

War, peace and the crisis of the reproduction of human capital in former Yugoslavia

Part A

If one leaves aside the left patriots (CP, various marxist-leninist organisations) who used the anti-war demonstrations, which they organised and led, as a vote-hunting tactic, all the "well-intentioned" anti-war protestors who dragged themselves to the spring demonstrations in Greece, failed completely. They failed, not in the sense of stopping the war- that was impossible and, anyway, it was primarily the duty of the Albanian and Serbian proletariat, who in the best of cases would have had the help of the proletarians of the countries which the mercenaries of NATO came from. They failed, and this is most important, to ask the fundamental questions about this war, which, we should not fool ourselves, has been going on in Yugoslavia for the last ten years. Questions like:

-What is the function of war in promoting the larger aims of a globalized economy?

-What role does it have in maintaining/ restructuring the dominant mode of production and the consumption of ideologies?

-In what way is it a means for the production and reproduction (i.e. the organisation and control) of labour power?

-How can we, as a class and not in disarray, react in such a way so as to create a community of struggle?

For someone to ask these questions, she must have sensed from her daily experiences in work, in consumption, in the kitchen, that the central social relation is the (exploitative and hierarchical) capitalist relation and that the whole organisation of this society revolves around the reproduction of human capital, i.e. the reproduction of the disciplined worker/consumer/parent/student.

Yet, how many of those who participated in previous years in the social struggles against lay-offs, wage cuts, the law 2525, expulsions of immigrants, etc, tried to reflect seriously on their own activities and on the inner connection of the various tactics which constitute the strategy of capitalist power? How many thought even once that lay-offs, the creation of unemployed failures through the abolition of the teachers' list of seniority and the new examinations or of students failures through constant exams for example, are "mild" forms of "cleansing" a surplus, demanding population, and that the "harsh" forms of "cleansing" that Milosevic and NATO promoted may simply be the other, bloody side of the same coin? How many wondered if the devaluation of labour power by all means "in times of peace", corresponds to a savage, i.e. by bombs and ethnic slaughter, devaluation and even destruction of human capital "in times of war"?

For years now the "well-intentioned" anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian political groups keep separating the problems we face into personal and political, into direct issues and issues of solidarity, into those that concern them and those which concern people who are "different" from them: immigrants, refugees, unappointed teachers, students, with which they "from the outside" can in the best of cases have the relation of an "active supporter to their just cause"; and in the worst of cases they choose a "social subject" whose suffering better suits their ideology. In such a way thousands of proletarians in Europe and in Greece have become the victims of anti-imperialist (read anti-American) ideology or of selective anti-nationalism, either gathering under the national flags of the left and shouting hackneyed and boring slogans like "Americans-you-murderers-of-the-peoples" or devoting themselves to a costless condemnation of the "Serb-fascists" which suited NATO's and NGOs' humanitarianism. The winners of this anti-war/pacifist/humanitarian story are nation-states, i.e. the nationalisation of social struggles. And all that is left for those who took sides in this war, excusing either Milosevic, Simitis and NATO's leaders, or the KLA, is the bitter taste of delusion. Each one, according to their ideological hobbies, sought to find the "greatest victim" in this story and everyone was of course anti-fascist and democratic.

Meanwhile the "cleansing" goes on: yesterday it was unappointed teachers and students, today it is Serb proletarians, tomorrow it will be Albanians again and the war of capital against all of us bears up well.

In order to be clear about this war, having in mind the questions that we asked in the beginning and looking for what was the problem in Kosovo from the standpoint of capital, let's start with the Albanian moderate nationalist Vetton Surroi, the publisher of the "Koha Ditore" in Pristina. He said in 1990:

There is a problem here, in that the Kosovo village is backward and unproductive. Because it exists at a subsistence level, it has no distinct awareness of its own specific interest and is not the bearer of a new agrarian development. The strong trends of emigration into the cities and abroad also militate against this. The peasant himself does not know [sic] what to do with his land and there are no models elsewhere in Yugoslavia that he can follow...The Kosovo peasant does not produce for the market...Kosovo as a whole is overpopulated. The density of population is in fact the greatest in the country. Yet right now we are expecting new settlers! ,

If we referred to the way in which the problem was posed by the Serb bourgeois intellectuals or by the makers of the Rambouillet treaty which demanded that the "economy of Kosovo shall function in accordance with free market principles" we would not notice any serious differences from the Albanian politicians who propagate "civil society". What differs is the way in which every national or international capitalist fraction tried to solve the problem for its own benefit.

