

A reply to a liberal supporter of the US-NATO attack on Yugoslavia

Cause and effect in the Balkan War

David North
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The following letter by David North, chairman of the editorial board of the World Socialist Web Site, was written in reply to a letter from a reader defending the US-NATO war against Yugoslavia. The full text of the reader's letter is linked to Mr. North's reply.

First of all, your description of yourself as "very liberal" does not at all contradict your endorsement of the war that is being waged by the United States and NATO. Under the cover of "human rights," American liberals--having recovered from the trauma of their Vietnam debacle--are reasserting their traditional political role, dating back to the days of Woodrow Wilson, as the strategists and apologists of United States imperialism.

You justify support for the war as follows: though the humanitarian rationale given by the US and NATO may be a false one, the effects of the war are nonetheless humanitarian.

This is an absurd and reprehensible argument. If, as you seem to accept, "NATO did not enter into the struggle in a humanitarian capacity," then this war was launched by the United States for other reasons, i.e., those related to imperialist political and financial interests, which are being concealed from the people. It would follow that the entire media campaign which has accompanied the war represents a colossal exercise in disinformation.

Moreover, I do not quite know what "humanitarian effects" you are referring to. Since the United States launched its bombing campaign, the central Balkans has become the scene of death, destruction and untold suffering. As for the long-term political, social and economic consequences of the war--for Serbs and Kosovan Albanians alike--it would be appropriate to recall the impact of other reckless and brutal interventions by the United States. Have you forgotten

all about Cambodia?

The WSWS does not by any means assume that all the atrocities attributed to the Serb forces in Kosovo are merely the propaganda concoctions of the American media. There is no question but that atrocities have been committed--as they have been committed by all the nationalist forces involved in the Balkan wars of the last decade.

What the WSWS has repeatedly pointed out is that 1) the coverage of these atrocities has been utterly one-sided and hypocritical, and 2) the underlying political and economic roots of the violence of the past decade have been ignored or distorted by the media. The manner in which the economic policies and diplomatic intrigues of the major imperialist powers accelerated the dissolution of Yugoslavia and the descent into civil war has been swept under the rug.

Your own letter provides a rather blatant example of the prevailing double standard. "There have been atrocities performed by the Serbs against innocent Kosovars," you write, "and it should not matter that they have been the result of action by the KLA [Kosovar Liberation Army]."

This astonishing statement simply confirms that the media has been remarkably effective in poisoning public opinion and demonizing the Serbs. Whatever happens must in every case be explained as a product of Serb criminality. There is no pretense any longer of an objective examination of political events.

No notice is to be taken of the fact that the KLA, whose ties to the drug underworld are not disputed even by its imperialist patrons, has been waging a terrorist campaign to secure the secession of Kosovo from Serbia. It has been involved in numerous acts of terror against Serbs living in Kosovo. And yet you maintain that civilian deaths that are the consequence of the on-

going civil war, in which the KLA is being funded, trained and armed by the United States and NATO, are the sole responsibility of the Serb government!

Perhaps you will reconsider your strange double standard in light of the most recent developments. Earlier this week, as you know, the United States dropped bombs on several convoys of civilians in Kosovo, which resulted in scores of deaths. What was the reaction of Mr. Clinton? "That is regrettable," he said yesterday in San Francisco. "It is also inevitable."

In other words, when civilians are killed by American bombs 5,000 miles from the borders of the United States, it is merely an unfortunate occurrence. "This is not," as Clinton went on to say, "a business of perfection." On the other hand, even those deaths that result directly from clashes between the Serb forces and the KLA are depicted as Serb atrocities. In its present state of self-righteous imperialistic intoxication, the media fails to even take note of its own double-standard.

In closing, let me return to the essential premise of your letter: that we should not trouble ourselves with the real reasons for the waging of this war by the United States. It's the effects that count. Aside from the increasingly tragic "effects" that are already observable, your argument is politically bankrupt. The political aims that have led the United States to wage war in the Balkans are not of secondary or incidental significance. Reactionary political aims and methods have reactionary consequences. The operation of this basic law of politics will become ever more evident in the weeks and months ahead.

Yours sincerely,

David North

Full text of letter sent to the WSWS by Mr. P



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