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Date: Sunday, July 18, 1999 4:18 AM
Subject: Fw: Kosova Analysis

Dear friends,

The following is, I think, as good an analysis of the recent events in Kosovo that you are likely to get anywhere.

David McReynolds is happy for it to be used, with proper credit etc. (see end)

Sincerely,

Ron Gray
 Australian Peace Committee (South Australian Branch) Inc.

-----Original Message-----

From: DavidMcR@aol.com <DavidMcR@aol.com>
 Date: Thursday, 1 July 1999 9:32
 Subject: Re: Kosova Analysis / nuclear link

Death, Bombs and Videotape
 Making Sense of the Balkan War
 By David McReynolds, Senior Staff Emeritus, War Resisters League

This cannot be brief, yet it cannot begin to be long enough—the Balkans are too complex for any analysis to do more than hint at the problems. What must be left out is the usual "trip to the past," the long history of the religious divisions between Rome and Constantinople that ran right through the heart of the Balkans, and the more recent division between the Muslim populations and those of both the Catholic and Eastern Orthodox faiths. No recent war has seen so deep a split in opinion within the left and liberal communities. The media kept asking, "Where is the opposition we saw during Vietnam?" If you look back, the Vietnam War, now over two decades in the past, did not arouse major opposition until it had been raging for several years. There is another reason for the split in opinion. In the case of Vietnam, the more we learned about it, the more obvious it became that if there was a "good side" it was Hanoi, not Washington. It was a war of national liberation. Kosova was different—this was one of those wars in

which there seemed to be a clear choice between a bully (Milosevic and the Serbs) and a genuine humanitarian crisis (the Kosovar refugees). To many people it seemed as if NATO were the "good guys" riding to the rescue, led by Bill Clinton and Tony Blair.

Let me lay my cards on the table, and see if I can persuade some of the doubters. I opposed the NATO action before it began, after it began and after it ended. I view it as a war crime, in violation of the United Nations Charter, the NATO Charter, and the U.S. Constitution. However, I also believe Milosevic turned his army and paramilitaries loose on the Albanians in Kosova, that it was at his orders (as well as in their own fear of the bombing) that hundreds of thousands were driven out. This is also a war crime.

This is the hardest of positions to defend or, perhaps, to understand. There is something about the human mind that hates ambiguity. We want a good side and a bad side. If we can't have one, we create one. Some people—former Attorney General Ramsey Clark for one—decided the good side was Belgrade. So far as I know he was silent on ethnic cleansing. Others—Bogdan Denitch, honorary Chair of the Democratic Socialists of America—decided the good side was NATO and vigorously supported the bombing. If two men, each with a record of "left politics," can disagree so sharply, it is no surprise the rest of us had to struggle for a clear position.

Then we had the media. I don't just mean Jamie Shea, the press spokesman for NATO, who could be so infuriating. I mean ABC, CBS, NBC, CNN and even PBS. They have a bias in favor of the American power structure. The networks reflect that power structure, because they are part of it. They do not just report news, they select it and they mold it. Recently a friend said he watched the "talking heads" every Sunday morning and I said "Why? They never have anything profound to say." He said, "Yes, but I watch them because they let me know what the establishment wants us to think."

He was right. Even the Charlie Rose talk show, carried on PBS, is generally pap. A number of clear, articulate intellectuals simply fall outside the limits of what discussion is offered. When was the last time you saw Dan Berrigan interviewed? Or Grace Paley? Or Barbara Ehrenreich? Or Dave Dellinger? Or Noam Chomsky? Or Howard Zinn?

Second, the media had a legitimate story in the refugees that flooded out of Kosova after the bombing began. Every night we saw their pictures. They were heartbreaking. Men, women, children, the elderly, all driven from their homes—primarily by Serb paramilitaries and the Serb army, but also (though the press didn't report this) by the bombing. Leaving behind the graves of their families, plots of land planted for the spring, trees about to leaf, cattle, dogs and cats, homes built with such labor. The dresses laid aside for weddings, the photographs of children and relatives. Left behind, all of it.

