

Milošević and the distortion of the history of Yugoslavia's dismembering*

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The transnational elite seems not to be satisfied just with eliminating its opponents (Arafat yesterday, Milošević today, Saddam tomorrow —the ‘war criminals’ and terrorists, as characterised by this elite whose kangaroo courts are, naturally, unable to perceive the massive war crimes and state terrorism of its own members!) The transnational elite is even more interested —as every totalitarian regime has been— in rewriting History, so that the submission of future generations can also be secured. In the last few days, for instance, we have witnessed a huge campaign launched by the international mass media, controlled by the same elite, for the distortion of the history of Yugoslavia’s dismembering. This campaign’s line was summarised by Lord Ashdown, the former high representative of the international community in Bosnia (read: the former Bosnia gauleiter of the transnational elite) thus: “most of the blame for the strife and the thousands of deaths that followed the break-up of the former Yugoslavia can be laid at his [Milošević] door, although Franjo Tuđman [the Croatian leader] was also culpable.”^[1]

The reality, of course, is almost totally different. As I attempted to show at the time,^[2] the real culprit in the dismembering of Yugoslavia and in the creation of the hundreds of thousands of victims caused by the national cleansings and Nato bombings was the transnational elite. Its aim was to secure the stability of the internationalised market economy environment in a strategically important area and the full integration of Yugoslavia into the New World Order (NWO), as expressed by capitalist neoliberal globalisation and its economic and military institutions (EU and NATO respectively). The assimilation into the NWO of the old Yugoslavia, which was the strongest Balkan state with a long history of independence from both the Western and Soviet blocks, was expected (and proved) to be particularly difficult. This was mainly because the Serbs, who constituted the strongest ethnic element within the federation, had always had a proportionately higher percentage of communist party members than other nationalities and, in the 1989 US-imposed elections in the republics, Serbs supported the former Communists over the US-backed ‘democrats’,^[3] who managed to come to power only after Nato had bombed the Serbian population into submission.^[4]

It is, therefore, clear that the Western elites drew the conclusion, at some stage, that normal methods of economic integration (capital and commodity penetration etc), successfully used in the rest of the Balkans (Albania, Bulgaria, Romania) would not be sufficient to integrate the old Yugoslavia fully into the internationalised market economy and its economic and military institutions (EU/NATO). In other words, it became apparent that the safest method of fully integrating the old Yugoslavia into the New World Order would inevitably involve its dismembering.

The dismembering of Yugoslavia began with economic measures aimed at uprooting the foundations of the federation, so that the conditions for its physical dismemberment could be created. The peoples of Yugoslavia, who were united in fighting the Nazis in the second world war (apart from the fascist Croats), were galvanised in their heroic struggle by the promise of a double self-determination on which the foundations of the subsequent federation later relied: self-determination at the cultural/ethnic level (ethnic multiculturalism) and at the social level (workers' self-management). The establishment of the five republics (Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia) united in a federal multicultural Yugoslavia was aimed at achieving the former, while the introduction of some form of workers' control, after the break with Stalin in 1948, was intended to achieve the latter. In other words, ethnic multiculturalism within the system of the federal republics was founded upon social self-determination at the factory level which presupposed a break with the market economy. However, when the Yugoslavian elite turned to foreign lenders in the 1970s and the 1980s to finance further development, inevitably this led to the creation of wide gaps in per capita income between the different republics and, worse, the ideology of competition and individualism was revived. The link between ethnic and social self-determination started to break. Individual self-determination within a competitive environment began replacing social self-determination as the basis for ethnic self-determination, thereby creating the perfect background for the development of ethnic conflicts. As Samary of *Le Monde Diplomatique* pointed out, "the crisis of Titoism allowed anti-communist nationalisms to re-emerge, and in the 1980s Western governments welcomed them as democratic"^[5].

The huge rise in the expenses required to service the constantly growing external debt – which jumped from 9 per cent of GDP in 1970 to 24 percent in 1987!^[6] – as a result of the drastic increase in the price of oil and the huge rise in interest rates following strict neoliberal monetarist policies, in combination with a significant reduction in Yugoslavian exports because of the recession in the West, marked the beginning of the country's economic dismemberment. Foreign creditors –through the World Bank and the IMF– imposed the usual 'restructuring' recipe which, in this case, involved not just wage freezes and drastic cuts in welfare spending but also the elimination of worker-managed enterprises. Crucially, in addition to this, transfer payments that had been channelling state revenues from Belgrade to the republics were frozen and diverted, instead, towards servicing Yugoslavia's debt. The latter was a time bomb planted at the foundations of the Yugoslavian federation, as it was through these payments that the redistribution of income from richer to poorer areas had hitherto been achieved. With the economic basis of the federal state having been effectively undermined at a stroke, the secessionist tendencies, which were already flourishing in a climate of economic decay and frozen wages and salaries, were enhanced. As a result of such measures, in less than two years (from January 1989 to September 1990), according to World Bank data, more than 1,100 industrial firms were wiped out and over 614,000 industrial workers were laid off (out of 2.7 million).^[7] The areas hardest hit were Serbia, (including Kosovo), Bosnia-Herzegovina and Macedonia.

At the same time, the transnational elite did everything possible, at the beginning of the 1990s, to enhance the autonomous role of the republics at the expense of the federal government. A US law in 1991 provided aid only to the separate republics, while the European Community organised a conference in Yugoslavia that same year calling for

‘sovereign and independent republics’.^[8]

The Yugoslavian elite, facing the visible danger of losing power in the midst of mounting social unrest —particularly in Serbia where, as mentioned above, the socialist movement has historically been strongest— moved from socialist to nationalist ideology. No wonder Milošević's rise to power in 1987 was marked by his calls for the protection of the Serbs in Kosovo, soon to be extended to the Serb minorities in Croatia and Bosnia. So, when Milošević, in 1989, abolished the autonomy of Kosovo that was introduced by the 1974 constitution on the grounds that it was "anti-Serbian", he gave the first blow to the system of constitutional balances inherited from the

Tito era and nationalist tensions increased not only in Kosovo itself but in Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia and elsewhere. Independence movements flourished all over Yugoslavia leading to the establishment of nationalist governments, armed struggle and the dismembering of the country itself. However, what is crucially missing in western accounts of this conflict is not only the fact that the dismembering process of Yugoslavia began with the transnational elite's systematic effort to uproot the economic foundations of the Yugoslavian federation which I examined above, but also the fact that even its physical dismemberment was critically boosted by the transnational elite's actions as well: Croatia's 1991 recognition by Germany in particular (which, according to Hans Dietrich Genscher, Foreign Minister at the time, was his greatest achievement!), followed by the entire EU's recognition of Croatia and Slovenia at the beginning of 1992.

What followed was both predictable and inevitable. The secession of Slovenia and Croatia (1991) was followed by declarations of independence by Macedonia (1992) and Bosnia-Herzegovina —the latter resulting, after protracted armed struggle, in the 'Dayton accords' (1995) that partitioned Bosnia-Herzegovina and created two new ethnically homogeneous 'republics': the Muslim-Croat federation of Bosnia and the Republica Srpska (Bosnian Serbs). The old Yugoslavia, through a process of massive ethnic cleansing (carried out by all sides in the conflict and not just the Serbs, as the propaganda of the transnational elite maintains) that cost the lives of hundreds of thousands of Yugoslavs who had previously lived together harmoniously, was broken up. Once the Serbs had been effectively left alone in resisting neoliberal globalisation —i.e. export-led growth (the hallmark of globalised neoliberal modernity^[9] and privatisations (as late as 1989 more than three quarters of Serbia's basic industry was still publicly owned)— and while even the Milošević elite was supporting similar 'reforms',^[10] the transnational elite's 'heavy artillery' was brought in. This consisted of the economic threats and sanctions which, in combination with the barbarous NATO bombings, finally brought the Serbs 'in line' with the New World Order. The transnational elite had, at last, succeeded in dismembering Yugoslavia and in converting the only Balkan state still not fully dependent on the West into a fully integrated member of the NWO!

* The above text is based on a translation of an article which was first published in the fortnightly column of Takis Fotopoulos in the mass circulation Athens daily *Eleftherotipia* on 18/3/2006.

[1] Paddy Ashdown, "Bloody legacy of a man whose talent was lying", *The Independent* (13/3/2006).

- [2] see Takis Fotopoulos, "[The First War of the Internationalised Market Economy](#)", *Democracy & Nature*, Vol. 5, No. 2 (July 1999).
- [3] Michael Parenti, *To Kill A Nation* (London: Verso, 2000), pp. 81-82.
- [4] *ibid.*
- [5] Catherine Samary, 'The Balkans show trial', *Le Monde diplomatique* (April 2002).
- [6] World Bank, *World Development Report 1989*, Table 24.
- [7] World Bank, *Industrial Restructuring Study, Overview* (WB: Washington, June 1991)
- [8] Michael Parenti, *To Kill A Nation*, pp. 27-28.
- [9] Michael Parenti, *To kill a Nation*, p. 22.
- [10] The so-called 'Milosevic Commission' report was calling for market-oriented reforms in which the 'world market and world competition represents the strongest generator of economic operation'. Also, at least since 1988, Milosevic himself was urging Yugoslavs to overcome 'their unfounded, irrational and...primitive fear of exploitation' by foreign capital (see Lenard J. Cohen, *Broken Bonds: Yugoslavia's Disintegration and Balkan Politics in Transition*, quoted in "The Balkan War and Leftist Apologetics for the Milosevic regime" by Harald Beyer-Arnesen (Oslo: Norway, 11/5/1999).