

Dragan

“The war was always in the back of my mind; I wanted to know what happened”

16 February 2013

I came to Australia as a refugee from Yugoslavia in 1998, and, after living through four years of civil war, I will carry scars for the rest of my life. I came out of the war with the conclusion that the nationality that I belonged to was always hated by the other nationalities in this region and vice versa, and that this was the cause of the civil war between the Balkan nations.

I could not fully believe this explanation, but I could not think of any alternative as I was too young to understand. Life before the civil war was very different. From the eyes of a child it seemed perfect. I did not even know my nationality; the civil war changed all this.

Being a child of a war prisoner who was also wounded, my family and I had the opportunity to start a new life in another country. Being one of the lucky ones who escaped the aftermath of the war, we could go back to school and finish our education. Life eventually went back to normal and we were very soon doing the same thing as everyone else.

The war was always in the back of my mind; I wanted to know what happened. I started following politics, especially in 2008 with the Israeli attack on Gaza. I wanted to understand the Israel-Palestine conflict and very soon I was reading much more broadly. I wanted to understand the struggle of the Palestinian people. I also wanted to understand the Israeli view. What is Zionism? The War on Terror did not make sense. the US invaded Afghanistan and Iraq, but when you look at September 11 and the hijacking of the planes, they were mostly Saudis, but the US never said anything about this fact. The evidence of Iraq having weapons of mass destruction was used as a pretext for the invasion of US and NATO forces. It turned out to be a lie. What other lies were we being fed?

I was reading all that I thought would give me a better understanding of world politics; the military sites, leftist

sites, socialist sites, anarchist sites. I did not think much of the global financial crisis in 2008. When it happened, I did not see any connections. I saw it as just a glitch in the system and that very soon things will be back to normal. I wasn't interested in Australian politics as to me it seemed that we were too far from world events.

As I was reading and learning I found myself running into more questions than answers. Something was missing, but I could not point out what it was. I read articles, blogs, analysis and everything seemed clear on a broad sense. The thing that was missing is the revolutionary thought, the progressive outlook on the future. At first it all seemed like conspiracy theories, no connection with history at all.

Then I encountered the World Socialist Web Site (WSWS). I saw that the website had a notice that speakers would be coming to my city to present a public meeting. They gave a presentation on world and Australian politics and economy, Kevin Rudd's removal and backstabbing by Julia Gillard. They called themselves socialists and I went to their public meeting out of curiosity. As I come from an ex-communist country, I thought that these guys must be kidding themselves if they are going to preach about socialism to someone who saw what communism did to his country.

I was surprised. The speakers were laying out facts and logical conclusions that were amazingly clear; but my real surprise came when the light was shed on those who I thought were the good guys. Their analysis of the bankruptcy of the unions, the Cuban revolution, the bureaucratization of the Soviet Union, laborism and parliamentarism, and the historical lessons of globalization were overwhelming.

To list some examples: the assessment that Russia was a degenerated workers state, that Yugoslavia was never a socialist country but more properly a deformed workers

state, where there was public ownership but the power was not in workers' hands, the importance of Trotsky's struggle against Stalinists and the struggle to build the Fourth International. It left me confused. I wanted to argue but I could not as I never really understood the system in Yugoslavia. The presenter referred me to the World Socialist Web Site archives on the breakup of Yugoslavia and NATO intervention in 1999.

I started reading the material; at first it was hard to connect the dots. I had to get rid of the nationalism that was ingrained in me from the struggle that I went through. Once I made it over this it was like a breath of fresh air; it finally made sense and it was clear as day. The issues in Yugoslavia were never ultimately caused by national hatred. The hate was the effect but not the cause. The major cause was the economy, the bureaucracy, the outside pressure of the world market, the collapse of the cold war and subsequently the end of the balancing act that Yugoslavia played between east and west.

This gave me a footing and orientation in the world. I could understand where things went wrong for this deformed workers state—what was missing—and to see behind the nationalist rhetoric that came out from the chaos and violence. Now I could turn to the other articles and world events with peace of mind. I went frantically through the archives educating myself on the events of the past 10 years.

The objectiveness and principled approach of the site is shown through the years in thousands of published articles. It is the only movement and website that clearly represents the Marxist approach and is leading the workers' cause in fighting to overthrow capitalism. It is only a matter of time before the working class enters the world stage, guided by the lessons of the struggle of Trotsky and the Fourth International. The WSWS, as the voice of the international working class, is invaluable.



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