

Radio interview with WSWs Editorial Board Chairman David North

The historical, political and economic background to the war in the Balkans

21 April 1999

David North, the WSWs Editorial Board Chairman, was interviewed by Chamba Lane on the Sacramento, California-based radio station KVMR on Thursday, April 15. The following is a transcript of the discussion.

CL: David, can we welcome you to KVMR?

DN: Yes, you can.

CL: Why don't you begin by telling us who you are and what qualifies you to be on our show today?

DN: I'm the chairman of the editorial board of the *World Socialist Web Site* which is an on-line publication produced by the International Committee of the Fourth International. It follows world events, politics, economics and culture, from a socialist and Marxist standpoint.

CL: Before we get started on the historical context, I'd like to talk about the timing of Clinton's latest escapade. We allow, even support, ethnic cleansing in Turkey, Iraq, all over Africa. We allow the Algerian military to slaughter even its own civilians in far greater numbers than in Kosovo. We even allowed Milosevic free reign to do the same thing in Bosnia that he is accused of in Kosovo, while we did nothing. Now we begin a war in a season of bad weather, knowing our laser-guided missiles are only accurate in clear weather. In addition, we must have known that we would cause civilians to run for the hills. And if we'd waited a month, they could have been hiding out or fleeing in relatively dry weather rather than in the present, in the cold and rain. For what reason did Clinton begin this war when he did, except to keep his impending scandal in China-gate from being investigated by Congress, the media and the American people? What is your opinion on the timing of this, other than "wag the dog."?

DN: I have heard that interpretation. There may be many different factors that enter into a decision to launch a war at this or any other moment. I don't really believe, however, that this war can be explained simply from the immediate problems facing the Clinton administration.

CL: I wasn't attempting to justify the war from that standpoint, simply the timing, because he could have started this war any time. This has been an ongoing problem, has it not?

DN: Yes, it has. However, there are other political and military factors. I think it would be important to examine the relations the US government developed with the KLA, which certainly affected the timing of the decision to launch the bombing. The "negotiations"--if you wish to call them that--at Rambouillet were based on the premise that it would be possible to repeat the success of the formula that had been used by NATO and the Croatian government against the Serbs in 1995. The United States believed that the combination of NATO air strikes and ground attacks by the KLA--or even the threat of such a combination--might lead to a Serbian capitulation.

CL: They certainly overestimated the KLA's power.

DN: I think they did. There was even an element of recklessness. But there were very heavy pressures on the Clinton administration to attack Serbia. Whatever Clinton may have thought about the short-term benefits

that a war might bring, the real pressure for war came from the policy-making elite of the ruling class.

CL: Why?

DN: I think one has to look at this within the context of the political situation that has existed since the end of the Cold War. There has been an intense debate within the ruling elite about the role of the US in world affairs. If you follow the policy journals you will find extraordinarily frank statements about America's global aspirations. The intervention in the Balkans, I think, takes place within a broader context. One should ask how this war will be understood 10 or 20 years from now. I suspect that historians will note that in the aftermath of the collapse of the Soviet Union there was an enormous escalation of American military activity. I think they will conclude that the United States sought to take advantage of the opportunities created by the collapse of the USSR to establish an absolutely unchallengeable position of world dominance. The military interventions have as their aim the strengthening of the world position--politically and economically--of the US. This is certainly how this war is being interpreted in many other parts of the world.

CL: Are you referring to our escapades in Panama, Somalia ...

DN: Yes. And if one thinks about it, during the last eight or nine months, we have seen no less than four countries bombed by the US: the Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq--which we are bombing every day--and finally Serbia. I don't know of any country in the world which has that kind of record.

CL: But Sudan and Afghanistan were not for military purposes, they were for reasons at home, because Clinton was having problems here. It took his name off the page.

DN: I would agree that that may be a factor. But again, this is not just being done by one man. There has to be a certain political consensus within the ruling elite within the US--within the capitalist class--which favor such actions. One man cannot just launch a war by himself.

CL: It seems like in the case of bombing that factory in the Sudan, it seemed like a one-man show. Who did he have to go to for permission? Did he go to the Joint Chiefs of Staff? I don't think so.

