

WSWS readers report on protests and opposition to the bombing of Yugoslavia

27 April 1999

To the courageous writers and editors of the WSWS:

Thank you for your unwavering commitment to providing the truth behind America's "humanitarian war" in Yugoslavia. Ever since the infamous aggression was unleashed by Clinton and his mad-bomber cohorts over a month ago, your articles have been one of the few sources of solace for me as a Serbian-American. Your articles have also provided me with highly desirable intellectual ammunition with which to rationally refute the sensationalist objections of my opponents at demonstrations here in my hometown of Chicago. By my very identity and my mobilization to rage against the machine of global imperialist hegemony, I and my fellow Serbs have exemplified the feminist rallying cry that "the personal" indeed "is the political."

I'm writing to share my experience at the anti-NATO rally which occurred in Lafayette Park, Washington, D.C. on 24 April--the very day that NATO was trying to wash off its bloodstained hands at their unhappy, over-the-hill 50th birthday celebration. A local TV station, Channel 7, estimated the crowd to be in excess of 20,000 (and they admitted that that was a "conservative estimate"). I find it hard to articulate the transcendent experience of participating in such positive, collective energy on such a large scale. And though the D.C. police, with such Ramboesque demeanor, tried to goad us into losing our tempers with their verbal taunts (expressed in profanity, of course), no one took the bait. For eight straight hours, from noon to eight, not a single protestor was arrested. Our voices, signs, banners, and flags were loud and clear, but all was in the parameters of peaceful protest.

It truly was an experience of unity through diversity. It was not an all-Serbian crowd by any means, and political leanings were as divergent as can be. But there we were--Serbs and our Slavic brethren from Russia and Poland; citizens from China, India, and Ireland; African Americans and others from the African Diaspora; survivors of the Holocaust who so bravely denounced the propaganda of the U.S. media; the homeless clad in T-shirts with the now-famous "target" motif; socialists, conservatives, and pacifists standing side by side.

The highlight of the day for me began around seven o'clock, as young Serbian-Americans drew everyone's attention to the bustling activities on the south lawn at 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue. We dashed to the police barricade just as NATO motorcades began to pull in. We jeered and chanted, much to the dismay of the "dignitaries" assembling outside, for we were drowning out the military band's fanfare with our shouts and blaring whistles. "NATO go home," "Stop the bombing now," "NATO-Nazis,"

"SHAME!" and other messages were clearly projected across the barricade at the edge of Lafayette park and across the street. Secret servicemen snapped our photos. The police tapped their billy clubs in the palms of their hands and taunted us to hop the fence and prove our bravery. Our voices grew the loudest when a limousine draped with the flag of Albania raced up the driveway.

That was the climax of the day for me, occurring just an hour before I boarded my bus. This first visit of mine to the nation's CRAPital is one that will resonate in my spirit for the rest of my life.

And when I arrived home--surprise, surprise--the media failed to acknowledge that such a large protest ever took place. Local and world news stations on TV and the Internet did not want to admit that NATO was embarrassed on its day of celebration by a sizeable crowd of protesters. They did not want to admit that antiwar opposition is growing among non-Serb Americans, for that would refute their opinion poll propaganda.

That's my story. Thank you, again, for effectively combating the Public Relations arm of the Pentagon, a.k.a. the "free press" of the U.S.

Keep the faith,

AU Chicago

To the editor:

The resistance to NATO bombing in the Czech Republic is widespread. Opinion polls (even the official ones) show that only 30% people support the bombing, and 48% are outspokenly against it. All discussions on radio where the listeners can call in show dominant hostility to the NATO bombing. Our brand-new NATO membership also lost support. In March it reached its peak - 56% support. Now it is well below 50%.

Among political parties only the KSÈM (Communist Party - Stalinists) is actively against NATO. Due to this it is gaining support rather fast. Social democrats are split--the majority of members and voters are against this aggression, but the top leadership and government support NATO. Right-wing parties are supporting the NATO bombing with the exception of Mr. Klaus (he personally condemned the bombing, his party, ODS, is supporting it).

There have been several dozens of demonstrations. The largest one (about 5000 people) in Prague on Wenceslaw Square, was organized by KSÈM. Smaller demonstrations--several hundred participants--took place in nearly all towns of the country (even here in Mladá Boleslav--a rather small town with about 50,000 inhabitants and not very politically active--we had a demo of about

300 people).

