

Letters to the WSWS and replies by David North

NATO's motives: propaganda and reality

26 May 1999

The World Socialist Web Site has recently received a considerable number of letters on the NATO bombing of Yugoslavia. Below are reprinted a sample of them. The replies of David North, the editorial board chairman of the WSWS, are included.

Dear Editor:

I appreciate being sent a link to your article entitled "Why is NATO at War with Yugoslavia? World Power, Oil and Gold." I will read it carefully so that I may better understand the Serbs point-of-view of this terrible conflict. Right now it is hard for me to understand, everything seems to convoluted. When so many national and world leaders seem to agree that what Milosevic is doing is genocide, when only the western or EU Western opinion is put forth for us to read, when all we see on TV is gaunt, sickly looking ethnic Albanians flowing out of Kosovo, against their will, by the tens of thousands, it is very hard to think other than what we are being told. But I agree with you that probably we are not being told everything that is going on. When is the populace ever told everything? Not very often. I suppose this is no different. The anti-war protests occurring in the U.S. and in Serbia tell the story of the people. The people want Peace. They want their kin home alive, not dead. I hope a peaceful solution will soon come from this. Your Yugoslavia is a beautiful country. I would rather see pictures of your country without the dead bodies, bombed and burned out houses and buildings. If there was some way I could bring about peace, right now, I would do this. I will read your article, but I can tell that I will need to read it several times in order to completely understand what it is saying. I can't say that I will agree 100% with you, but I will try to understand your position.

Jon

Dear Jon:

Thank you for your letter. However, permit me to clarify one very important point. The *World Socialist Web Site* does not represent the "Serb's point of view" or, for that matter, any *national* point of view. The WSWS approaches all political issues from the standpoint of the *international* interests of the *working class*. Our opposition to the war does not imply the slightest support for Serbian chauvinism and the nationalistic policies of Milosevic. As our statement explains, this war is being waged by the US and the major European imperialist powers to advance the global interests of the transnational conglomerates which are engaged in a new carve-up of the globe. The attack on Yugoslavia symbolizes the manner in which small countries and their people are trampled upon by the imperialist powers in pursuit of their world ambitions. In the final analysis, the war serves the interests of reaction and threatens the democratic rights and future of all working people — Serbian, Albanian as well as American. This is why we oppose this war.

Yours sincerely,

David North

To the editor:

I am a 32 yr old male living in a medium-size city in the United States. I have never been particularly involved in politics or the foreign policies of my country. I'm busy taking care of my own business. In other words I am

a normal, average American. But I can say unequivocally, that what the Serb army is doing is EVIL. I would send my only child to fight to the death against their armies in Kosovo. I understand that what is going on in Kosovo is not the fault of the Serb people, and that Serbs should not all be lumped together and stereotyped. However, it is time for the Serb people to make their voices heard!! It is not right to hate someone because of their ethnic background!! If you don't stand up against it, then you are for it...

NATO is not fighting a people. They are fighting a person. Unfortunately this person happens to have a stranglehold on his country, and doesn't seem to care if he drags it down with him...

My point is, I've heard many arguments against the bombing based on international law, history, who started it....for whatever reason. All that is completely irrelevant when you see the bodies of 180 Albanian Kosovars dead in a row. When you hear the story of the 70 yr old man who played dead and was able to slip away after the murderers left. These videos have reached the America. They were on CNN/Time. They are real. They people are real. If the Serbs don't stop their government, then I guess they deserve what they get.

Sincerely,

GN

Dear Reader:

You write that arguments against the bombing of Yugoslavia "based on international law, history, who started it [and] for whatever reason" are "completely irrelevant when you see the bodies of 180 Albanian Kosovars dead in a row."

Perhaps without realizing it, your own words indicate the degree to which public opinion has been manipulated by the highly sophisticated propaganda techniques of the American media. You quite freely admit that your attitude toward the war has been influenced, above all, by the images broadcast by CNN. "They are real," you write. As a matter of fact, the images that you see on CNN are arbitrarily selected moments from a highly complex reality. Even if one were to accept that the image is what the broadcasters claimed it was — and that is hardly beyond dispute — what does this image tell you of the circumstances which gave rise to that particular tragedy? What does it tell you about the issues that were in dispute? What does it tell you about the conflicting aims and interests that lie behind the conflict in Yugoslavia?