The media turned this, almost at once, into "genocide." One can debate the legal definition of genocide, but as someone old enough to remember World War II and Hitler's determination to kill all Jews and Gypsies, I don't think the ethnic cleansing was genocide. In fact, except that it occurred in a very short space of time, it was not much different from the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians carried out by Israel after its creation in 1948—and still going on today, as Palestinian housing in East Jerusalem is

torn down and families driven out. Since I've been outspoken about Israeli policy, you can be sure I feel just as strongly about the Serbian ethnic purges. I think any such purges, whether in Israel or Kosovo, "are criminal violations of human rights".

The refugees were dramatic and easy to cover. But I cannot believe that at least one refugee didn't say, "We were terrified when the Serb police came, but our Serbian neighbors took care of us overnight and helped get us on the way next morning. We wept as we parted." That quote is, of course, my invention—but I find it impossible to believe some of the refugees didn't have this kind of experience and express this kind of feeling. We know this happened in Germany with the Jews. We know it happened in our own South during Jim Crow. But these were not the refugees the media was looking for. American video does not like to transmit ambiguity. Nor do the corporations which own the networks.

The media helped build a view of the Serbs as totally evil, and except for BBC and an occasional shot on CNN, the horror of the bombing of Serbia was not reported. While both Kosovo and Serbia were being laid waste by NATO bombs, we never got a sense of the damage. Very few reporters risked staying behind in Kosovo or were assigned to Belgrade. Repeatedly NATO insisted the targets were military and any civilians killed were killed by accident. (At one point after a terrible air strike had blown up a block of flats, the NATO official said it was regrettable, but the "missile was seduced from its intended military target." Seduced? Freud in the NATO press room?)

>From the beginning a loose network of pacifist, peace, religious, left and social justice groups united around two simple slogans: End the Bombing / End Ethnic Cleansing. And those groups, which included the War Resisters League, organized rallies and demonstrations that were steadily building around that approach. But outreach was hard; some saw only the horror of the NATO bombing, and others saw only the tragedy of the Albanian refugees. It was necessary to see both.

THE DEMONIZATION OF THE SERBS

The Balkan mess didn't begin with the sudden flood of refugees. When Tito died in 1980 Yugoslavia had begun to pile up debts. The federation of republics Tito had held together was rocky. The richer republics (Croatia and Slovenia) didn't want to chip in to pay the debts or to be burdened with taxes necessary to help the poorer Republics (including Kosovo). Milosevic, a Communist Party "apparatchik," discovered the issue of nationalism and rose to power on it. Slovenia and Croatia moved toward declaring independence. Many of us supported that, not able to look ahead. Germany, then governed by the Christian Democrats (a Catholic party), rushed to recognize Croatia, which is the Catholic area of Yugoslavia and had been an area of German influence. (It had a Fascist government during the Nazi period and exterminated several hundred thousand Serbs and Jews in concentration camps.)

Milosevic turned his military loose on Croatia and Slovenia, starting the chain of events which led to the crimes and tragedies of Bosnia. Germany's 1991 recognition of Croatia marked the first step of the newly reunited Germany in resuming its position as a major power in Europe. If the European states had thought ahead, they should have realized (we "all" should have

realized) that a disintegrating Yugoslavia would be much more dangerous for the peace of the Balkans and should have used every possible pressure to keep Yugoslavia united. As it was, the man who took over Croatia—Tudjman—is every bit as dangerous a nationalist as Milosevic.

The problems we face today had their immediate origins not hundreds of years in the past, but in the recent breakup of Yugoslavia, for which responsibility is widely shared. It is, however, easier to deal with a complex problem if parts of it are ignored. Few have heard of the horrors of the Fascist period in Croatia—yet those horrors are as real today for Serbs as the Holocaust is for Jews. We can say, "Something 50 years in the past, forget it!," only if it happened to someone else. If it happened to you, it is part of living memory.

HITLER'S RESURRECTION

It has not helped that political leaders brought Hitler back to life. Hitler has been used a number of times by those who want to simplify things. A short list of recent Hitlers includes Quaddafi in Libya, Saddam in Iraq, Khomeini in Iran, and Noriega in Panama. Because these people are "Hitler," they are filled with boundless evil, pose limitless threats and require total war. (So far the UN sanctions on Iraq have killed more people there, largely children and the elderly, than anything Saddam himself has done). Hitler was unique, he actually intended to conquer the world or at least Europe. To compare any of those I've listed to Hitler is to wrench all meaning out of history and diminish what Hitler meant. Milosevic is a nationalist, an authoritarian and guilty of many things, but he has shown no interest in conquering Europe. He is bad enough without trying to turn him into Hitler.

One of the terrifying things some of the pro-war intellectuals did was suggest there was inherent evil in Serbian culture, that NATO should do what the Allies did during World War II—invade, purge, cleanse and then certify a new government, made up of healthy Serbs. All the Serbs were branded as responsible for Kosova (Tony Blair, the "mouth that roared," has taken this line). In fact, Belgrade is a modern European city; most of the people who live there oppose Milosevic, whose support comes from elsewhere in the country. It is a little sickening for any American intellectual to suggest cleansing another country if one even begins to total the amount of havoc and horror we have brought to Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Central and Latin America. (In Guatemala alone some 200,000 people—many of them children—were killed in the Civil War which just ended a few years ago, almost all of them victims of government forces, paid for and trained by the United States. *And we are going to cleanse the Serbs?*)

However, none of this makes the ethnic cleansing vanish.

WHAT COULD HAVE BEEN DONE?

It would help if we could keep the events in sequence. The ethnic "purges" were minimal until after the NATO bombing began*. There were tensions, yes. Milosevic ended the autonomy of Kosova some ten years earlier and used his police to repress the Albanians. In 1995 when the U.S. negotiated an end to the Bosnian war through the Dayton peace accords, Kosovo was intentionally left off the agenda, and Milosevic was hailed as a peacemaker at the signing

of the peace treaty. The failure to resolve the question of Kosovo returned to haunt us all.

Milosevic refused to come to terms with the powerful nonviolent movement of Kosovar Albanians led by Ibrahim Rugova (about which the Western media said nothing until after this tragedy began, in part because U.S. and NATO were paying no attention to the details of Kosova, an area where the War Resisters International has had close contact for some time. In checking my email I found a document from January of this year, from Belgrade, signed by a number of groups in the civil society, demanding Milosevic take action on Kosova, end the state of repression and resolve the legitimate concerns of the Albanian majority. It is not true that no Serbs were concerned with the issue).

Last year, because the nonviolent movement had not had great success—Belgrade had ignored it and NATO wasn't interested—the Kosova Liberation Army (KLA) began to emerge. Originally dismissed by Madeleine Albright as terrorists and described in a recent 'New York Times' article as a marginal political group with an odd amalgam of Maoist/Stalinist ideas, the KLA used the classical pattern of military groups in rebellion—they began to shoot Serbian police and Serbian military (and, in at least a few cases, Albanians they felt were following the wrong political line). Predictably Belgrade responded with military measures and tried to put down the KLA. By the time the NATO action began there was a civil war going on in Kosova (which is not a very large area—if it was a perfect square it would be about 85 miles in each direction).

In an effort to resolve the crisis, NATO convened a meeting at Rambouillet and got both the Albanian Kosovars and the Serbs there. There was no actual negotiation. The Serbs and the Albanians never met directly, but both were presented with the "Rambouillet Accords" drafted by the US. The Serbs refused to sign. The Albanians refused to sign. Under enormous pressure from the US—which clearly promised the Albanians that if they signed NATO would come in on their side—the Kosovars went back home, talked among themselves and finally signed. Belgrade continued to refuse to sign. The text of the Accords was not published, but can be found on the Internet. I've read the text, and it was clear (as has been conceded by at least one of the authors "off the record") that they had been drafted so that the Serbs couldn't sign. One provision called for the right of NATO to enter the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia from any entry point, without passports, in NATO uniform, flying the NATO flag. That amounted to an army of occupation for Serbia. It was inevitable it would be rejected.

No effort was made to see if the Serbs would accept a peacekeeping presence with Russian involvement. In fact the Russians were frozen out of Rambouillet altogether. NATO was determined to impose its own "peace" on Kosova.

As the deadline drew near, Western reporters were asked to leave and almost all of them did. Much more serious, hundreds of observers (including an old friend of mine from Germany) from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were ordered to leave. OSCE had been sent in to monitor the situation. Up to that point—and this is essential if we are to understand what happened—the violence had been limited. A columnist, Tony Snow wrote, on the eve of the NATO air attacks:

"Key members of the U.S. Senate sat slack-jawed through a confidential briefing . . . from the Clinton Administration foreign policy team . . . one senator asked: How many Albanians have Milosevic's troops massacred this year? The President's emissaries turned ashen. They glanced at each other. They rifled through their papers. One hazarded a guess: 'Two thousand?' No, the senator replied, that was the number for all of last year. He wanted figures for the last month—or even the year to date, since the president had painted such a grisly picture of genocide in his March 24 address to the nation. . . . The senator pressed on. How often have such slaughters occurred? Nobody knew. As it turns out, Kosovo has been about as bloody this year as, say, Atlanta. You can measure the deaths not in the hundreds, but dozens. (I'm not trying to deny Milosevic's brutality here; only to provide some comparisons). More people died in a single outburst of violence in East Timor"

TRAGIC MISCALCULATIONS IN WASHINGTON AND BELGRADE

And so the bombing began. It began without political support in Washington. It began in opposition to advice from the military (reminding us of how rarely generals start wars, and how often politicians do). It began with the assumption on the part of Madeleine Albright and Bill Clinton that after one or two days of bombing Milosevic would cave in and agree to the Accords. And it began with Milosevic assuming that NATO wouldn't remain united very long on the bombing and that it would end. Both calculations were horribly wrong. Let's not let Clinton, a skilled prevaricator, cause us to forget the early statements about how the war would be brief and soon over. Clinton stated that his objectives were to protect the Albanians in Kosova, and to insure against destabilization of Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro. Within 48 hours after the bombing began, sensible leaders in NATO should have realized it was a disaster and taken almost any steps to end it. (As John F. Kennedy did in 1960 when the Bay of Pigs attack on Cuba foundered on the beaches). The slaughter of Albanian civilians began. Serbs, outraged by the bombing and unable to get their hands on anyone from NATO, turned on helpless civilians in cowardly fury. This is when most of the killings occurred—"in the first week after the NATO bombing began"! The bodies being uncovered now are not relics from 1998—they are victims both of Serbian fury and NATO folly.

This is so important it merits a note of its own. Given his mindset, if Clinton had ever been even slightly serious about the humanitarian issue, he would have known that only a NATO land invasion *might* have protected the civilians—but that risked the deaths of NATO (particularly, American) troops. It would have been politically risky. So instead he bombed, trading the lives of American troops for those of Yugoslav civilians. Rarely has a political leader acted with such calculated cowardice and dared to call it humanitarian.

Milosevic played hardball and began a ruthless expulsion of Albanians. Serb forces went on a murderous rampage in which as many as 10,000 may have lost their lives. The main objective of the Serbs, however, was the expulsion of the Albanians. Within 48 hours we were seeing the very destabilization of Macedonia, Montenegro and Albania which Clinton had assured us we had gone to war to prevent! Finally, the significant democratic opposition within

Serbia was undermined. While email communication with Belgrade continued through the bombing—I got both propaganda posts from the Yugoslav Communist Party, and also very moving posts from the opposition—the opposition was isolated. Milosevic cracked down on the opposition, closing papers and threatening dissidents.

NATO lost its war in the first 48 hours. All that was left, then, was massive bombing of Kosovo and Serbia. The bombs were not accurate. One of the clever missiles hit a residential area in Sofia, capital of Bulgaria!

There is no space here, nor time, to detail just how far off the mark some of the smart bombs fell, nor add up the number of civilians were killed—the figure probably runs in the thousands.

What is essential is to demolish the argument that if any civilians were killed it was by accident, that the bombing was aimed only at military targets. That was a categorical lie. First, if the bombs are smart, you can't kill over a thousand civilians by accident. And if they are killed by accident, then the bombs aren't smart and you shouldn't say they are. *But in fact the targets were civilian*. By the end of the first month the key military targets had been hit. The bombing then became an effort to destroy the will of Serbian people. Communications centers, bridges, power stations, factories—none of these military targets—were hit repeatedly.

During Iraq's invasion of Kuwait there was a story about Iraqi soldiers throwing infants from their incubators (a story which Amnesty International picked up and spread—but which turned out to have been one of those wonderful "true war stories" which had been invented in Washington). At one point during the bombing, when the power was cut off in Belgrade, a BBC reporter said that it was touch and go in one of the hospitals, which didn't have a quick backup system and worried about the infants in their incubators. *We had become the enemy we denounced earlier in the decade: barbarians deliberately targeting infants*.

WHAT WAS THE REASON FOR THE WAR?

One of my friends in England recently wrote that she had finally become a pacifist; watching the NATO bludgeoning of Serb civilians was too much. Howard Clark, former staff for War Resisters' International, well informed on Kosova, in touch with the KLA and a frequent visitor to the area, wrote me that except for his personal pacifism he might have supported NATO, but it became clear to him almost immediately that anyone who had any thought NATO could be used for humanitarian missions was out of touch with reality. No one informed about the situation denies there were serious, long-running problems in Kosova. I've been as clear about this as I can. But that was not the reason for the war. American conservatives were right to ask what vital American interests justified the war. The 'New York Times' wondered out loud in one news report whether the actions were taken to make it easier to have access to oil in the adjoining region (the Balkans themselves have no oil), or whether there might not be some impatience in NATO with Serbia's "alternative" economic system. Only liberals, who, God bless them, are always willing to believe the best about the Democratic Party, insisted Clinton had gone to war because he was moved by humanitarian issues. If pressed on how the U.S. had been able to discover these humanitarian impulses after its long history of malevolent interventions, or why Kosova

you have started it, you have no choice but to stay the course and win it, or NATO's credibility will be lost." All that death and damage . . . for the credibility of an alliance which had no real purpose! That was the reason for the war.

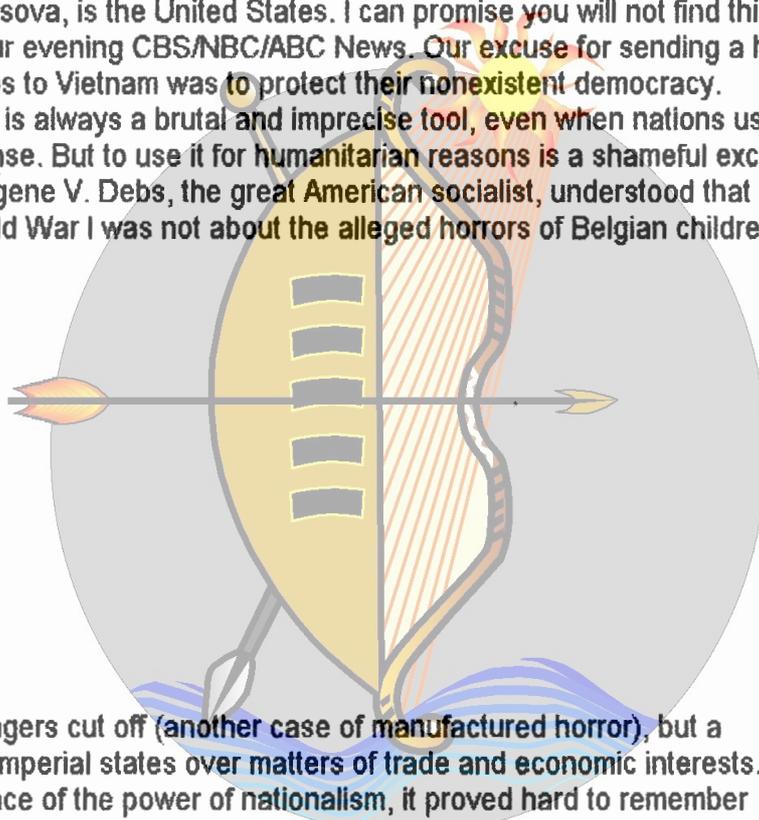
OLD "RADICAL REASONS" FOR QUESTIONING HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTIONS

When nations go to war, be very careful when they justify their actions on humanitarian grounds. Hitler used those grounds when he bit off a chunk of Czechoslovakia to protect the Germans he alleged were being mistreated in the Sudetenland. I can't think of a single war the U.S. has gotten into where it didn't allege its motives to be pure (the exception being WWII, when, attacked at Pearl Harbor the U.S. needed no excuse).

Our real reason for getting into the Gulf War was to maintain a series of weakened states in the Middle East, which would permit our continued control of the area. Hundreds of thousands died then and later, most from sanctions that have taken the lives of over a half million elderly and children for lack of food and medical care. Saddam Hussein certainly is in part to blame, but the primary responsibility for this continuing tragedy, which dwarfs the horror of Kosova, is the United States. I can promise you will not find this story on your evening CBS/NBC/ABC News. Our excuse for sending a half million troops to Vietnam was to protect their nonexistent democracy.

The military is always a brutal and imprecise tool, even when nations use it in self-defense. But to use it for humanitarian reasons is a shameful excuse for folly. Eugene V. Debs, the great American socialist, understood that at its root World War I was not about the alleged horrors of Belgian children

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with their fingers cut off (another case of manufactured horror), but a struggle of imperial states over matters of trade and economic interests. But in the face of the power of nationalism, it proved hard to remember this. (The powerful socialist parties of France and Germany, which had pledged a general strike if their governments went to war, capitulated, voted war credits in 1914, helping lead the way to the slaughter of the working class in all European countries).

With few exceptions—and the war under discussion is not one of them—wars are fought for reasons of perceived national interest (often badly perceived), and those interests are always the interests of the dominant class.

If ground forces had been sent into Kosova by NATO, they would not have included men such as Clinton or Blair, nor any of the talking heads and intellectuals busy selling the war—but working class men and women. Because it is a problem to persuade men and women to go and get killed—or kill others—the dominant group in a society, the group which will not be doing any of the fighting, finds it necessary to portray each war as a moral one. And, as we have seen in the past three months, it will find a host of intellectuals to justify this position.

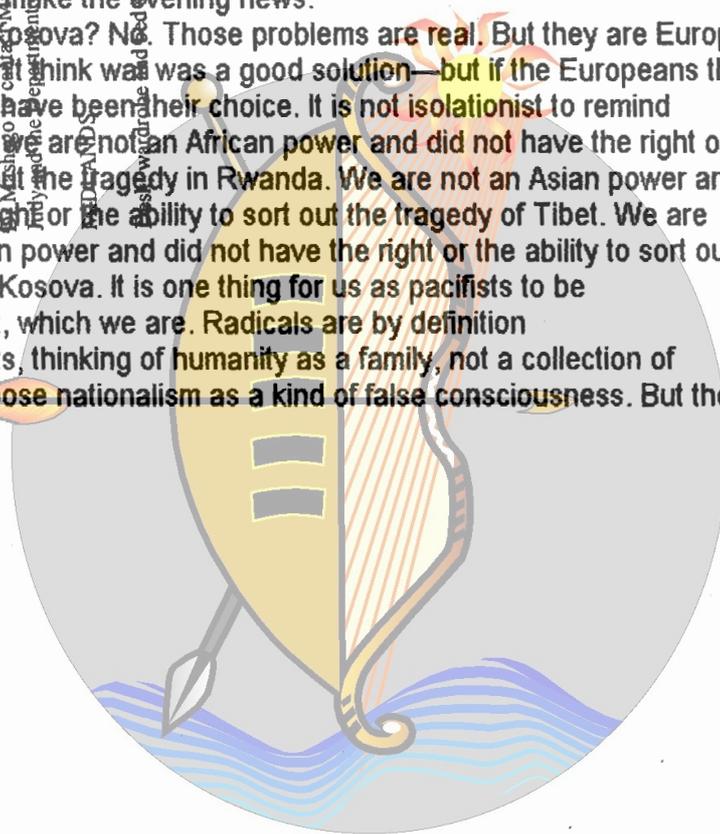
In mentioning the role of the media, I do not want to leave the impression they are the cause of this misdirection. They report on issues when the

government has "put things on the agenda" by some action it has taken. The government points in the direction it wants covered. Note the difference in the coverage of Kosova and East Timor. Both are areas of tragedy, but only one made the evening news in such a way that intellectuals rushed to use the word "genocide."

Class does matter a great deal in what gets covered and how. Even as attention was directed to the tragedy of Kosova and intellectuals were signing on for their war duty, terrible things were happening every day in our country. We have the largest prison population in the world, most of whom are in prison for nonviolent offenses. Conditions are bad and getting worse. Many of our prisons are not far from being concentration camps. The prisons get an occasional "special" on PBS, or in the 'New York Times', but they are not on the evening news. When, a few years ago, after the revolution in Iran a number of American officials were taken captive in Iran, their imprisonment was on the news every day, every night, for months. Remember the famous "Iran hostage crisis"? Yet we have hundreds of thousands of men and women being "held hostage" by a system of criminal law that almost invariably punishes the poor and sets the rich free on bail. And this story does not make the evening news.

Am I ignoring Kosova? No. Those problems are real. But they are European problems. I don't think war was a good solution—but if the Europeans thought so, that would have been their choice. It is not isolationist to remind ourselves that we are not an African power and did not have the right or the ability to sort out the tragedy in Rwanda. We are not an Asian power and did not have the right or the ability to sort out the tragedy of Tibet. We are not a European power and did not have the right or the ability to sort out the tragedy in Kosova. It is one thing for us as pacifists to be internationalist, which we are. Radicals are by definition internationalists, thinking of humanity as a family, not a collection of tribes. We oppose nationalism as a kind of false consciousness. But there is

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an enormous difference between having a world view and sending an army to every part of the globe.

That so many on the Left and within the liberal community do not understand how profoundly wrong this recent intervention was is a cause for dismay—but it is not a reason for us to be swept along in applauding one of the bloodier chapters in recent U.S. military history.

FINAL QUESTIONS AND PROBLEMS

Some of the problems we are now left with include a deeply chilled relationship with both the Soviet Union and China. Some of the talking heads felt the Chinese government was making too much of a fuss about the U.S. hitting their embassy and killing their citizens. (Why wouldn't they believe Washington that it was an accident? Perhaps they believed Clinton when he said the bombs were so smart they only went where they were supposed to go. And perhaps now they want to sell back the bits of intelligence they had stolen and bought, on the grounds that if the CIA couldn't find the right maps, the nuclear formulas were probably also wrong.) The talking heads did not understand the simple fact that only since the 1970s (a mere blink in time for a nation as old as China) has China been free of the insult of not even being "recognized" by the United States. The Chinese are a proud people, civilized long before us.

NATO policy has driven China and Russia back together, to shape foreign and military policy in concert against the US. Additionally, and this has been confirmed by a host of reports, hostility to the United States is now so deep in Russia and in China that NATO may have succeeded in poisoning a whole new generation in those countries. Americans in those countries have been roughly accosted on the streets of Moscow and Beijing where, six months ago, they were popular.

Second, many Europeans were dismayed by the degree to which the United States so clearly was calling the shots, even if Jamie Shea was left to defend the policy at the press briefings. There is now talk of a European military alliance excluding the United States so that this kind of thing doesn't happen again. Which means that NATO's "victory" in this war may also mean its defeat. (Most Americans, unless they were really in touch, were never aware how deep the tensions within NATO were running—*Greek public opinion was 95% against the NATO action*. The majority of the public in France, Germany and Italy were against the bombing.)

Third, Germany has emerged as the major power on the continent, strong enough that its foreign minister publicly mocked Tony Blair's call for ground troops. (Which is one reason for Blair's wild pro-Americanism—Great Britain is so isolated from Europe that he hopes to maintain some influence by sticking close to the U.S.)

Fourth, hopes for ending nuclear proliferation are dead for the time being. The Abolition 2000 campaign, which was uneasy about saying anything clear on the Kosova conflict, can change its date—there won't be any abolition of nuclear weapons in the foreseeable future. China, Russia, Israel, India and Pakistan, all watching the U.S. steamroller over international law, are not going to surrender their nuclear weapons, judging them one thing Americans understand.

Worse, we can expect efforts to acquire nuclear weapons (or similar weapons

of mass destruction such as biological or chemical weapons) to continue, with renewed vigor, in the Arab states and in North and South Korea. By its deliberate flouting of the United Nations, all nations realize that the U.S., with its great military power, is now a rogue state. (The excuse that "human rights were at stake and if we had gone to the UN the Russians and Chinese would have vetoed action" is not very good if the result of violating the Charter is to undermine what little sense of world law has been established. In the long run the hope of protecting human rights rests upon law, not upon its arbitrary violation.)

THE TEMPTATION OF VIOLENCE

There are many entirely nonpacifist reasons for questioning the U.S. action in Kosova. And one great lesson to learn: So long as the U.S. remains this heavily armed, it will find ways to use those weapons. Great industries depend on this military framework. Many jobs are related to it. The country is addicted to the military and if an occasional war is needed to keep the supply of weapons coming, to keep the Congressional committees primed to increase the military budget, that is a small price to pay to feed this complex set of institutions—military, corporations, universities, trade unions, bureaucrats. The chance of taking diplomacy seriously is only possible when that is easier than shooting someone. If you "talk softly but carry a big stick," you can't resist the temptation to use that stick occasionally to find out if it still works.

Violence is a great temptation. It seems so easy. One bomb. One bullet (note the increased discussion in intellectual circles about returning to the old U.S. policy of assassination. One might ask the ancient Pharaohs how well it worked in dealing with Moses, or ask Herod whether the murder of all the children near Bethlehem saved the world from Jesus.) In the end one bomb is never enough. The U.S. laid waste to Serbia and Kosova. But it could not save the Kosovars. And now, the war over, the U.S. wants to punish Serbia because we failed to oust Milosevic. We have insisted (Tony Blair is the loudest exponent of this position) that the Serbs must have free elections, and NATO will support whoever the Serbs freely select—as long as they don't freely select Milosevic. (I hope Milosevic goes—and if there are trials for war crimes, he should certainly be on trial, along with Clinton and Blair; but it is outrageous for NATO to define a free election as one where NATO agrees with the verdict!)

Our work is harder now than before. For us to work effectively we need to see if we can get the BBC TV or ITN TV in our areas. We can find when BBC broadcasts over AM or FM. We can support the Pacifica stations. We can subscribe to conservative but generally accurate publications such as the 'Economist' or the 'New York Times' or the 'Wall Street Journal', and reliable Left journals such as the 'Nation' and the 'Progressive' and 'In These Times'.

We can remember, when confronted with humanitarian crises, to weigh them against those in our own backyard, our prisons, the elderly and poor who can't afford health care, police forces that are often as brutal as any military occupation. But Kosova? It is a war that everyone lost—Serbs, Kosovars and NATO. Clinton would have left office stained by the Lewinsky affair. But now he leaves with a deeper stain—blood.

(This article may be reprinted with proper credit to the author and contact information: War Resisters League, 339 Lafayette Street, New York NY 10012 USA)