DN: In every case, I think you will find there is a consensus. Just as you cannot explain the events in the Balkans from the standpoint of "bad Milosevic," I don't think you can explain American foreign policy from the standpoint of "bad Clinton." Obviously, personalities do play a role. Individual aims, strivings--all of that may have some significance. But when the history of these events is written, I don't think the scandal of the last year will be seen as the major factor--except, perhaps, in the following sense. Underlying the crisis within the Clinton administration were tremendous internal political tensions that expressed in a very peculiar form the fact that the United States finds itself, in terms of its social policy, at an impasse. Beneath the surface, there exists a tremendous potential for bitter class conflict. The internal social contradictions--which

can find no resolution within the existing framework of American political life--tend to explode outwardly, in the form of very violent military assaults against supposed enemies of the United States.

Caller: *This is not a unilateral USA action. There were 19 nations that decided that this had to be done. It's in accord of the decision of NATO which Congress approved in 1949, according to the provisions of the Constitution. Do you think it would be better to be isolationist and ignore what these nice so-called Christian people have been doing to the Moslems, as we ignored what the Nazis did to the Jews, or do you think that at some point you have to take a stand, because if you don't take a stand for something, you'll fall for anything?*

DN: The issue of ethnic cleansing has been used by the media to justify American intervention. I think the point you made, Chamba, at the beginning of the show is very important: the US has taken a very hypocritical attitude to these incidents. The American attitude toward ethnic cleansing always depends upon who's doing it. Just a month before this war began, the US participated in the illegal abduction of the leader of the Kurdish national movement. According to the Human Rights Report of the State Department, somewhere between 500,000 and 2,000,000 Kurds have been evicted from their villages in the last 15 years ...

CL: *That's called ethnic cleansing*

DN: Yes, and one of the most outrageous cases of it. The US adopts a completely hypocritical attitude towards such events. On Monday, Madeline Albright invited to a special State Department dinner a representative of the Croatian government. The US participated with the Croatian government in the planning of what was the largest ethnic cleansing exercise of the Balkan wars--the expulsion of 100,000 Serbs from the Krajina region in 1995. I would recommend that the caller who asked this question take a look at the memoirs recently published by Richard Holbrooke, the American ambassador, who acknowledges that he supported the Croatian offensive. One further point. An investigative committee of the Hague tribunal has produced documents, to the chagrin of the US government, which show the extent of ethnic cleansing carried out by the Croatian regime. Why does the US denounce this when it's done by the Serb government and support it when it's done by the Croatian government? There is a double standard. The WWSW opposes all ethnic cleansing. What is taking place is a tragedy for all the Balkan people. If one wishes to stop it, then one should examine the roots and causes of these atrocities, their political and economic roots, rather than trying to exploit them opportunistically to justify military interventions.

CL: *Can you take another caller?*

Caller: *I appreciate your insights into the world problems we're having. We've been having problems for a long time and they're escalating now, but at least we're allowed to know about it now due to the worldwide media. In order to heal these problems, it's a good time to tune into our spirits, forgiveness ... the telepathic anger is feeding this. To heal all these problems, from Tibet to Europe, it's a good idea to think loving thoughts*

DN: I can't say much about telepathy, but I would urge people who'd like to know more about our views to look at our web site at www.wsws.org, the World Socialist Web Site.

CL: *I visited Yugoslavia when Tito was in power and all of these tensions were absolutely not evident. The country got along extremely well. How did the country degenerate to the situation we have now? And how on earth did they get these borders, which are so unrealistic as far as the populations within these borders?*

DN: This is an important point. The history of the Yugoslav republic under Tito was a contradictory experience. Briefly, significant social progress was made. I wouldn't describe Tito's policies as socialist--the framework within which he worked was national, rather than internationalist. But, speaking in broad terms, Tito's program had socialistic elements. Industry was nationalized. There was an attempt to

address the social interests of the working class. Of course, working within the framework of an underdeveloped country, the results were limited. Tito's policy was an attempt to substitute Yugoslav nationalism for the petty Balkan nationalisms--Croatian, Serb, Slovenian, etc.--which had previously existed. However, from the 1970s on, economic crisis mounted in Yugoslavia. The world recession had a profound impact. Yugoslavia became increasingly dependent on loans from the IMF. The deepening of ethnic tensions can be traced to the consequences of the debt repayment demands of the IMF--the destruction of the social safety net, falling wages, inflation and unemployment. The policies of the IMF played a very critical role in the economic destabilization of Yugoslavia and the economic destabilization escalated very rapidly into ethnic conflict.