How can you correctly interpret the fragments of reality that are depicted in a CNN video image unless you grasp the broader historical context of events?

The American media cannot even explain why the recent shootings in Littleton, Colorado and Conyers, Georgia took place. But the entire complexity of Balkan politics has been conveniently reduced to a single gripping phrase: "Ethnic cleansing"!

You describe yourself as "a normal average American" who has "never been particularly involved in politics or the foreign policies of my country." Would it be fair for us to suggest that, based on your own self-description, you knew virtually nothing about the Balkans before the

bombs began flying? Or that you had not looked into the reasons — economic and political — why the United States might want to intervene in that region? Is it not possible that the government and media have taken advantage of your limited knowledge of the Balkans by appealing to your raw emotions?

We hope that you will think this over.

David North

Dear Sir:

I am writing to express a few comments in regard to your article about the American 'lie' of genocide in Kosovo.

Firstly, you severely criticize American officials for comparing the anti-Albanian campaign conducted by the Serbs to the Holocaust in Nazi Germany. But I wonder why you do not mention the several comments made by Milosevic and officials in his government to the effect that "Clinton is worse than Hitler." Both sides have employed incendiary rhetoric in this campaign, most often involving references to the atrocities of WWII. That is normal in any military campaign. But I think that, if you are going to accuse the west of constructing lies to support their activities, you ought to advise your readers of the rather unbelievable lies constructed by the Serbian media. (Not just those reprinted in Western papers; as a resident of Zagreb, Croatia, I have slightly better access to Serbian sources, and their capability for manufacturing facts and statistics is quite astounding.)

I should say that I do not see any sort of similarity between Serbian activities in Kosovo and the Holocaust. The Albanians are in armed revolt; the Serbs are attempting to save their cultural homeland from destruction. But that does not excuse the Serbs for employing inhumane tactics and committing atrocities. Which they have certainly done. Even before the bombings began, I was able to read several stories (admittedly in non-Serbian, but also non-American papers) describing the execution of civilians, usually in groups of 40 to 50, who were clearly not soldiers: most were either too old or too young. This type of warfare clearly cannot be condoned by the international community. Furthermore, a campaign of ethnic hatred has been waged in the Serbian media since 1989: the Serbs are not conducting a civil war but an ethnic war. I am amazed that although the [WSWS] is continuously attacking state-sponsored racism, it seems to have ignored the much worse, institutionalized racism endemic in Serbia. That suggests that you do not stand for any particular principle, but only stand opposed to one particular regime.

By citing a series of unrelated facts and vague comments by officials and journalists, you have attempted to construct a picture of American policy which, I'm afraid, does not hold water. I cannot say that the Americans are fighting for any moral principle—more likely, they are fighting to prevent a new Balkan war, which would likely be fought over Kosovo and Macedonia—but that is the worst charge which can be imputed to them.

DFE

Dear DFE:

What I find most remarkable about your letter is its highly mannered impartiality. All of the faults in US policies and actions are offset by those of the Serbs. The US government is wrong to compare Serbia to Nazi Germany, but you immediately note that the Serbs are also guilty of exaggerations. You seem to forget that it is the United States that is bombing Serbia, not the other way around.

When Milosevic says that Clinton is worse than Hitler, he, at least, is comparing two imperialist politicians that have— in relation to Serbian history —one important thing in common: Both ordered the bombing of Yugoslavia.

You state frankly that you "do not see any sort of similarity between Serbian activities in Kosovo and the Holocaust." But if there is no similarity, then what is left of US-NATO rationale for the war against Yugoslavia?

Without the frenzied incantation of the media's "ethnic cleansing" mantra and the obscene equation of the communal fighting in Kosovo to the industrialized mass extermination of European Jewry by the Nazis, there would be absolutely no plausible basis upon which the United States could justify before American and international public opinion its destruction of the industrial infrastructure of Yugoslavia and the killing of hundreds, and potentially thousands, of its citizens.

It is certainly true that the atrocities committed by the Serb regime and its supporters against the Albanian Kosovans cannot be excused. But you simply assume that opposition to the actions of the Serbian nationalists necessarily require that one support the imperialist onslaught against Serbia. We entirely reject that premise.

The only principled opposition to the chauvinism of the Serbs (as well as that of the Croats, Slovenians, Macedonians, Bosnian Moslems, and Albanians) is one that appeals, on the basis of socialist internationalist principles, to the class solidarity of workers throughout the Balkans. One must ignore all the lessons of the past decade to believe that the problem of ethnic conflict in the Balkans can be resolved by the imperialists. Indeed, the communal violence of the late 1980s and 1990s is, in the final analysis, the product of the economic policies of the IMF and other international imperialist financial agencies that played such a major role in the dissolution of Yugoslavia.

At the conclusion of your letter, you concede that you "cannot say that the Americans are fighting for any moral principle..." But if you are unable to determine the real reasons for the war, your defense of the bombing of Yugoslavia rests on very shaky and even morally indefensible grounds.

You cannot believe that the Americans are waging war for any other reason than to prevent further fighting in the Balkans — "But that is the worst charge which can be imputed to them," you write. Permit me to say that you are somewhat naive. Far from being yet another war to end all wars, the bombing of Yugoslavia is merely a dress rehearsal for further slaughter. Underlying the US intervention in the Balkans are global ambitions. The war against Yugoslavia heralds a new eruption of imperialist wars brought on by the dissolution of the USSR and the reopening of vast portions of the globe to direct exploitation. Keep following the WSWS and you will learn more about this — but, for the time being, here's a hint: Have you been following the reports of vast untapped reserves of oil in the Caspian region and growing US interest (and interests) in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Armenia and Azerbaijan?

Yours truly,

David North

To the editor,

Thank you very much for informing me on this article you have put together on the Balkans. I thought it was wonderful!!! By nationality I am Ukrainian, Serbian, and Kosmet (Kosovar) Albanian.

I live in Kiev, and I travel a lot to the United States, Western Europe, Russia, and Yugoslavia. I have seen all sides of the twisted news, and I have been to Pristina as recently as March 2nd. I knew from the beginning that the Rambouillet "peace" accord was strange. I also knew that the Yugoslav government was not committing the atrocities to the extent the NATO was claiming.

I have Albanian relatives from Pristina and Djakovica (Kosovo) who are currently living at my home in Kiev while I am in New York. I know first hand from them that NATO has wrought great disaster on Kosovo without regard for the Albanians whom it supposedly supports. My relatives, as others, left because of the mass hysteria. They were not evicted by any Yugoslav forces, nor did Yugoslav government forces harass them on the way out. They were robbed by whom they thought to be Serb civilians, and harassed by the KLA who tried to draft my 12-year-old twin male

cousins into their terrorist organisation. While I have heard that the Yugoslav army has forcibly drafted Albanian men (as well as men of other nationalities), even they, I doubt, would attempt to draft 12-year-old children!!!

While I knew that NATO's motives were far from humanitarian, I was perplexed over what they wanted. Could it be that they just wanted to show their strength and dominance over world politics to scare other countries into signing their "peace" agreements? It didn't seem like a strong enough motive.

Your article really answered all of my questions!!! Keep up the good work, and let me know if you come out with something else interesting!

Sincerely,

Violet P.

Dear Editor,

First I would like to thank you for having the courage to research and write an article like that, exposing NATO and "the game" they're playing. I am glad that you mentioned the fact that they are in Kosovo mainly fighting for natural resources and using "ethnic cleansing" as an excuse for doing so, and to use as precedence for further such actions.

It was a very interesting, very thorough and very well written story and I thank you for writing it. It needs MAJOR EXPOSURE though. I realize it's on your website which is accessible internationally, but I think you might want to submit the article to other publications as well —so that more people can see it and wake up, to what's happening.

Thank you again for such a fine exposé on NATO and what they're up to.

Frances

To the editor:

Excellent, excellent, EXCELLENT article by your staff. As an American unable to obtain a respectable living wage and living standard due to useless American capitalism, I will enthusiastically watch global events taking place in the coming days, weeks, months, and years. Your article is well to the point, and covers many questions left open-ended by events in the news.

Keep up the good work!!!

CFM

To the editor:

Since the start of the US-led campaign against Yugoslavia the propaganda war, which began long before the first bomb was dropped, has been so blatant that I have felt compelled to search for a source of 'truth' to illuminate the denials, distortions, half-truths and lies that have been promulgated through the British and American media. I have found several consistently reliable sources and wsws.org is certainly around the top of the list. Congratulations and thank you.

IFF



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Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact