracy; the CP oriented to the LaFollette movement in the United States and in Germany the CP's support for the "national revolution," competed with the slogan of the fascists.

As part of this process, the Stalin faction advanced the wholly anti-Marxist proposition that nationalism in the Balkans was inherently revolutionary since it rested upon a peasant base. It sought to derail the CPY from its proletarian internationalist orientation to one of welcoming national and ethnic separatist movements as allies in a struggle to destroy the Yugoslav state.

The leader of the CPY, Sima Markovic, upheld the traditional socialist demand for a Balkan federation and opposed the call for promoting national separatism. "One could not hope to strengthen class solidarity while encouraging centrifugal forces along national lines within the

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working class movement," he declared (Paul Shoup, *Communism and the Yugoslav Question* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1968], p. 23).

Markovic was no admirer of the Yugoslav state. He opposed it from its foundation. Yet he was reluctant to base the successes of the party on the indiscriminate appeal to national and ethnic grievances. He insisted that the only means of resolving these questions was to unite the South Slav working class in struggle.

Therefore he called for political agitation on the issue of the constitution as a tactical means of mobilizing the working class independently of the bourgeois parties and posing a socialist solution to the national question.

The Stalin-Zinoviev faction did their utmost to spread confusion within the Yugoslav party on this issue, painting Markovic and his supporters as a "right-wing," parliamentarist tendency. The Moscow leadership promoted the views of Markovic's opponents, who were orientating toward the bourgeois national separatist movements, designating them as the "lefts."

Under conditions in which Markovic and other leaders of the CPY were imprisoned and pressure was exerted from Moscow, the policy of supporting bourgeois national separatism gained ascendancy.

This debate over the tactical exploitation of nationalism involved vital political issues which continue to have far-reaching consequences in the Balkans and elsewhere.

This turn involved an attempt to find a short cut to the difficult task of winning the working class to the program of international socialism. The revolutionary potential of other, ready-made movements and organizations, based on different class forces, was exaggerated. Policies aimed at "neutralizing," not overthrowing, the world bourgeoisie were pursued with indifference to the impact which they would have on the socialist consciousness of the working class.

The implications of this policy were revealed at the Fifth Congress. D.J. Manuilsky, who emerged in this period as a chief functionary of the bureaucracy within the Communist International, delivered the main report on Yugoslavia. He insisted that universal support for secessionism was a basic principle of Bolshevism developed by Lenin and demanded that the Yugoslav party seek out united fronts with the bourgeois separatist movements.

Manuilsky, claiming that his arguments were culled from Lenin's writings of 1913, directed the CPY to abandon the perspective of socialist revolution, in favor of a national bourgeois democratic program. He specifically attacked those sections of the CPY program which derived the party's tactical attitude toward nationalist movements from its strategic goal of proletarian revolution.

In its "Resolution on Central Europe and the Balkans" the Fifth Congress stated: "The slogan, 'the right of every nation to self-determination, even to the extent of separation,' in the present prerevolutionary period must be expressed in the case of these newly arisen imperialist states in the more definite slogan, 'the political separation of the oppressed peoples from Poland, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia and Greece.'

This was a gross distortion of Lenin's position. Lenin upheld the "right" to self-determination as a means of overcoming national divisions and uniting the proletariat; he was never an apostle of national separatism.

On the Yugoslav question in particular, the Comintern now instructed, "the general slogan of the right of nations to self-determination, launched by the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, must be expressed in the form of separating Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia from Yugoslavia and creating independent republics out of them" (Helmut Gruber, *Soviet Russia Masters the Comintern* [New York: Doubleday], p. 134].

Significantly, it was on this issue that Stalin made his first intervention into the affairs of the Communist International.

After his release from prison, Markovic attended a plenum of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in March 1925 at which he defended his policy and expressed his disagreement with the turn toward "united fronts" with the bourgeois nationalist parties.

Stalin replied for the Moscow leadership and declared that Markovic's "mistake" was "his refusal to regard the national question as being, in essence, a peasant question." The crudeness and sterility of Stalin's arguments flowed directly from the fact that their source was the bureaucracy's own struggle against Trotsky and the Left Opposition and the attempt to extend its turn away from a proletarian policy to the international arena.

"I think that Semich's [Markovic's] reluctance to accept this formula is due to an underestimation of the inherent strength of the national movement and a failure to understand the profoundly popular and profoundly revolutionary character of the national movement. This lack of understanding and this underestimation constitute a grave danger, for, in practice, they imply an underestimation of the might latent, for instance, in the movement of the Croats for national emancipation" (ibid., p. 141).

Similar positions were advocated throughout the Balkans. Thus the Comintern endowed Hungarian irredentist tendencies in Transylvania with potentially revolutionary qualities and urged its separation, together with that of Dobrudja, Bessarabia and Bukovina from Romania.

8.The impact of Stalinism on the CPY

The line imposed by the Comintern had catastrophic results for the Yugoslav Communist Party.

Macedonia was one of the first arenas in which the Comintern put the new orientation into practice. In April 1924, it entered into negotiations with the International Macedonian Revolutionary Organization, a terrorist separatist organization backed by the Bulgarian government, drafting an agreement which called for the "liberation and unification" of Macedonia. This pact served to mire all of the region's Communist parties in the petty territorial disputes of the various Balkan states claiming sovereignty over Macedonia.

Historian Paul Shoup described the results of the Comintern's bloc with the Macedonian separatists: "With the publication of this agreement, troubles began. Far from aiding the Party in Macedonia, the alliance with IMRO created the utmost imaginable confusion. The Bulgarian Communists, as part of this maneuver, succeeded in getting the Balkan Communist Federation to adopt resolutions in March and July of 1924 which were highly favorable to their interests, and which in fact omitted any criticism of the Bulgarian role in the Macedonian question. The Greek Communist Party, outraged, at first refused to publish the resolution adopted at the March meeting of the Balkan Communist Federation, and the Yugoslav Communist Party also resisted the demand made in the Federation's resolution for the union and autonomy of Macedonia. When the IMRO declaration appeared, the CPY rejected the plan and forbade Party members to give it their support. It is reported that at this point the Comintern summoned a special delegation from the CPY to Moscow and in May, 1924, forced them to accept the IMRO position.

"On the other hand ... IMRO, under pressure from the Bulgarian government, renounced the April agreement; a bitter struggle for power broke out within the organization, as a result of which practically all those in any way associated with the agreement met death by assassination" (*Communism and the Yugoslav National Question*, pp. 31-33).

The best-known instance of this turn to separatism was the orientation toward Croatian nationalism and in particular Radic's Peasants Party, at that time the leading party of the Croatian bourgeoisie.

Radic was brought to Moscow for the Fifth Congress and inducted as a member of the Peasants International. While the Stalin leadership hailed the pact with Radic as a great victory, Trotsky dismissed it with disgust. As he was to write later in his Critique of the Draft Program: "Radic, the banker-leader of the Croatian rich peasants, found it necessary to leave his visiting card with the Peasants International on his way to the cabinet." Little more than a year later, Radic became a minister in King Alexander's

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government.

This maneuver provoked substantial opposition within the CPY. A section of the party issued a statement condemning the Comintern line and warning that "so much significance cannot be attached to the national question as to thrust back socioeconomic and class interests into a secondary place." One of the leaders of this faction was Zivota Milojkovic, a prominent figure in the Belgrade workers movement. He denounced the policy as collaboration with the Croatian bourgeoisie and a betrayal of Marxism and, together with a number of others, resigned from the party.

Even after Radic renounced his agreement with Moscow and joined the regime in Belgrade, the Comintern continued to advocate collaboration with the Croatian Peasants Party. According to one CPY document of the time, the experience left the membership in a state of "depression, passivity and despair."

In 1928, Moscow deposed the entire Yugoslav leadership, including Markovic, who a decade later would be put to death in Stalin's prison camps. By this time the national policy advanced by the Kremlin had reached a level of frenzy.

In addition to the previously listed national groups, the Albanian minority in Kosovo was likewise encouraged to form a separate state.

Under Moscow's direction, disorientation within the CPY reached such a level that it viewed the Ustashe, the Croatian terrorist organization inspired by Mussolini fascism, as a progressive, albeit confused, tendency. A major part of the CPY's work became the search for an alliance with the Croatian fascists.

Shoup comments perceptively on the overall impact of this orientation to national separatism: "Time and time again the Comintern urged collaboration with dissident national groups in Yugoslavia who had not the slightest interest in revolution, with the inevitable consequence that what groups were to be considered 'revolutionary' tended to be defined in terms of national attitudes, rather than the significance of national protest being measured in terms of its association with revolutionary goals.

"The miscalculation of the Comintern--and it was a fundamental one--lay in assuming that the nationalist movements would accept communism if they could be convinced that only a revolution would bring them satisfaction of their national goals" (ibid., p.36).

By 1929, the year in which a royal dictatorship was proclaimed in Yugoslavia, the CPY had been shattered internally by the liquidation of its proletarian and socialist program. Under the pressure of state repression, it quickly collapsed.

With the coming to power of Hitler in 1933, the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy--without any criticism of the earlier line--dropped all mention of self-determination and imposed upon the CPY a popular front policy based on support for the Belgrade government and the unity of Yugoslavia.

Stalinism never abandoned its adaptation to bourgeois nationalism. It merely shifted emphasis in order to serve the immediate foreign policy interests of the Moscow bureaucracy. A unified Yugoslavia was seen as a necessary counterweight to German expansion in the Balkans.

There is a direct connection between the line which Slaughter and the WRP advance today in relation to Yugoslavia and the degeneration of the Yugoslav Communist Party under the influence of Stalinism in the 1920s.

Both Hoare and his mother Branka Magas are open admirers of the revisions introduced into the line of the Yugoslav Communist Party on orders from the Moscow bureaucracy.

In the October 9, 1993 edition of *Workers Press*, Hoare praised the Fifth Congress for veering away from the fight for a socialist federation and in its place advocating Croatian, Slovenian and Macedonian national separatism. "The Comintern only changed this position with the adoption of the Stalinist Popular Front line in 1935. Subsequent developments suggest that the original [Fifth Congress] resolution was correct."

Hoare echoes his mother's statement in her book *The Yugoslavia.* This is a work which the WRP has actively promoted and Magas has been given a prominent position on party platforms.

Magas writes: "The CPY, founded in early 1919, took a considerable time--in fact all the vital years of 1919-28--to arrive at a policy sensitive to the multinational character of the new country. Through much of this period its position was that the national problem could be solved by local decentralization of government. It therefore found itself in active opposition not only to the non-Serb population's intense reaction against Belgrade's iron-fisted rule, but also to the Comintern, which saw Yugoslavia as an artificial construction and called upon the CPY to support national struggle against it and in favor of a Socialist Balkan Federation. Under the Comintern's constant and vigilant pressure, the CPY came to recognize the right of national self-determination, including secession, of the different nationalities--this line acquiring its fullest elaboration at the Fourth Congress held in exile in Dresden in 1928" (p. 27).

This potted historical account of the Yugoslav Communist Party and the national question expresses the outlook of a petty-bourgeois Croatian nationalist. Magas reviles the proletarian internationalist line fought for by the CPY in the first years of its existence.

She credits the "constant and vigilant pressure" of the Stalinist bureaucracy for compelling the CPY to become sufficiently "sensitive" to the aims of elements ranging from Radic, to IMRO and the Ustashe.

In the interest of discrediting the revolutionary program upon which it was founded, Magas lies unashamedly about the CPY's history. The CPY's internationalist line in the period preceding the Stalinist degeneration of the Comintern, far from placing it in "active opposition" to the non-Serb masses, won it the strongest support precisely in those areas where national oppression was most intense, such as Macedonia. Every election in which the Communists were allowed to participate verified this.

Magas suggests that the CPY somehow defended "Belgrade's iron-fisted rule," whereas in fact it was the chief victim of a reign of terror which enjoyed the full support not only of the Serb bourgeoisie, but of the ruling classes of Croatia and Slovenia.

Both of Slaughter's principal theoretical assistants on Balkan politics praise the nationalist politics introduced by Stalin. Magas only laments that it took so long--nine years--to complete the degeneration of the CPY from a revolutionary internationalist party into a Stalinist caricature.

It is significant that Magas and Hoare oppose and equate the pre-1924 and post-1934 periods. In the first, the CPY, inspired by the October Revolution, fought to unite the working class throughout Yugoslavia on a revolutionary perspective of overthrowing the capitalist state and replacing it with a socialist federation. In the second period, it supported the Yugoslav state in the service of Moscow's foreign policy.

These two perspectives--one revolutionary and the other class collaborationist--can only be equated from the standpoint of the most narrow and reactionary Croatian nationalism.

9. Tito, World War II and the Ustashe

Under the leadership of Josip Broz-Tito, the party was reorganized in the 1930s. This process went hand in hand with the Soviet bureaucracy's liquidation of large numbers of Yugoslav Communists in the purges which exterminated the entire revolutionary generation of October 1917 in the USSR.

The reorganization of the CPY incorporated national separatism into the party's structure. National Communist parties were created in Croatia and Slovenia as a means of cementing alliances with local sections of the bourgeoisie in order to better promote the new popular front policy.

This federated approach to the organization of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia--like the support for outright secession which preceded it--represented a repudiation of the methods developed by the Bolsheviks

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in Russia.

Trotsky outlined this approach in his *History of the Russian Revolution*. He pointed out that while the Bolsheviks fought against all forms of national oppression, they "did not by any means undertake an evangel of separation." He added that the party's attitude to the problem of nationalities had a another side relating to the organization of the party's struggle in the working class.

"Within the framework of the party, and of the workers' organizations in general," he wrote, "Bolshevism insisted upon a rigid centralism, implacably warring against every taint of nationalism which might set the workers one against the other or disunite them. While flatly refusing to the bourgeois states the right to impose compulsory citizenship, or even a state language, upon a national minority, Bolshevism at the same time made it a verily sacred task to unite as closely as possible, by means of voluntary class discipline, the workers of different nationalities" (Leon Trotsky, *History of the Russian Revolution* [London: Pluto Press, 1977], p. 891).

The decision to adopt a federated form of organization for the Yugoslav Communist Party was based on the conception of a bourgeois democratic, rather than a proletarian internationalist, solution to the national problem in the Balkans.

This period of the Stalinist degeneration of the CPY deserves careful study. The promotion of national separatism by the Stalinists in the 1920s and 1930s has had a lasting impact on the struggle of the Yugoslav working class. This policy, which had such tragic results for the CPY in the 1920s, is being repeated, though not, as in Marx's famous aphorism, in the form of a farce, but with even more tragic consequences.

Slaughter is indifferent to the catastrophic results of these betrayals. In order to rationalize his provocative intervention in Bosnia, he has endorsed Stalin's opportunist tactical exploitation of nationalism. In doing so he reveals that he himself has renounced any connection with the struggle of Trotskyism against Stalinism, adopting the counterrevolutionary policies of the latter.

Hoare/Slaughter elaborate a history of Yugoslavia in which the egotistical nationalist strivings of the Croatian bourgeoisie represent the sole progressive force. Their writings on Yugoslav history for *Workers Press* constitute an unabashed apology for the atrocities carried out by the Pavolic regime, which ran a fascist Croatian state during World War II.

Its crimes included the extermination of three-quarters of a million Serbs, Jews and Gypsies, as well as antifascist Croats. Men, women and children were herded into Orthodox churches and burned alive. The Ustashe ran its own death camp--one of the largest in Europe--at Jasenovac, on the border with Bosnia.

Ustashe's distinction was to have exhibited genocidal passions extreme enough to offend even Nazi sensibilities.

Hoare's apologetics for Croatian fascism are by no means unique. The present regime in Zagreb headed by Tudjman has paid tribute to Pavolic's regime and resurrected much of the politics of Ustashe.

This rehabilitation of a 50-year-old fascist dictatorship is a hallmark of Croatian chauvinism's resurgence. Croatian nationalism truly flowered under the Nazi-backed Independent Kingdom of Croatia. The regime achieved a key historic aim of Croat nationalists by annexing Bosnia-Hercegovina. It sought to purge this territory of its Serb population by means of genocide.

It is not here a matter of attributing "special blame" to a particular "nation," but of recognizing in the genocidal policies of the Ustashe regime of the 1940s--just as in the war crimes being carried out in Bosnia today--the genuine face of the national particularism which is promoted by the WRP.

While minimizing the crimes of the Ustashe, Hoare/Slaughter present the 1941-45 Partisan struggle led by the Yugoslav Communist Party of Tito as a series of separate nationalist struggles by Yugoslavia's different ethnic and national groups.

They lament the outcome of this struggle, however, declaring, "The Yugoslav nations were unable to exercise their right of self-determination within the framework of Yugoslavia."

This is a grotesque falsification of the struggle which took place in Yugoslavia during the Second World War. The strength of the Tito leadership flowed from its perspective of uniting all the oppressed of Yugoslavia in a common struggle, irrespective of national or ethnic background. This leadership had to ruthlessly combat the kind of national provincialism which Hoare personifies. On this basis, the Yugoslav Communist Party, in the form of the Partisan movement, attracted broad support from all parts of Yugoslavia.

Hoare/Slaughter refer contemptuously to the victory of the Partisans and the coming to power of the Yugoslav Communist Party under Tito as the "high point of Stalinism."

There is no doubt that Tito modeled himself on Stalin and attempted to recreate in Yugoslavia the bureaucratized state forms existing in the USSR. Nevertheless, in doing so he inevitably came into conflict with Stalin and the postwar arrangements into which the Moscow bureaucracy had entered with world imperialism.

In October 1944, Churchill met with Stalin in Moscow for a discussion on plans for postwar Europe. Churchill recalled the encounter in his memoirs in the following manner: "The moment was apt for business, so I said, 'Let's settle about our affairs in the Balkans. Your armies are in Romania and Bulgaria. We have interests, missions, and agents there. Don't let us get at cross-purposes in small ways. So far as Britain and Russia are concerned, how would it do for you to have ninety percent predominance in Romania, for us to have ninety percent predominance and go fifty-fifty about Yugoslavia."

Churchill wrote the figures down on a slip of paper and pushed it across the table to Stalin. "There was a slight pause. Then he took his blue pencil and made a large tick upon it, and passed it back to us. It was all settled in no more time than it takes to set it down."

The fifty-fifty arrangement on Yugoslavia initially took the form of a popular front government, incorporating three members of an imperialist-backed London exile regime. Most prominent among these bourgeois politicians was Ivan Subasic of the Croatian Peasant Party.

As it became clear that the Communist Party-led Partisans would hold all real power, the bourgeois representatives resigned and in November 1945, the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia was proclaimed.