CL: *David, did the IMF move into Yugoslavia while Tito was in power, or after?*

DN: It began under Tito. Notwithstanding his conflict with the USSR, Tito was trained in the politics of Stalinism. That determined his response to the pressures that arose in 1948. He attempted to position Yugoslavia between the USSR and the US.

CL: *He did a brilliant job of that--how can he have been so stupid as to allow the IMF in?*

DN: I don't think he was either brilliant or stupid. I think he followed a certain pragmatic political line ...

CL: *He was the only communist leader that didn't join the Russian camp and managed to stay between the US and Russia. He's the only one that was clever enough to do that. You have to give him some credit for that.*

DN: My view on that would be that he had other alternatives. After the Second World War there was also the possibility of developing an internationalist line, which would have sought to relate events in Yugoslavia to a European revolution. He chose not to do this. He responded to Soviet threats and pressure by seeking an accommodation with the US. The US, for a period of time, welcomed this because they saw Tito as a club which they could use against the USSR. Tito tried to walk a tightrope. Unfortunately, however skilled he was as a tactician, his strategy was based on a limited and false premise: that socialism could be built on a national basis. That was not possible, especially in an economically underdeveloped country. During the postwar boom of the 1950s and 1960s the limitations were not all that obvious. Tito's maneuvering yielded ephemeral results. For a time he could counteract the national tensions that remained beneath the surface. Keep in mind that the United States, because of the Cold War, supported the unity of Yugoslavia. But the change in the international environment revealed the basic weakness of Tito's program. Tito then sought Western support to sustain his industrial development. I'm sure it was all done with the best of intentions, but in the long run it had serious and dangerous consequences. When the debts became due--particularly in the environment of world recession from 1974 on, pressures increased. Tito died at the age of 88, I believe, in 1980. It was downhill from there. The different republics--which had developed distinct economic interests--were dominated by factions of the ruling party bureaucracy whose outlook was regional. That, in the long run, called into question the survival of the Yugoslavian state.

CL: *We went into a situation in Somalia, supposedly for humanitarian reasons, and later it turns out the reason we were there was for oil. Now we are supposedly in Kosovo for humanitarian reasons, do you believe there is any mineral wealth we are actually after? Is that one of the reasons we have decided that this ethnic cleansing can't take place where all the other ethnic cleansing all over the world is perfectly acceptable?*

DN: Yes, there is. This is one of the considerations which exists. I was just reviewing an article which appeared in the *New York Times* last July by Chris Hedges which dealt with the vast mineral wealth which exists in Kosovo, enormous concentrations of lead and zinc, cadmium, silver and

gold. Indeed Kosovo has one of the largest deposits of coal reserves in the entire world. There are 17 billion tons of coal reserves, which I believe is three times the annual world production. So, yes, there is substantial wealth, and I'm sure that's a factor in the calculations which the different powers are making about their attitude toward Kosovo and what should become of Kosovo in the future. This is a return to old-fashioned imperialism. We are now seeing words reemerging in the political dictionary: "protectorates," "spheres of influence," and before long, "colonies." I was struck by an article I read in *Foreign Affairs*, which said that the biggest problem that the American foreign policy elite faces today is that the US has the power to do whatever it wants, but it doesn't have a cause which appeals to the population. The government is trying to remedy this situation by proclaiming the attack on Serbia a war for human rights. Last year the great cause proclaimed by the Clinton administration was the need to eliminate "weapons of mass destruction." That has now been superseded by "ethnic cleansing."