The Serbian side, which was the one that was primarily demonised in the West, tried in the 80's to settle the problem within the context of dealing with the general crisis of capitalist reproduction in Yugoslavia, which, due to the continuous class struggles, had

reached a turning-point. To deal with the problems of the high birthrate of the Albanians, of the adherence to the patriarchal agricultural family, of low productivity in the enterprises, it proceeded with a series of measures (which initially had the approval of the federal government):

-it relieved the Albanian "communist" party leadership, which had developed political-clientelist ties with the Albanian population, of its command so as to promote with greater ease the layoffs and the "restoration of the public sector to health"

-it drew up a long term plan of settling thousands of Serb refugees in the region so as to replace the patriarchal Albanian family with small and mobile agricultural households in certain areas which would form the basis of a future modernisation of agricultural production

-it aggravated the military and police repression in the whole region so as to thin out the population by forcing more and more people into immigration.,,

This whole process which lasted 15 years was intensified even more in recent years because of the blocking of the restructuring of the labour and political-hierarchical relations in Serbia proper in the 90's. The war in Bosnia, the sanctions imposed by international capital and the fear of a new outburst of the class struggles, which could be contained temporarily through nationalist ideology, the remnants of the welfare state and the possibilities of working in the black market, had transformed the governmental gang of Milosevic from a neo-liberal reformist one into the political boss of a protectionist 'war' economy. By increasingly resorting to barbarism, the Serb regime created by itself the political terms of the failure of the policy of restructuring in Kosovo in the form of "ethnic cleansing". The resistance of the Albanian bourgeoisie, which had allied itself with the patriarchal family and had overshadowed the social conflicts with its nationalist language as far back as the 1981 uprising, increased by promoting its own agenda: internationalisation of the supposed ethnic conflict and political and military intervention of the international capital so as to allow them to take over the process of westernising the kosovar society themselves. In order to achieve the definite nationalisation of the social question and to win the support of the international capitalist organisations, which had shown from the very beginning of the balkan tragedy that they favour the creation of ethnically "clean" states in former Yugoslavia, a fraction of the Albanian bourgeoisie set up the national-liberation gang of the KLA. These bullies began their campaign in '96 with bomb attacks on camps for Serb refugees from Krajna, they gradually upgraded the tension between the two communities and, after the savage military operations of the Serbs last summer, managed to complete their mission by attaching to the chariot of nationalism the scared and persecuted Albanian population who was by now forced once and for all to take sides in order to survive.

In early '98, NATO was still closer to Milosevic's "solution" and branded the KLA as a "terrorist organisation", but after the meeting of Holbrooke with the leadership of the KLA guerillas in Yunik in June '98 things started to gradually change and former high officials of the State Department found themselves alongside the guerillas in the camps

and in the negotiations at the Rambouillet castle. NATO did not of course fall in love with Albanian nationalism in one day. They gradually realised that Milosevic was an inadequate cop who could not create the preconditions for capitalist restructuring in his region, nor solve the so-called "Kosovar question" or reverse the downfall of his regime into a de-stabilising force. Their decision was to intervene under the veil of humanitarian ideology so as to kill many birds with one stone:

-they sped up the thinning out of the Kosovar population by destroying traditional agricultural communities and producing a cheap labour reserve force (not to mention the disciplining of the Albanian workers and peasants through rallying them around their national leaders)

-they terrorised the Serbian proletariat and destroyed the productive structures of Serbia, creating overnight thousands of sacked workers and a regime highly dependent on western financial help, and thus facilitating the transition to a market economy

-they militarily supervised the Albanian labour force which demonstrated very bad behaviour two years ago

-they created the preconditions for a balkan "zone of free exchanges" by unblocking the process of deregulation.

In this wide-ranging campaign -whose success will always be at stake since new expressions of social antagonism will always reappear- the Greek state participated politically and militarily in every move of NATO, as one of the 19 cowboys that it consists of. Hoping for a large piece of the pie of the reconstruction of Serbia and Kosovo, it put aside its outdated pro-Serb bollocks while, at the same time, showing great tolerance towards the manageable anti-American demonstrations of the left patriots. In this way, inside Greece it preserved the profile of a neutral pacifist who seeks a "diplomatic solution only", as if wars created by capital are meant to last eternally and that a "diplomatic solution" would not be THE "solution" that would allow the continuation of the exploitation of the proletariat by "peaceful means". Greece's share in the feast is at stake at the moment(the Greek state has "managed" to get Thessaloniki appointed as the centre of the European Service for the Reconstruction of Kosovo), but so far the privileged deals of the Greek capitalists -with the mediation of the Greek state-with the Serb nomenklatura seem to be blocked, since the latter faces its potential breakdown, or, in any case, its radical transformation.

From the beginning of this war our small group of people kept the only position that fits those who wish to believe that they are against capital and the state: we kept away from the nationalist demonstrations of the left, we refused to play the game of selective anti-nationalism (turning against either the "Serb-fascists" or the "Albanian crutches of NATO") and we tried with our minimal forces to project the proletarian internationalist response to the war. For that purpose we organised, along with a small number of comrades, some autonomous actions and we primarily addressed Albanian immigrants, not in order to blame the Serb proletarians or the Serb bosses specifically (as the autonomist

anti-fascists did), but to speak the language of proletarian internationalist solidarity with them. It is a fact that we were isolated since we did not follow either the dominant pro-Serb (but also short-lived) nefarious activities, nor the harrowing pro-national-liberation, pro-Albanian exhortations (either clearly stated or disguised under the cloak of "struggle for dignity"). It was however a consciously chosen isolation which, to say the least, protected us from being ridiculed by following the cynical cruelty of either pro-Serb or pro-Albanian nationalism.

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