By mid-1947, most of industry, commerce and transportation was nationalized and placed under state control. During these early years, Tito opened negotiations with Bulgaria on a Balkan federation and supported a revolutionary uprising in neighboring Greece. Yugoslavia came into armed conflict with US military forces, and the Tito leadership entered into an increasingly bitter and public confrontation with the Stalin bureaucracy in Moscow.

10. The Fourth International and Yugoslavia

The attitude taken by the Trotskyist movement toward these developments was completely at odds with the line now put forward by the WRP. In promoting the nationalist views of Hoare, Slaughter repudiates the history of the Fourth International on the Yugoslav question.

The Fourth International took note of the progressive content of the Yugoslav revolution, seeing within it the potential for breaking Stalinism's grip on the international workers movement and advancing the cause of international socialism.

It waged a principled defense of the Yugoslav revolution against the threats of both Stalinism and imperialism. The Trotskyists understood that this revolution could survive only if it was extended through the struggle for the socialist federation of the Balkans based on the perspective of world socialist revolution.

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The Yugoslav revolution faced a genuine dilemma. Tito had come to power on a wave of revolutionary upheavals which swept the Balkans following the Second World War. The American and British ruling classes were determined to quash this movement and enjoyed the collaboration of the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy in doing so.

In July 1948, in the midst of mounting threats by the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy against Yugoslavia, the Fourth International addressed a letter to the membership of the Yugoslav CP. It declared that the Yugoslav revolution was at a critical juncture, facing the choice of three possible directions. The first two--an adaptation to either the Moscow bureaucracy or imperialism--would represent the abortion of the revolution and a betrayal. The third was the road of world socialist revolution, basing Yugoslavia's fate on the fight to extend the revolution and relying on the strength of the international working class.

This perspective was summarized in the analysis of the Stalin-Tito split published by the Socialist Workers Party (US) less than a month later:

"The alternatives facing Yugoslavia, let alone the Tito regime, are to capitulate either to Washington or to the Kremlin--or to strike out on an independent road. This road can be only that of an Independent Workers and Peasants Socialist Yugoslavia, as the first step toward a Socialist Federation of the Balkan Nations. It can be achieved only through an appeal to and unity with the international working class. That is to say, it can be achieved only by Yugoslavia's rallying to the banner of the European Socialist Revolution, and calling upon the international working class to aid her in the struggle against both the Kremlin oligarchy and American imperialism.

"For revolutionists, however, it is not enough to welcome a great opportunity. This is only the beginning for the next step, namely their seizing the opportunity and intervening, above all, in order to raise the conscious level of the world working-class militants...

"The precondition for how far the masses will move to the left lies not in their own wishes or their spontaneous movements but in how ably and effectively the conscious revolutionary vanguard, the world Trotskyists, will intervene as a dynamic factor in the situation" (*Fourth International*, August 1948, pp. 174-76).

Only the Fourth International advanced a program and perspective capable of carrying forward the Yugoslav revolution. Its principled approach was firmly rooted in the struggle to resolve the international crisis of proletarian leadership on the basis of socialist internationalism.

What is Slaughter's position today on this perspective? Was this too a hopelessly "abstract" proposal which failed to take into account the decisive role to be played by Croat, Bosnian, Slovene and Macedonian separatism? Does he believe, perhaps, that the Trotskyist movement missed the boat; that instead of fighting to develop the Yugoslav revolution on the basis of a internationalist perspective, it should have promoted the demand for secession by the country's constituent republics?

Don't expect any answers from Slaughter. He has no time for such "sectarian" questions. Whatever he now believes, the Fourth International condemned the Tito bureaucracy not for failing to encourage petty nationalism, but for failing to break from the basic nationalist outlook of Stalinism--the ideological insistence on the viability of an isolated, self-sufficient national socialist regime and the renunciation of the program of world socialist revolution.

11. The dilemma of Yugoslav nationalism

Under pressure from Moscow, Tito abandoned the call for a Balkan socialist federation. In its stead, the Tito leadership attempted to cultivate a new, Yugoslav nationalism. Conceivably, such an ersatz nationalism could have played a transitional role of uniting Yugoslavia's different ethnic and national groups as part of the struggle to extend the revolution throughout the Balkans and internationally. But a perspective based on the independent socialist development of Yugoslavia was unviable.

First, the backward economy of the country could not provide a sufficient base for the development of socialist production. Second, the acceptance of the existing national state system in the Balkans as a whole--which left different peoples still divided by state frontiers--made it impossible to achieve a genuine resolution of the national question within Yugoslavia itself.

Faced with growing economic problems and direct threats from Moscow, Tito adapted himself to imperialism. The Fourth International publicly denounced the Yugoslav regime in 1950 for its support of US imperialism in the Korean War. It condemned the regime again for its perfidious bloc with the Moscow Stalinist bureaucracy against the Hungarian revolution of 1956.

Hoare/Slaughter have concluded that this proletarian internationalist critique is hopelessly archaic and today, in retrospect, oppose Tito from the right, from the standpoint of bourgeois nationalism.

Despite the postwar euphoria over the victory of the Partisans and the overwhelming support which the Tito regime enjoyed in its confrontation with Moscow, without a sufficient economic base, Yugoslav nationalism inevitably dissipated, while regional and ethnic tensions emerged.

In an attempt to overcome these tensions, the country was divided into six republics--Bosnia-Hercegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia, and two autonomous provinces attached to Serbia, Kosovo, with an Albanian majority, and Vojvodina, with a mixed Hungarian, Romanian, Serbian, Croatian, Slovak and Ukrainian population.

Bosnia itself was established as a separate republic in an attempt to strike a balance between the two most prominent national groups--the Serbs and Croats--and not as the result of any striving for independence on the part of the region's Moslem population.

Tito presided over this system as a Bonapartist figure, balancing between conflicting national and regional forces, alternately encouraging or repressing one or another of them in order to stabilize his rule. At the same time, the federal state which he headed served to provide each of the ethnic groups a measure of security that the fratricidal war and atrocities of the recent past would not be repeated.

Nonetheless, unresolved national problems and economic backwardness gave rise to centrifugal economic tendencies which the bureaucracy would ultimately prove unable to control.

Under the slogans of "decentralized socialism" and "workers self-management," the turn to capitalism began in the context of the nationalizations and state regulation imposed after World War II. The bureaucracy's devolution of power to local enterprises represented a shift to market policies. This was joined with the increasing integration of Yugoslavia into the world capitalist market. By the 1960s, Belgrade was admitted as a full member of GATT.

Economic interests underlay the resurgence of ethnic nationalism in Tito's Yugoslavia. The rapid growth made possible through the nationalization of industry only served to increase the gap between the more economically-developed republics of Croatia and Slovenia and the more impoverished ones such as Macedonia. In Macedonia, for example, per capita income fell from 31 percent below the Yugoslav average in 1947 to 36 percent below in 1963. During the same period in Slovenia, per capita income rose from 62 percent above to double the national average.

Provincial nationalism emerged with the greatest intensity within the wealthiest republics. It found its social base within the party leadership, the managers of enterprises and the intelligentsia. It was rooted largely in resentment over the wealth created by the republic's industries being used to subsidize the development of the more impoverished regions.

Moreover, the decentralization of economic planning placed greater power in the hands of local and the Communist parties of the different republics. A policy of particularism and economic autarchy increasingly predominated, in which each republic sought to develop its own industries, services and markets, with very little economic integration

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between neighboring regions.

Extreme forms of competition developed between republics and even between local governments. Slovenia formed its own airline in competition with JAT, the Yugoslav national carrier in 1961. When Croatia attempted to mount a similar effort, soliciting a joint venture with Pan American, opponents of the deal pointed out that even the different Scandinavian countries were able to cooperate in the running of a single airline, SAS. Nonetheless the scheme was approved by 1963.

The entire system became increasingly irrational as each republic and even municipalities sought to develop themselves as autonomous economic units. Each republic had its own central bank and all banking was carried out on the republican level. Each one pursued its own distinct development, taxation and pricing policies, with little or no coordination.

One of the Croatian party leaders, Vladimir Bakaric, wrote despairingly of this growth of petty nationalism and chauvinism driven by economic interests: "Here there appear, among other things, examples of antagonism, of unscrupulous nationalistically tinged struggles for investments; there exists the tendency to shut oneself up into narrow administrative territorial boundaries, which make normal economic development more difficult; cases occur of distorted presentation of conditions and the use of inexact indices in order to prove how 'our nation' is 'plundered', that it is 'threatened', how 'everyone gets more and passes better than we'" (Shoup, p. 247).

Divisions emerged within the party over economic "reform"; i.e., the imposition of capitalist market policies, with the more prosperous republics--Slovenia and Croatia--calling for a more rapid implementation of these policies.

By the mid-1960s, a broad national separatist movement emerged in Croatia based on the intelligentsia, management and Stalinist bureaucracy, and encouraged by the Catholic church. This culminated in student demonstrations which called for independence, and the virtual break by the Croatian party from Belgrade in 1971.

No doubt these protests expressed, at least partially, popular sentiments against the Belgrade bureaucracy's heavy-handed treatment. The program of this "Croatia First" movement, however, was bourgeois, founded on cultural nationalism and economic particularism. It, moreover, had extensive ties with old Ustashe exile organizations in Germany and elsewhere.

Predictably, Hoare extols this movement, only bemoaning the fact that the Croatian Stalinist leaders failed to carry the fight through to secession and civil war. He does not bother telling his readers that one of the principal demands of the Croatian nationalists during that period was for the partitioning of Bosnia-Hercegovina and the annexation of the western half to Croatia. They likewise sought the annexation of Croat-inhabited ares of Vojvodina.

It is precisely the threat of a Serbian-organized partition which has been presented by Slaughter and Hoare as a criminal violation of Bosnian self-determination. This only serves to demonstrate that their support for the "right to self-determination"--even in the case of Bosnia--is entirely relative.

While this movement in Croatia was suppressed and the party purged of its nationalist elements, the Tito bureaucracy acceded to many of its economic demands. The decade leading up to Tito's death in 1980 was one of accelerating economic disintegration in Yugoslavia, with politics following suit. The constitution drafted in 1974 specifically declared that the republics were economically sovereign and encouraged the independent development of the republics and autonomous provinces.

Transfer of capital and labor between the republics and foreign countries had become far larger in volume than among the republics themselves. By the 1980s, apart from the mandatory development funds which were levied on the wealthiest republics to aid the most backward, there was almost no flow of capital among the separate republics. The value of interrepublican investments amounted to no more than one percent of all capital investments in Yugoslavia as a whole.

To some extent, the irrationality of these policies was concealed in the 1970s by the massive loans which the Tito regime secured from Western finance capital. Yugoslavia, like Latin America, became one of the recipients of recycled petrodollars. When Tito died in 1980, Yugoslavia was crushed by a debt burden approaching $20 billion.

By the mid-1980s, 44 percent of the country's foreign currency holdings were going to meet the cost of servicing the foreign debt. Continuous IMF austerity programs were instituted and living standards for the working class were decimated by soaring prices and rising unemployment. In the fall of 1986, the inflation rate hit 100 percent and 1.2 million Yugoslav workers were on the jobless lines.

The working class responded with a growing wave of mass strikes, defying the bureaucracy's laws prohibiting any independent workers struggles. In 1986, there were 851 strikes. A year later the number of strikes doubled, and in 1988 there were 2,000 walkouts. In response to this growth of working class resistance, the ruling Stalinist officials in each of the republics turned increasingly toward national chauvinism as a means of diverting the anger of the masses.

Any serious examination of Yugoslav history demonstrates that the eruption of nationalism in the present period is not the inevitable expression of some age-old striving for Croat, Slovene, Moslem or Macedonian "self-determination," but the outcome of definite economic policies pursued by Tito and his successors over four decades.

12. Socialism betrayed: The consequences of the WRP's line

It must be said that the WRP's conception of self-determination in Bosnia is entirely undemocratic and bourgeois in character. Hoare/Slaughter's article in the WRP's journal *The International* states that: "the right to self-determination can be recognized only for the republics and provinces of former Yugoslavia within their present legal boundaries.... Attempts to grant the right to self-determination to smaller territorial units such as the Serb and Croat majority areas of Bosnia or the Krajina region of Croatia amounts to support for ethnic cantonization."

For socialists, self-determination means nothing if not opposition to the use of state coercion to force national minorities to remain within the confines of a given state. This was the essential democratic content of the demand when it was posed at the beginning of this century and remains so today.

Yet it is precisely this which the WRP rejects. Hoare/Slaughter declare openly that they have no concern for the rights of minorities within Bosnia, Croatia or indeed Serbia. They dismiss the slaughter of Serbs in Bosnia as, "small-scale atrocities" carried out by "local militias."