CL: *It's the latest buzzword and latest excuse for "business as usual."*

DN: Or, we might call it, "Back to the future."

CL: *There is such talk of these separate republics in Yugoslavia and such battles over the borders. How did these borders come about, are they the original borders, are they borders the Yugoslavs would agree are the original borders, or were they artificial constructs as so many national borders are?*

DN: They are artificial constructs. The Balkan states were carved out in the course of Great Power European diplomacy going back to the nineteenth century. The borders of the Balkan states reflected the conflict between the Russian, Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. Of course, the interests of Britain played a large role as well. The national strivings of the Balkan people as a whole were continually frustrated by the intrigues of the great powers. From the standpoint of economic and democratic development, the division of the peninsula on the basis of religious and linguistic differences was an obstacle to progress. The most far-sighted among Balkan people--the Balkan socialists--were interested in creating, through a voluntary union of the "South Slavs," a stronger and more rational basis for economic and social development. The Yugoslavia which emerged from World War I was a union of Serbia, Croatia and Slovenia, but one in which Serbia dominated. The structure which emerged out of the partisan struggle had a far greater democratic content and potential. An effort was made to combat chauvinist tendencies, particularly among the Serbs and Croats. Tito's Yugoslavia had internal borders, like our states, which were the result of complex negotiations and compromises that were aimed at weakening the old divisions. There were all sorts of political calculations in the drawing up of the internal borders. For example, the position of Kosovo as an autonomous province was devised by Tito, I believe, in an attempt initially to draw Albania into the Yugoslav federation. The borders of Bosnia were devised as a buffer between Croatia and Serbia. All the different ethnic groups looked to the federal state as the ultimate defender of their democratic rights and to guarantee a fair allocation of national resources.

CL: *I think that's a tremendously important point and I'd like to restate it. Yugoslavia under Tito survived because he kept these warring factions at peace with each other and the Yugoslavia state was strong enough at that time to guarantee civil rights for all of these minorities.*

DN: Right. He also made an appeal to the working class of Yugoslavia, which is a very critical factor. The striving for unity came from the Balkan working class. After all, a fundamental tenet of the Balkan socialist movement, dating back to the late nineteenth century, was that the unity of the Balkans would come from the struggle of the masses from below--in opposition to the petty dynastic conflicts which had produced war after war and endless bloodbaths. In that sense, the Milosevics and Tudjmans represent a revival of precisely what the Balkan working class fought against in the early part of the century, and which Tito, in his best

period, opposed. Even if one were prepared to accept that there existed no ulterior geopolitical and economic motives--which is assuming a great deal--the intervention of the US and Europe in the Yugoslav crisis of 1991-92 was utterly irresponsible and destructive in two fundamental respects: First, they insisted that the internal Republican borders--which only made sense within the framework of a federal Yugoslavia--would be recognized as international borders. This placed minorities--Croats in Serbia, Serbs in Croatia --in a position that they considered dangerous. Second, they acceded to the dissolution of Yugoslavia without securing guarantees that the democratic rights of minority populations within the internal Republican borders would be respected. The entire approach was duplicitous and illogical. On the one hand, the US and Europe were no longer interested in the territorial integrity of Yugoslavia. On the other hand, they insisted on the territorial integrity of Republican borders that were viable only within the framework of Yugoslavia. The intervention of Europe and the US guaranteed disaster.

CL: *This was decided from outside by Europe and the US?*

DN: Interestingly enough, at first the US opposed premature dissolution of Yugoslavia. But when the German government pushed for Croatian independence--reviving its own historical interests in central Europe ...

CL: *That smells to high heaven right there! When Germany was all of a sudden in favor of Croatian independence, you have to remember that Croatia sided with the Nazis in World War II ...*

DN: And there were horrifying massacres in the 1940s. But to get back to 1991. The US initially opposed Croatian independence. Numerous Balkan experts warned that the internationalization of internal borders would result in dispossessed populations, with the likelihood of ethnic civil war. What would happen to the US if a state seceded, and African Americans suddenly found themselves in an "independent" country whose leaders declared that they were no longer recognizing the federal constitution? People would suddenly question whether their civil rights were going to be respected. One can be sure that such a situation would lead to a situation not that different from what occurred in Bosnia.

CL: *All we have to do is go back to the 60s in the US and imagine Alabama or Mississippi seceding.*

DN: Exactly. It would have meant civil war in the states. The US, however, went along with the Germans on Croatia, and then endorsed Bosnian independence, which guaranteed the explosion of the whole situation. In saying this, it is not a matter of justifying the nationalistic politics which were pursued by any of the communalist factions. But it is important to understand that the policies pursued by the US and the major European powers were, even within their own framework, completely irresponsible. I know there is tremendous confusion created by the media which tends to present events and developments completely out of any historical context--as if the crisis in Yugoslavia simply erupted because of the actions of one bad man. There's always a Saddam Hussein or Milosevic or Osama bin Laden to justify various military actions taken by the US.

Caller: *Is it true that in those countries, we can't get in there and dominate those societies by the Federal Reserve because they don't honor the banking system in the same way we do, and therefore the only thing we're left with is to assign them the title of "bad guy" and bomb the hell out of them?*

DN: I think there's an element of this. I should point out, by the way, if one wants to have a better understanding of the more essential aims underlying the war in the Balkans, one should look at Bosnia. It has been turned into an economic protectorate of the IMF. Its banking system and currency are under the control of foreign administrators appointed by the IMF. The United States claims, of course, that it has no economic interests in the Balkans; its attack on Serbia is motivated by only altruistic and humanitarian motives. But what are the objective consequences of its actions? From the standpoint of the historic evolution of this region and its

relation to world capitalism, a more essential process is working itself out. The old nationalized economy of Yugoslavia has been destroyed. All the new "independent" states are being reorganized and reintegrated into the global system of capitalist production and finance. Much of the old industry, from the perspective of world capitalism, is inefficient and unproductive. It is being wiped out--either by being forced to close for lack of capital or, somewhat more violently, through the use of cruise missiles. Now, as throughout the history of capitalism, the subordination of less developed economies to the more advanced ones is a very brutal process.

Caller: *Could we call that colonization of the banks?*

DN: Yes, I think that would be correct.

Caller: *Exactly what we put in there and how much we can buy out.*

DN: As I said, what's being done with bombs is only a more dramatic form of what's happened to much of Russian industry. The impact of capitalist restoration upon the former Soviet Union is horrifying. I don't know of any example of a country which has seen a drop of 60 to 70 percent in industrial production in the course of a decade, but that's happened to the former USSR.

Caller: *Isn't it amazing that Americans have forgotten completely about their principles and don't realize that if Alabama was seceding and the federal government went in there in a civil action and then France came over and invaded and said they didn't like the way we were handling it, we'd be pissed off?*

DN: Yes, but before we blame the American people for not opposing the war, let's look at the role of the media. There is information, but very little context. The public is bombarded with propaganda. There's very little variety of views presented in the American media.

Caller: *So you're saying the American public is not able to get complete or correct information so they really can't make an intelligent decision?*

DN: Well I think it's very, very difficult. But I also think that experiences will drive more and more people to look for answers. Perhaps your impression is different, but I do not sense that there's large public support for this war. My impression is that people are stunned and troubled by what's happening.

CL: *Do you believe that polls are presented to us accurately or are they phony too?*

DN: I think the polls reflect what people feel when they are asked, "Do you want to see an end to ethnic cleansing?" Of course they do. If they understood the background to these events, they would take a much more critical attitude.

CL: *Where do think it's all leading, David, given that we have an incredibly powerful force able to control the media, the military, the money and the laws?*

DN: The entire political situation is dominated by a great crisis in the international workers movement. To the extent that the working class, not just in this country but internationally, lacks independent political leadership, it has no means of preventing the drift to another world war. That's very much present in the situation. When people like Senator McCain say: "Everything must be done for victory," one must ask, "What do they mean?" How many thousands of lives are they prepared to destroy in Yugoslavia, how many Americans are they prepared to sacrifice, what weapons are they prepared to use? And if at a certain point the Russians were to become involved because they saw this as a threat to their national interests, we could be very rapidly brought to the brink of World War III.

CL: *Which we'd probably love because our military industry and the stock market ...*

DN: Let's make a distinction between the people and those who are guiding policy.

CL: *Given what you said about leaders, we had a leader, his name was Martin Luther King Jr., and there was another named John Kennedy who got effectively dealt with. Having leaders don't necessarily last long*

DN: I wouldn't compare John Kennedy with Martin Luther King. JFK has Vietnam to answer for in terms of his historical reputation. He was a leader of American imperialism.

CL: *He must have done something good otherwise why would they have given him the large haircut they gave him?*

DN: In retrospect, I think the Kennedy assassination--like the crisis in the US during the past year--was an expression of extremely intense political and social conflict. Obviously, I am an opponent of Clinton, but I do believe that the events of the last year were a right-wing conspiracy to remove him from office unconstitutionally, behind the backs of the American people.

CL: *To remove Clinton from office?*

DN: Yes.

CL: *And you're anti-Clinton?*

DN: Yes, but I oppose Clinton from the left and not from the right. I'm perfectly prepared to see Clinton removed through a movement of the American working class in opposition to this war. I don't believe it should be left to a corrupt media using sex scandals which only confuse people and contribute nothing to their political education.

CL: *It entertains us and keeps our eyes off the ball.*

DN: That's just the point. While this war was being prepared, what was the media writing about? How were people being prepared politically for these events?

CL: *Do you think there are teams which plan these diversions for the American attention? Like ... Monica?*

DN: Again, I don't really believe in conspiracy theories. I think the whole nature of political life in this country has a certain logic. Social and class issues are suppressed. Much of American debate consists of an avoidance of real questions. When do you see references to the conditions of the working class, to social division, to the extraordinary polarization of wealth in this country--the fact that 2 percent of the population controls 40 to 50 percent of the aggregate wealth of this country? These issues are not discussed openly. As a result, we have political struggles which are organized in a manner which is largely incomprehensible.

CL: *How do you see the working classes in the various parts of the world uniting?*

DN: The only rational and viable program today, in a period of globalized production, is the development of unified political movement of the international working class.

CL: *Do you think war is ever an answer?*

DN: Imperialist war, no. I think another world war is one of the great threats against which the working class must fight. Much of what we're seeing recalls, in a very eerie way, the conditions which preceded the great world wars of the twentieth century.

CL: *When I was in Yugoslavia in the 1960s it was probably one of the best examples of the workers taking control of their country. There was a tremendous amount of pride there because the workers owned the factories. That has been destroyed. To me, Yugoslavia was one of the leaders in that. Now that has been destroyed.*

DN: We could debate all the contradictions of Yugoslavia, but I think the general point you're making is correct. It shows that there is an alternative. The idea that ethnic wars and world wars are inevitable is a demoralized and false view. What has happened is a product of economic development, the globalization of world capitalism on the basis of the most ruthless market principles. This is what is driving people into terrible distress all over the world. The events in Yugoslavia are singled out as a horrific example of senseless killing. But the scenes in Yugoslavia--of communal bloodshed, displaced people--are to be found all over the world. No decade in this century--with only the possible exception of the 1940s--has seen such massive growth of refugee populations. Entire continents are being reduced to economic rubble. Much of Africa is in the throes of horrifying epidemics. The fall of commodity prices has caused

far more death in the world than even the civil wars which have been waged. These are the horrifying realities. There are countries in Africa and Asia where 20 to 25 percent of the male population is HIV positive. These are epidemics of poverty, of lack of resources. Much of Asia has seen its so-called wealth wiped out in the last year and a half. These are facts and phenomena bound up with the development of transnational capitalism, a world market which is dominated by powerful financial interests.

CL: *I'd like you to give our listeners your opinion or your group's opinion of how this should be handled at this point. If you were running the show, what would you do at this point?*

DN: Bombs would not be falling on the Balkans. First of all, the American people should raise the demand, "Hands off the Balkans." Stop the bombing and get all the foreign imperialist powers out of there.

