

# A letter on "After the Slaughter: Political Lessons of the Balkan War"

24 October 2000

Dear editor,

I guess you could say I belong to the American working class. I've never in my life had anything but minimum wage or near-minimum wage jobs. And yet I never thought of myself as working class! My parents and their parents belonged firmly to the white-collar, lower middle class, what you would call the petty bourgeoisie. So of course that was the identity that I unconsciously assumed, even in adulthood. All evidence to the contrary!

"Unconsciously" certainly is the operative word here. And the shabby government indoctrination centers (also known as "public schools") I attended didn't exactly help matters. What worthwhile education I have I acquired on my own, no thanks to them.

All this is just by way of an introduction to saying that I find the *World Socialist Web Site* to be one of the most valuable education sources I've found yet. This letter is just a compulsive expression of gratitude for the work that all the people at the WSWS must be putting into it. I've never really studied Marxism before and many of the concepts written about on WSWS are new to me. As I read and re-read various articles, the ideas and terminology begin to sink in and become more clear. It takes time to undo decades of brainwashing.

The particular article that prompted this letter is David North's "After the Slaughter: Political Lessons of the Balkan War." On my second reading of it the ideas are much clearer, and I find myself increasingly amazed at the uniqueness and political realism of the Marxist worldview and analysis. The article is a valuable primer on many of the most basic principles of international socialism, as well as the distressing ugliness of modern-day realpolitik. And that's why I'm also very heartened by the unexpected optimism of Mr. North's basic outlook.

There is a passage in it that applies perfectly to people like me:

"For the present, it is an undeniable social fact that the level of political consciousness within the American working class is very low. Let it be said, however, that this is not a failing that is only to be observed among the workers. Consciousness is influenced by events—not only for the worse but also for the better. The underlying contradictions of American society will, in the final analysis, result in profound and, for many, unexpected changes in mass consciousness."

I can tell you that I am a living confirmation of some of the principles given in that article. Before the American/NATO terrorism campaign against 10 million helpless civilian men, women and children in Yugoslavia, my political consciousness was somewhere between low and very low. I got my first Internet connection one week after the slaughter began. In the beginning of April 1999 I saw a photo on Yahoo! of one of those ugly, bat-winged, B-1 Stealth bombers on its way to murder women and children, and I thought: Well, isn't that impressive! Look how powerful our country is. What a frightful-looking technology...

Maybe it was the photo of the severed human foot lying in the grass somewhere in Yugoslavia—neatly severed by shrapnel from an American cluster bomb. Maybe it was the story of 100 people burned alive in Korissa by an American incendiary bomb, dead bodies charred and smoking, a blackened infant still in the arms of its charred mother—and American leaders saying, "We didn't do it. The Serbians must have done it." Then when it was proven NATO did it, them saying, "Well, gosh, accidents will happen! We're so very sorry, really we are, but collateral damage happens in war, you know. Can't be helped." Maybe it was the story of the dead grandfather lying in his blood on the market street in Nis, and the dead grandmother lying

next to her just-bought bag of carrots—both of them murdered by American cluster bombs.

And throughout it all, the shameless whores of the mass media claiming it was all about “humanitarian intervention.”

Well, the word “America” is now a dirty, dirty word to me.

“The underlying contradictions of American society” certainly resulted in an “unexpected change of consciousness” for me! Like the obscene contradiction between what America's supposed leaders say and what they actually do. Between what their mass-media lapdogs say, and what is actually going on in this tortured world.

I wrote a letter to the editor of my local newspaper when I first learned about the dead people in Nis. I cried when I wrote it, and I'm fighting back tears now as I type this on my keyboard.

I've spent the last 10 months writing a simple little web site, my first, detailing and denouncing the history of American terrorism. Researching the content for it is pretty depressing, but I need to contribute something to help wake people up to what our viciously evil government and military are doing in this world.

Your web site is a priceless resource for thinking people. All I can say is, thank you to the people in the Socialist Equality Party for the work you're doing, for standing up to the brutal evil in this world, and for your political realism and integrity. And I must say optimism can be contagious. I don't see how worldwide socialist revolution can fail to happen, sooner or later. The human race is not going to roll over and play dead forever while capitalist predators and parasites enslave and murder whomever they please. Sooner or later there is going to be justice. It's just a matter of time.

Sincerely,

DT

Arcata, California



To contact the WSWWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](http://wsws.org/contact)**