The so-called legal boundaries established between these republics were drawn under conditions in which Yugoslavia was a unified federation. With declarations of independence by Slovenia, Croatia and then Bosnia, large minorities found themselves living in states which were suddenly foreign.

Once separatism in general, and Serb and Croat chauvinism in particular, were unleashed, the old republican boundaries could hardly be expected to contain the resulting chain reaction. The idea that these boundaries could be reconciled with a conception of "self-determination" based on separatism is laughable.

What of the Albanian populations in the province of Kosovo and the newly declared independent Macedonia? Both have expressed their desire for separation and "self-determination."

Will the WRP support self-determination for Kosovo, on the basis that it was recognized as a separate administrative unit of Yugoslavia and is opposed to the "oppressor" Serbia, while rejecting it for western Macedonia, on the grounds that this would represent "ethnic cantonization," the violation of "legal boundaries," and an infringement upon "oppressed" Macedonia's right to "self-determination?"

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The WRP's position is not known. It has not even bothered to consider the implications of its Bosnian policy for developments taking place in the rest of the former Yugoslavia, much less for the rest of the world. If civil war erupts over these issues, as it well may, the fine distinctions about the legality of borders will be lost in the carnage which results.

It is this aspect of the Balkan problem--of a number of different nationalities sharing the same small territory--which made the demand for the Balkan socialist federation a matter of life and death. However "abstract" Hoare/Slaughter may find this demand, it remains the only way out of a continuous bloodletting in the region.

Hoare/Slaughter present the modern history of Yugoslavia as a progressive march toward the country's dissolution. This process, they state, culminated in the "revolution of 1989-91," which "would have created a confederation or commonwealth of independent nation-states under modernizing bourgeois democracies, had its gains not been largely destroyed by Milosevic's counterrevolution." At another point, they refer to this process as a "national-democratic revolution."

Contained within this reactionary nationalist description of the events in Yugoslavia is a world historical prognosis in which the socialist revolution is renounced. This is not merely an opinion which Attila Hoare has developed through his readings at Cambridge University. It is the outlook of a whole international layer of Stalinists, revisionists and petty-bourgeois radicals who viewed Stalinism's collapse as proof of a "failure" of the socialist perspective itself.

Hoare has yet to express an opinion in the WRP's press on any issue which is not directly related to the national question in Yugoslavia. As far as can be determined, this is the sum total of his political concerns.

Cliff Slaughter, however, claims to be engaged in the "reconstruction of the Fourth International." He continues to masquerade as a Trotskyist. Yet he has never bothered to spell out the implications of this analysis of Yugoslavia for world perspectives. Now Hoare has done it for him.

If the Yugoslav events represent nothing more than an abortion of the task of completing the "national-democratic revolution" and forming a group of independent states ruled by "modernizing bourgeois democracies," then it is obvious that the bourgeoisie still has a progressive role to play, and not just on the Balkan peninsula.

After all, the "revolution of 1989-91" was not confined to the Balkans. It was part of a general right-wing process which saw the collapse of Stalinist bureaucracies and the rise of bourgeois regimes throughout Eastern Europe and culminated in the collapse of the Soviet Union itself.

The views expressed by Hoare/Slaughter on these events are key to understanding the current evolution of the WRP itself. They are asserting that the restoration of capitalism in these countries represented not the culmination of a protracted Stalinist counterrevolution, but the realization of a bourgeois democratic revolution.

On the basis of this perspective, the disintegration of the USSR and the emergence of independent capitalist restorationist regimes from the Baltic region to the Caucasus must be seen as a realization of "national-democratic tasks" which were aborted by the 1917 October Revolution.

To accept Hoare's analysis of the "revolution of 1989-91," one would have to conclude that the Bolshevik Revolution was a gigantic historical blunder and the theoretical conception which guided it, Trotsky's theory of permanent revolution, fallacious.

It is not necessary to extrapolate from the WRP's positions on the Yugoslav civil war to determine its attitude toward events in the former Soviet Union. One need only examine the views of A. Gusev, whose Socialist Workers Union, has aligned itself with Slaughter's Workers International.

This is an organization which has distinguished itself by arguing that the Soviet proletariat is incapable of fighting on a socialist perspective and insisting that there have been no fundamental changes in the character of the state, the nature of property relations or the social position of the working class in the period encompassing the collapse of the Soviet Union.

In the spring of 1993, Gusev outlined his views in letter sent to a Soviet supporter of the International Committee: "We proceed from the fact that to place one's bets on mass agitation today is senseless and frivolous, that it is simply a waste of time and energy insofar as the real problem consists not in the fact that the working class doesn't have a revolutionary leadership, but that NOW the workers for the most part are still in no condition to accept our agitation. In other words, there is not so much a 'crisis of revolutionary leadership,' as a crisis of the proletariat ITSELF. The given crisis is the inevitable consequence of the atomization of the working class during the dictatorship of the bureaucracy, of its destruction AS A CLASS with the corresponding class consciousness."

Consider for one moment what Gusev is saying. The working class has been "destroyed," "atomized," it is in "no condition" to respond to socialist policies. Does this sound familiar? Hoare/Slaughter advance a nearly identical perspective in relation to Yugoslavia--there is "hardly a working class left" in Bosnia; calling for the unity of Yugoslav workers is hopelessly "abstract" and bears no relation to the "real struggle."

If the working class has been destroyed and no longer constitutes an objectively revolutionary class, then clearly a party claiming a mission of social transformation must turn to other class forces and other programs. If in Yugoslavia this means support for ethnic-based regimes and militias as well as imperialist military intervention, why not in the former USSR as well?

The imperialists will inevitably move toward the exploitation of nationalist conflicts and the launching of military interventions in the former Soviet Union as a means of furthering capitalist restoration. One can predict confidently that, as in Yugoslavia, Slaughter's WRP will find itself working alongside the United Nations, NATO and US and British imperialism in furthering this counterrevolutionary effort.

Hoare concludes his own analysis with a ringing anticommunist tirade, proclaiming the emancipating role of capitalism and nationalism in the former Yugoslavia. "To condemn the republican governments as 'capitalist restorationist' is ridiculous," Hoare writes. "Ever since the 1950s, the ruling Yugoslav Communist Party had increasingly abandoned state control of the economy and developed the system of 'market socialism.' This went hand in hand with increasing autonomy for the republics.... Instead of seeing this development as being that of the steady emancipation of the nations oppressed by the Serbian-dominated Yugoslav state, they see it as the negative break-up of a 'deformed workers' state.'... The comrades dogmatic and archaic theoretical views lead them to defend the old Stalinist order from the forces for national emancipation in Yugoslavia."

In publishing this filth, Slaughter only proves that the politics of the WRP are bourgeois all down the line. It represents the culmination of his own "steady emancipation" from Marxism and any pretense of basing himself on a proletarian policy.

Rejecting the possibility of a working class solution to the Balkan crisis, the WRP's entire perspective boils down to support for a military victory by the Bosnian and Croatian nationalists against Serbia.

13. The WRP's campaign for the "northern route"

Given the theoretical positions elaborated by Hoare/Slaughter, it was inevitable that the practical politics of the WRP would come directly into line with imperialist aims in the Balkans. Under the pseudohumanitarian cover of Workers Aid, the British WRP is providing logistical support for imperialist operations in the former Yugoslavia.

It is well known that the WRP's convoys are involved not just in supplying token shipments of food and medicine. Workers Aid has been involved in bringing satellite communications equipment and other strategic military equipment into Bosnia for use by the Izetbegovic regime and its imperialist backers. Its trucks are being operated on the basis of

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commercial contracts paid for by European arms dealers and others.

This is the first time in history that a movement claiming to be Trotskyist has organized gun-running for the capitalist powers.

At the same time, the WRP is using Workers Aid to mount direct military provocations in the region. When its convoy arrived in Yugoslavia last October, the WRP rejected the UN's recommendation that it proceed to Tuzla by wayof the Croatian coastal city of Split and then through central Bosnia. The WRP arranged a meeting with Brigadier General Jehan Ceccaldi of the UNPROFOR military command and demanded that it be allowed to travel through the "northern route" along the Pasovina corridor.

The WRP's insistence on this route was extraordinarily vehement and at first glance inexplicable. The central slogan of the WRP's propaganda became, "open the northern route" and a second convoy was undertaken under this provocative banner. This peculiar turn in the campaign had nothing whatsoever to do with logistical problems in taking aid to Tuzla. When a section of their aid convoy led by the Socialist Outlook group agreed to abide by the UN's conditions, it had no problem getting through.

The instigators of the demand for opening the "northern route" were none other than the Croatian and Bosnian governments. At a report back meeting held in Manchester, (*Workers Press*, November 6, 1993) convoy leader Dot Gibson praised two members of the Croatian Union, Jasna Petrovic and Mario Uccelini: "They helped us to speak to the representatives of the Croatian foreign ministry and to the Bosnia Hercegovina government, where we discussed the opening of the aid routes.

"We had the support of both for our convoy to go to Tuzla. Somennka Cek of the Croatian foreign ministry proposed that we go from Zagreb to Zupanja, in order to travel out of Croatia and to go to Tuzla through the northern corridor."

Gibson went on to elucidate the motive of the two regimes in seeking to send the WRP through the northern corridor. She explained that the route is controlled by the Bosnian Serbs, who occupy an 8-15 kilometer stretch of it and use it as their main supply road: "This northern corridor holds the key to the whole war. It marks the division of Bosnia and Hercegovina."

The Pasovina corridor forms the link between Serbian-occupied central Bosnia and the Serbian region of Krajina inside Croatia. It could only be opened up by UN military force. The support for this route by the Bosnian and Croatian governments has the sole purpose of provoking Western military intervention against Serbia.

Thus, the WRP was now carrying the logic of its political line to its ultimate conclusion--direct participation in the war plans of the Croatian and Bosnian reactionaries. Its "northern route" was in fact merely a stalking horse for the northern front which the Bosnian and Croatian ruling cliques hope to open--with direct imperialist support--against Serbia.

This perspective is shared by the most fervent proponents of imperialist intervention. Liberal Democrat leader and former SAS (Britain's Special Forces) officer Paddy Ashdown, for example, wrote in the *Observer* of February 6, 1994: "The response to Sarajevo's horror must come first in Tuzla.... Opening Tuzla would pierce the seal which the Serbs and Croats have set around the whole of central Bosnia.... Convoys must be backed with the threat of real force, attacks repelled and all impediments to aid delivery resisted." When the Socialist Outlook group disassociated itself from the WRP's provocations, Hoare/Slaughter drafted a vitriolic attack on the organization's leader Alan Thornett. This document provides the most uninhibited display of the pro-imperialist politics of the WRP.

They declared: "In demanding that the UN open the northern route, we are demanding an end to what is effectively a Western blockade of Tuzla. If this involves killing some of their Chetnik allies, so much the better." This was nothing but an appeal for NATO to make good on its bombing threats. In its January 15, 1994 issue, *Workers Press* published an editorial entitled "Imperialism out of the Balkans." This hypocritical piece was meant to cover the WRP's tracks as NATO air strikes appeared imminent. The same issue of the paper, however, carried a letter from Dot Gibson which spelled out the real line of the WRP.

Dated January 10, Gibson's letter was addressed to Gojko Susak, the Croatian Minister of Defense. "We write to request that you arrange for the blockade on the northern route from Orasje to Tuzla to be lifted," the letter states. "Our humanitarian aid convoy is in Zupanja. We received permission to leave Croatia from here. But we are unable to pass until you give permission for the HVO forces to clear the way."

The HVO is the Croatian militia. It has carried out some of the most horrific massacres in the course of the civil war in Yugoslavia. In the city of Mostar alone, its units have killed thousands of Moslems in a relentless bombardment. Politically it stands in the traditions of the fascist Ustashe. To ask its forces to "clear the way" can only be interpreted as a call for a full-scale military assault against the Serbs.

Workers Press, in its February 12 edition, returned to attacking the WRP's erstwhile revisionist allies over the issue of the "northern route." In this case it condemned the French Ligue Communiste Revolutionnaire for deciding to deliver aid to Tuzla by way of the south.

"Yet the northern route from the Croatian border at Orasje is not an invention of the British or the Hungarian Trotskyists," writes the *Workers Press*. "Its opening is the obvious aim that flows from the serious political, military and geographical analysis made by the Bosnians themselves. And among them the representatives of Tuzla in Zagreb, who know what they are talking about."

This is quite clear. The WRP's actions in Yugoslavia are based upon a "serious political, military and geographical analysis" made by the Bosnian bourgeois regime itself. This is a party which is utterly shameless in its abandonment of any class approach to politics. Questions of socialist principle and of the independent interests of the proletariat do not even enter into its calculations.

In recent weeks, the NATO bombing ultimatum in Sarajevo has been followed by actual air strikes against Serb positions around Gorazde. Discussions have begun within NATO and the United Nations on extending the bombing threat to Tuzla. Slaughter and his allies in the Croatian and Bosnian governments could well see the realization of their demand for the opening of the "northern route," by means of US warplanes.

Never before has a group claiming to be Trotskyist directly collaborated with bourgeois regimes and the imperialist military in preparing an assault on an oppressed people. The WRP has transformed itself into an appendage of the Bosnian and Croatian war ministries and of the UN and NATO.

This turn by Slaughter's organization makes clear the objective significance of the struggle waged within the International Committee against the WRP's national opportunism, culminating in the split of 1985. Had the opportunist elements in the leadership of the WRP not been exposed and driven out of the Fourth International, the International Committee itself would have been transformed into a political prop for imperialism.

The WRP's evolution was part of a process of degeneration of an entire petty-bourgeois left layer which leaned for a considerable period on the Stalinist bureaucracy and the bourgeois national movements. With the collapse of the Soviet Union and the universal capitulation of the national liberation movements, this social layer hastily made its way into the camp of imperialism.

In the nine years since its split with the International Committee, the WRP has undergone a thorough political transformation. While its political line and its practical activities have exhibited some astonishing twists and turns, one distinct and continuous thread has run through this entire process. Under the political guidance of Cliff Slaughter, the

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membership of this organization has been systematically trained to renounce any class criteria in determining its politics.

14. Petty-bourgeois moralists and imperialist reaction

In the course of the split itself, Slaughter advanced the slogan of "revolutionary morality" and declared that the crisis in the WRP was a result of its leadership's failure to recognize "the rights of human individuals." At the time, the International Committee noted Slaughter's use of a non-class terminology, which in its content bore striking similarity to the anticommunist rhetoric of bourgeois liberals.

The WRP soon developed provocative public campaigns which flowed quite naturally from this petty-bourgeois moralism. In 1988 there was the strange case of the Wild Boar trial, in which Slaughter's son Patrick was convicted and imprisoned on charges of being one of the ringleaders of a gang of fascist sympathizers which singled out black and Asian workers and youth for physical attacks at football matches.

The WRP never challenged these charges during the trial itself. Six weeks after Patrick Slaughter's conviction, however, it launched an international campaign of slander against the International Committee and the Workers League. While at that time no section of the IC had published a single line on the affair, Slaughter denounced the Trotskyist movement for failing to show sufficient sympathy for his son's plight. [The Workers League was the predecessor of the Socialist Equality Party in the United States. The SEP was formed in 1996.]

Incredibly, he described the Wild Boar defendants, who included well-known fascists and National Front sympathizers, as "a group of youth who are being witch-hunted as scapegoats for the social crisis of capitalism and Toryism."

Finally he denounced Workers League National Secretary David North for what he termed "scandalous abuse of the personality and integrity of those whom he decides may be destroyed" and for rejecting a "principled struggle for objectivity, for human integrity in the face of oppressors." All this for refusing to defend a group of middle class bully-boys and fascist thugs who engaged in violent racial assaults!

Then in 1990, the WRP threw itself into a right-wing human rights campaign in Namibia, directed against the bourgeois nationalist SWAPO movement. The objective of this campaign, launched on the eve of Namibia's first election, was not to forge the political independence of the Namibian working class, but rather to vilify SWAPO on the basis of highly exaggerated charges of internal repression. This campaign dovetailed neatly with similar operations mounted by the South African secret service, BOSS.

The real significance of these positions has now become quite clear. They served to politically demoralize the membership of the WRP, ideologically conditioning it to reject any connection between the party's politics, on the one hand, and the class interests of the proletariat and the principled positions of Marxism, on the other.

Under the powerful nationalist pressures unleashed by the drive towards war in the Balkans, the WRP has consummated its political evolution. A party which is welcomed into ministries of bourgeois Balkan states, negotiates for the services of fascist militias, transports military equipment for capitalist governments and agitates for imperialist military intervention has truly arrived on the other shore.

The WRP today cannot be defined as a centrist organization. It is not a party occupying a position somewhere between reform and revolution. This is a group which no longer accepts even formally the revolutionary role of the working class. It explicitly declares the need to rely on other, bourgeois class forces for the purpose of realizing a bourgeois program.

If it rejects the working class as the agent for the socialist reorganization of society in the Balkans, then it must reject it in England as well. If it utilizes capitalist state forces in pursuit of its aims in the Balkans, it will do the same in Britain.

In Bosnia, the WRP has demonstrated that it is prepared to act as a patriotic party of national defense and a trusted ally of the most reactionary nationalist forces. There is absolutely nothing preventing it from fulfilling the same role in Britain. It already functions as an adjunct to the trade union and Labour bureaucracy and a vehicle for political intrigue against the working class. At some point in the future, it may well become part of a bourgeois coalition government of national salvation.

In short, the lines which divide the WRP from the Fourth International are those which divide counterrevolution from revolution. This is a party which has been transformed as the result of a protracted national opportunist degeneration into a bourgeois tendency.

The political transformation of the WRP is itself a harbinger of momentous shifts in class relations on a world scale. Prior to every period of revolutionary upheaval, such political transitions and realignments take place. Political parties ready themselves for the role which they will be called upon to play in the impending class struggle. Such evolutions of petty-bourgeois centrist movements were frequently witnessed in the 1930s and 1940s.

Slaughter and his WRP have taken up their position. By way of Tuzla, they have reached the camp of imperialism.

When Slaughter was still a leading member of the Trotskyist movement, he would often make the point that in periods of crisis, when the foundations of capitalist rule were being undermined, the bourgeoisie sought assistance from among those who had played critical roles in the workers movement. So it was with the Second and Third Internationals. And the Fourth International had its own experience with the entry of the LSSP into the bourgeois government of Madame Bandaranaike in Sri Lanka.

He went so far as to predict that were an opportunist tendency to emerge within the International Committee itself, its leaders would rapidly find themselves drawn into the direct service of imperialism.

Could Cliff Slaughter have imagined in those days that he himself would become the leader of precisely such a tendency and would be recruited as an accomplice in one of imperialism's bloodiest crimes?

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