CL: *Some people would say, well, you're just leaving them to slaughter each other.*

DN: At the very least, one is giving them the democratic right to solve their own problems without outside interference, without outside powers who are now exploiting their great difficulties--whose policies have led to these troubles and who are exploiting them for their own purposes. The Balkan people have to have the right to sort out their own affairs.

CL: *The first thing you would advocate is get the hell out and leave them alone?*

DN: At the very least. If I were in a position to contribute to a solution to their problems, I would see their solution coming through the unification of the Balkan working class--finding some way to reforge the unity that was shattered through the IMF and the various nationalist cliques among them. The Croatian worker, the Serb worker, the Albanian worker--they all have the same problems. Certainly there is much to be learned from their past history to show the benefits of a voluntary amalgamation of all these different populations into a unified entity, on a democratic basis. That would lead to a much more progressive solution than war, which only impoverishes the Balkan peninsula.

Caller: *I want to call Bill Clinton and give him my opinion. This war has me really upset. I wondering what would be the best thing? And do you have the number off hand?*

DN: Leave the Balkan people alone. Stop bombing them!

CL: *Let me read something from your web site: "What sort of 'independence' could be possible for Kosovo? It would be, from the first hour of its existence, nothing more than an impotent protectorate of US and European imperialism. And what sort of economic, social and cultural progress would be possible within this landlocked and impoverished mini-state? Those raw materials that are to be found within its borders--i.e., coal, zinc, manganese, copper, bauxite--would be integrated quickly into the holdings of the massive transnational conglomerates."*

DN: I agree with it. I'm glad I wrote it. We know that the Europeans are forming their economic unit, the US has always had the advantage of its continental existence. So how can the interests of the Balkan people be expressed in the existence of a dozen mini-states?

CL: *I found it very interesting that when Ron Brown's plane went down in Yugoslavia, this was at a time that there was already warfare in some of the Balkan provinces, and here we have Ron Brown with 34 businessmen. What in hell were they doing there if not looking for ways to carve up the country and exploit it for their own interests?*

DN: I'm certain it wasn't to bring peace and goodwill among men.

CL: *If that plane had gone down with people teaching conflict resolution, it would have been far more indicative ...*

DN: You might have noticed in yesterday's *Wall Street Journal* that Bechtel has signed a very large contract with Croatia. There are many corporations which are going to enrich themselves on the basis of this war. That is a fact.

CL: *That goes far beyond the defense industry that's going to make*

money replacing all the weapons.

DN: It seems that this war is costing \$1 billion a month, being paid really by the American working people. It's really a misuse of the resources of the people.

CL: *This is the same time we are cutting back on welfare and cutting back on all sorts of social benefits, and we can't afford decent healthcare for our people because we don't have money.*

DN: Every cruise missile is probably more than the annual budgets of many public schools in this country.

CL: *What haven't we covered yet?*

DN: This war marks a major turning point in world politics. It marks a recrudescence of imperialism in its most violent forms. This war seems to have taken broad masses of people by surprise, but I would hope that it leads to a reexamination of political perspective and a rebirth of political thought. I think the great issue is that we need an alternative to the Democratic and Republican parties. I should make the point that the *World Socialist Web Site* is affiliated in the US with the Socialist Equality Party, and we are seeking to build an independent political party of the working class as part of an international movement of the working class. Our movement, again, is not a national movement, but an international movement.

CL: *I think it's important to note here that since the media is controlled, since the polls are done by the media for the media, the bottom line is we really don't know how the American people feel about this conflict. I think that if you talk to your friends and neighbors, there's very little support for this war and yet there's nothing we presently can do about it.*

DN: One thing we're very optimistic about. Since the *World Socialist Web Site* was founded a bit more than a year ago, it has had a tremendous response. We have thousands of readers every day. It's a very discriminating group of readers. We've seen a continuous improvement in the correspondence we receive. The Internet has opened up vast possibilities for democratic debate and discussion and a broadening of public awareness. We're very confident that it's going to lead to a revival of a genuine, international socialist movement, which is what the world so desperately needs.

CL: *Thank you for talking to us today.*

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