Radical left groups (Budoucnost - CWI, SOP - LRCL, SocSol - IS) participated in the demonstrations, giving out leaflets and selling their press. Probably most active is now Budoucnost - united front with KSM (young communists), organising two demos of about 200 - 500 participants, appealing to young people to refuse military service for NATO etc.

ZP Czech Republic

Dear colleagues,

I found on your Web site the text "The record of the Kosovo Liberation Army: ethnic politics in alliance with imperialism" by Linda Tenenbaum and Peter Symonds and I found it very interesting and it motivated me to contact you.

I live in Belgrade, Yugoslavia and I am not member of any political party in the country. Among many things in my life I have completed the course "Responding to Conflict" at the Woodbrooke College, Birmingham, UK. On other occasions I have had the opportunity to read books about conflicts and international relations written by world renowned authors and scholars. I have worked so far with the children and young refugees who left Bosnia during the war there.

I think that your article is very good for different reasons, because it stresses the importance of understanding that NATO and its leaders, including the USA, are abusing the scientific understanding about stability and instability of societies and their asymmetrical political systems. Actually, they pay a lot of attention to the definition of instability and look for the cultural, political and economical factors which may cause instability and turmoil in a certain country. Those factors may be criminal acts, corrupted elites, malfunctioning of legal system, ethnic structure, religious values, financial difficulties, political instability. In the case of federal states, the factors of instability may be very much associated with the lack of more or less equal distribution of power, economic resources, ethnic balance of population, etc. Each factor may cause structural uncertainties and instabilities in those societies and states.

Those who know the vulnerable parts in society in the Balkans are capable of making the populations unstable when confronted with "others". Terrorist actions supported and/or organized by intelligence agencies may serve as triggers for conflicts which then "justify" the military presence of the superpower in that region "in order to keep peace".

I just want to issue a reminder that the war in Bosnia started after "occasional" killings of the members of different ethnic groups at funerals, weddings, etc, which triggered conflicts which escalated into the war. The same was happening in Kosovo over last couple of years. All factors are producing instability were already there:

- victimhood - Kosovo is recognized by the Serbs as the place where a lot of Serbs died in historical war against Turks
- ethnic differences and lack of cohesion due to the fact that Kosovo is a very much undeveloped area with a very strong patriarchal culture characterized by rigidity, oppression of women and highly authoritarian family structure with all its consequences
- political and economical instability due to UN sanctions against Yugoslavia and a political regime which failed to develop cohesive processes in the region

- violent and criminal groups which can trigger a crisis. Serbian extremists and Albanian narco-mafia (see reports by Geopolitical Drug Dispatch) are ideal for making the region unstable.

- internationalization of the problem--some human rights groups, willingly or not, invested much more energy and money in reporting on problems than helping the communities to develop the capacities to overcome the problems. I remember very much how many of them were saying that internationalization of an issue is very important. But they forgot, willingly or not, that in that case community issues are put in the hands of generals and ministers of foreign affairs who are not by their nature familiar with the community-building processes and community-conflict resolution.

- the increasing asymmetry and misbalance in size of ethnic groups, distribution of power. This has been present in Kosovo for many years, thus making it structurally very vulnerable

- strategic position -- Kosovo does have a strategic position since in the case of conflict it involves many countries. The contending parties have overlapping territorial claims (Albania, Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey).

I know that the above-mentioned factors are just a few, but those who abuse knowledge in order to impose a military action are social and political J. Mengele characters who experiment with nations, cultures, innocent people in order to use the conflicts, crime and violence to justify their own military and other ambitions. The current crisis is a typical example of such a case and I am glad that your article pointed out that very important part of the truth. One of the best tools for dismantling such criminal, violent and evil actions is to dismantle its mechanisms and to show to the narcissistic behaviour. The mirror is not so nice as the Narcissist thinks. Knowledge must be used against its abusers in order to dismantle the machinery of dismal ambitions and violent actions of those who are economically and militarily stronger. I realized that your article is contribution to that issue and I found it very important at this moment. Thank you.

Best wishes,

VV



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact