

The fraud of NATO humanitarianism

What are the reasons for the war in Yugoslavia?

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A new edition of the German magazine Gleichheit (Equality), magazine of the Partei für Soziale Gleichheit (Party for Social Equality), German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, was published on May 1. It contains the most important articles to have appeared recently on the World Socialist Web Site. The following, is the editorial from the new issue.

After five weeks of war, not much remains of the original reasons which NATO used to justify its attack on Yugoslavia.

A "humanitarian action"?

But what is humane about it if all of Yugoslavia, including Kosovo, is bombed back into the Middle Ages? The fairy tale that only "military targets" would be destroyed has long been disproved in practice, and not just by the many bombs that have "missed" their mark. Textile factories and auto plants, refineries, district heating and power stations, government buildings, bridges, roads and railroad lines are being directly attacked and destroyed. In five weeks more bombs have fallen on Yugoslavia than during the entire Second World War; hundreds of civilians have lost their lives and half of the country's industrial capacity has been destroyed. The same fate threatens Yugoslavia as befell Iraq, where, as a consequence of the embargo over 1 million people have died and infant mortality is now the highest in the world. And this is thanks to the same "humanitarian" benefactors.

A new level of barbarity was reached with the direct bombardment of the Belgrade television studios. International journalists' federations have warned of a dangerous precedent--if the media becomes a strategic war target, then any objective reporting falls by the wayside. NATO accuses Milosevic of using the television station for spreading "propaganda"--as if NATO itself is not responsible for any propaganda. The real reason is more likely the fear that pictures showing the devastating bomb damage, when transmitted to the West, might unfavourably influence public opinion.

The "protection of the Kosovar Albanians" is a further justification used for the war.

But as a consequence of the air raids, the majority of Albanians have been driven out of Kosovo. Many have paid with their lives; the region's infrastructure has been destroyed; and NATO's use of ammunition containing uranium threatens millions with radioactive contamination.

Some say: but these expulsions would have taken place even without the war, Milosevic had been systematically preparing them for a long time. The same retrospective argument can be heard coming from the German Foreign Ministry under Green Joschka Fischer.

However, this is contradicted by situation reports from the same department according to which, by March 24--the first day of the NATO air attack--"Kosovar Albanians were not threatened by the Serbian-dominated state due to their ethnic identity". This is explicitly stated in the analysis of Foreign Ministry expert assessments for the German Administrative Courts, which were made by the "lawyers against atomic, biological and chemical weapons" (Ialana) in Marburg.

On January 12, Fischer's department informed the Trier Administrative Court: "There is no evidence of the specific persecution of ethnic Albanians in Kosovo". On March 11, the 13th Senate of the Higher Administrative Court in Münster relied on similar information to reach its verdict: "Ethnic Albanians from Kosovo were and are not subject to any regional or country-wide persecution in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia." That was just two weeks before the beginning of the war. This information served, however, not to justify the launching of a war of aggression, but to enable the deportation of asylum-seekers. It would seem that a certain economy with the truth is not only practised in Belgrade, but also in Bonn.

What, then, are the real reasons for this war?

We are experiencing the birth of a new world order, one which reflects politically what has long existed on the plane of economics: The absolute supremacy of the rich and powerful countries over the poorer and weaker ones.

The consequences of globalisation have long been the topic of discussion in numerous publications. The supremacy of the global financial and stock markets over each national economy has long since transformed national sovereignty over the economy into a relic of the past. No government, and no national enterprise, can oppose the dictates of the billions-strong funds that dominate the global markets. The International Monetary Fund's austerity programmes have removed every obstacle that stands in the way of the unrestrained penetration of financial capital--social security systems, union and democratic rights, state regulation. It has left a social ruin, on which the ethnic and social tensions thrive that

provided the pretext for the Great Powers to intervene.

The war against Yugoslavia is the continuation of these politics by other means. NATO's first action was to cast aside the principle of national sovereignty, previously a cornerstone of international law. In the Gulf War, the inviolability of internationally recognised boundaries--the violation of the Kuwaiti border by Iraq--had served as the pretext for military intervention. In the case of Yugoslavia, for the first time, a sovereign state has been attacked exclusively due to events that have taken place within its own borders. NATO has even foregone the fig leaf of a UN mandate, even if such a mandate would not have altered the character of the war very much. Nevertheless, the fact that NATO judged it unnecessary clearly shows the extent to which it has arrogantly assumed for itself the role of judge, jury and executioner.

One does not have to support the brutal policies of President Milosevic in order to see that a precedent is being established here. The defence of democracy and human rights was the very last reason that would have induced NATO to intervene against Yugoslavia. This is demonstrated by the case of Turkey, where the government is acting just as brutally against the Kurds ... but is nevertheless supported by NATO.

In the war against Yugoslavia a new international law is being established, which grants political command to those countries that already control the wealth of the world. The reasoning utilised to justify the bombardment of Yugoslavia can be used as a formula to legitimise interventions anywhere in the world. Depending upon circumstances, any "emerging democracy" of today could become marked as the "rogue state" of tomorrow. If the fate of the American and European stock exchanges depends on international political events, then it is only logical that the American and European governments must also hold sway internationally. Colonialism is being aroused to new life--this is shown in no small measure by the appearance of terms from the political vocabulary of the last century, like "protectorate".

A common myth of this war is that economic interests do not play a role. Let those concerned speak for themselves: The DaimlerChrysler corporation followed eagerly in the wake of Western politics and the military in Eastern Europe, last year organising a "Croatia Conference", and this year holding a "Hungary symposium". Here the cream of the Hungarian elite, about 200 representatives of politics and economics, were to be found taking part in the "rapport". Economic data was presented, and discussions took place about entry into the European Union. The opening speech was given by no less a person than Otto von Habsburg, an offspring of the Austrian-Hungarian monarchy, who announced he would like to shift the "centre of Europe" further towards the East.

In a discussion with the *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, Matthias Kleinert, a senior DaimlerChrysler representative, gave a resumé at last year's Croatia Conference: "I think that this conference showed how a dialogue between neighbours can function. One prepares such a conference with many discussions between both sides, both concerning science, economics and also politics and culture. First of all this produces a mutual understanding, secondly mutual sympathy, and thirdly the will to co-operate. Then come the concrete results. In 1997 we had orders from Croatia of 500

million DM. The symposium was an impulse that clearly stimulated new business. At present, intensive negotiations are being conducted to convert options on six Airbus A319s into firm orders. Adtranz is working with the Croatian Ministry of Transport on modernising the railways. In March this year, Adtranz presented a project for Croatia to procure 17 special trains. At present, Adtranz, in direct collaboration with DaimlerChrysler, is establishing offices in Zagreb. In addition, in 1998 the Croatian government accepted Mercedes Benz C- and E-class vehicles on its procurement list. For the first time, the Croatian Interior Ministry decided to procure DaimlerChrysler products for their fire-fighting vehicles, and has ordered 30 Unimog chassis and engines, which will be assembled locally by a Croatian partner. Debis [another Daimler Benz affiliate] is also working on contracts in Croatia."

Penetrating into Eastern Europe is not taking place without causing conflicts between the Great Powers themselves. The attitude of Germany is contradictory. On the one hand, it wants to participate in subjugating the Balkans--hence the absolute loyalty to America. On the other hand, if the US continues to escalate the war it is afraid the consequences will be the destabilisation of all Eastern Europe and a conflict with Russia--hence the attempt to bring Russia on board and involve the UN. In the long term, the two positions cannot be reconciled. Already fault lines are developing in all parties over these questions.

The most remarkable thing in Germany about this war is the attitude of the Greens and the Social Democratic Party (SPD). The Vietnam war opponents of yesterday have become the most eager war propagandists against Yugoslavia. The capitulation of these former pacifists is a clear indication that we are experiencing the dawn of a new epoch. All the political cards are shuffled once again. The turnabout of the SPD and the Greens on the question of war abroad, and their inability to respond to burning social questions at home, requires the construction of a new party. That begins with the clarification of fundamental political questions.

This edition of *Gleichheit* concentrates on the Balkan war, analysing and investigating it from various sides. The coverage of Germany also concentrates on these issues, dealing with the reaction of the SPD and Greens to the war.



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